

The Berea Baptist Banner

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

Natural Religion

By Curtis Pugh
of Bocsa, Romania

Let us consider the natural religion of humankind. We shall consider its existence, its nature, its origin, the influence of it upon modern Christendom and the Baptists, and the damnation it brings. Even the casual observer will notice that all the peoples spread over this vast globe upon which we find ourselves have one thing in common. Human beings, perhaps for several reasons, have a tendency toward religion. Their religious beliefs, rituals, and practices differ from place to place. This is to be expected as a result of isolation in the past and perhaps other factors. But all these different religions share a common basis and common ideas. Because of this we can consider them together in such an article as this. We admit there are



many differences among the different religious practices of mankind, but we insist, and hope to demonstrate, that they all have, as stated, a common basis or origin and fundamental common ideas.

We are not attacking the right of people to believe what they believe. As historic Baptists we insist on what some old writers have called "soul liberty." This is the right of every individual to practice the religion of his or her choice, free from coercion from other individuals, religious organization, or governments as long as these practices do not harm others or infringe upon the liberties of

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Christ, The Law, and the Christian

By Timothy Hille
of Ashland, Illinois

Matthew 5:17-20

Much confusion reigns in the religious world concerning the law of God. It is no wonder, then, that there is so much confusion as to the Person and work of Jesus Christ, since He is both the subject and the fulfiller of the law (John 1:45, Luke 24:44, 45). **"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."** We ought to remember that here, in the "sermon on the mount," Jesus is, as a King, setting forth the principles and precepts of His kingdom. The truths found in our current text are for those described in the preceding verses, **"the poor in spirit"** (Matt. 5:3); **"they that mourn"** (Matt. 5:4); **"the meek"** (Matt. 5:5); **"they which do hunger and thirst after**



righteousness" (Matt. 5:6); **"the merciful"** (Matt. 5:7); **"the pure in heart"** (Matt. 5:8); **"the peacemakers"** (Matt. 5:9); and, **"they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake"** (Matt. 5:10). These describe the spiritual character of those who are the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, who have been born again and who have trusted in Christ as Lord and Saviour.

On the one hand, we find those who say that man is under no law as far as God is concerned. On the other hand, we find those who teach that man is saved by works of the law. Some teach

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The Myth of Old Testament, Proselyte Baptism

By Douglas Newell IV
of Wake Forest, North Carolina

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance" (Matt. 3:11).

John was giving some religious leaders fits over his preaching and his baptism. John is still giving religious leaders fits over his preaching and his baptism today. Matthew 3:1-8 gives the account of a portion of the ministry of John the Baptist preaching and baptizing in and about the Jordan River. As a child of God, you are going to have to deal with John, his preaching and his baptism, meaning you will have to explain his ministry some way or another. You will have to be truthful or you will have to explain him away, but you must deal with John the Baptist. An honest reading of the Scripture concerning John the Baptist will leave you with the conclusion that you ought to be; no, must be a Baptist if you are to follow the Lord in His church.



The baptism in Matthew 3 has been misunderstood, misapplied and attempted to be explained away since the very hours John was crying in the wilderness. John poses a problem for practically every false denomination; but especially those of the paedobaptism sect, or the infant baptizers. In order to justify the practice of baby baptism, it is attempted to try and link baptism to circumcision and Abraham to the church; but that pesky John the Baptist (along with the New Testament) just keep getting in the way. One way to try and neutralize and explain away the reality of John's baptism is to reinvent it as something it never was, namely proselyte baptism [Webster's defines proselyte as "A new

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Pastors' Problems

By Milburn Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)

That pastors have problems is not even doubted by their most bitter opponents or close friends. And I do not expect to relieve all the problems of pastors in this article, but I do seek to create a better understanding between pastors and members. Just about all the problems with which pastors are confronted arise from the basic ignorance of church members as to what a pastor really is. Generally speaking, there has been a shift in the role of the pastor in recent times. He is no longer looked upon as predominantly a minister of the Word. Now he is viewed as an administrator. Members are more concerned about his visitation ministry than his preaching ministry, his ability to speak with men than his ability to speak to God. They want him to possess much secular education, but are often indifferent to his having attended the school of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 1:11, 15-18).



The Bible nowhere says that a pastor is to be president of the PTA, or a member of the Lion's Club. Neither is he set forth as a civic promoter that strives for social equality. Instead the Scriptures warn the pastor of the evil of entanglement with the **"affairs of this life"** (II Tim. 2:4; Mark 4:19). A New Testament pastor is predominantly a prophet, propagator, preacher, promoter and promulgator of spiritual things. He is to be **"apt to teach"** the good things of the Lord (I Tim. 3:2), and people should expect to hear from him, not socialism and politics, but **"the word that cometh forth from the Lord"** (Ezek. 33:30). What was true of Old Testament priests should be true of New Testament pastors: **"For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he**

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You can lay so many books on the brain as to bury it, and teach children so much that they learn nothing, and preach so long that the people forget all that is said. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Pro. 25:11).

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Editor: Christopher Cockrell
Staff: Sheron Cockrell, Marsha Kiser, Virginia
Cockrell

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

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Pastors' Problems

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is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 2:7). An undershepherd under Christ, the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, is to feed (not fleece) the sheep the pure, unadulterated, unvarnished Word of Jehovah (I Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28; John 21:15, 16-17). He is to **"give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"** (I Tim. 4:13). He must give himself **"continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word"** (Acts 6:4). All other things are inferior and secondary to his spiritual work.

A good number in his church seems to expect him not to offend the good givers and bigwigs in his preaching, even if in pleasing men he ceases to be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10). There are always some in the church who would attempt to usurp the office of the Holy Spirit and endeavor to tell the pastor what to preach. They tell him: **"Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits"** (Isa. 30:10). They want to have their ears tickled (I Tim. 4:2). And though the pastor is a servant of the most high God, he will in many cases condescend to doing what they tell him. Any pastor who allows a deacon board or a clique to make out his sermon outlines would be better off if a millstone were hanged around his neck and he were cast into the sea. Such a pastor will soon discover that the church has no more respect for a peace-at-any-price, good-Lord-and-good-devil, sissy-britches than a loud-mouthed, domineering woman has for a puny, effeminate, henpecked husband.

A God-called, God-honoring and God-fearing pastor gets his message from God and this message burns in his soul (Jer. 20:9). He comes forth under a life-or-death sentence to preach God's Word without fear or favor to an eternity-bound people (I Tim. 5:20-21). God's pastor delivers Heaven's message whether men like it or not, for it is a small thing for him to be judged of men's judgment (I Cor. 4:3). If pastors would earnestly, faithfully, and prayerfully preach the whole council of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, they would find some of their problems removed.

Problems As To Visitation

There is no subject more frequently discussed among members than the pastor's visitation ministry. Many pastors are severely criticized for not visiting among the church members as they deem necessary. To hear some talk, you would think it is the pastor's duty to visit each church member daily. He may have several church members who work publicly, work hard at home and attend various clubs and school activities, but in spite of this, somehow, or somehow, he must know when they are home and visit

with them even when he is not invited and even given the impression that he is not wanted. Observation has convinced me that those who scream the loudest about the pastor not visiting them are the same group who seek the rule or ruin of the church. In other words, these people are angry because the pastor has not come down and let them tell him how to run the church to suit them.

This day and time about the only time the shepherd of the flock can visit his sheep and find them at home is at night. This is the time of various community and school activities. And though the members' kids must many times even stay home from the Wednesday night service to study their school lessons, the pastor's kids are denied the same right. If the preacher's family does not go with him at night, then they are denounced as unsociable. In addition to this, when the pastor goes to a member's house, he finds it impossible to talk because of the noisy TV which, if turned off, causes no small stir among the kids and some adults. While members denounce the pastor for not visiting enough, they will also criticize him for visiting too much. They will criticize him for going to one house more than to theirs. The pastor who visits his members too frequently is generally said to have "pets" and "special friends." He is even sometimes accused of being after someone's wife and of being a big politician. When a pastor gets to be too common to his members, they lose their respect for him and put the skids under him and out he goes.

Certainly it is the pastor's duty to visit the backslidden and the lost whether invited or not (James 1:27). He should visit with his members when he has business to discuss with them without an invitation. But he should visit socially only when he is invited (Acts 16:14-15). It is on this one point that there seems to be a great deal of misunderstanding. Members often say to the preacher, "Come to see me." Maybe the pastor tries to do this, but finds no one at home. Church members who really want the pastor to visit with them could greatly help their pastors if they would invite him to come at a stated time when they will be at home. When this is done, the pastor feels that his presence is wanted and would be appreciated. Then he can visit socially with church members and know he is not being a pest or a nuisance. A minister knows full well that Proverbs 25:17 reads: "Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he become tired of you and hate you" (Amplified Version).

Quite often church members complain because their pastor does not visit them when they are sick. Some never seem to realize that the pastor may have been sick during the time of their illness. They also fail to realize that the pastor may not have known that they were sick.

Contrary to the general opinion, the Scriptures admonish members to **"call for the elders of the church"** when they get sick (Jas. 5:14). The elder or elders should visit the sick when called, pray for them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. I do not believe it is the pastor's duty to do this every time a churchgoer sneezes or has the toe ache. I have visited many people who claimed to be sick when I was sicker than they were. Those who grumble most about the pastor not visiting them when they are sick are usually the last ones to visit the brethren or the pastor and his family if they happen to get sick. **"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"** (Matt. 7:3). **"Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same thing"** (Rom. 2:1). Too many church members have one standard for the pastor, and another for their brethren, and still another for themselves.

Lack of Respect

One of the most distasteful problems of the pastor in this twentieth century is the lack of respect for his office. We live in a disrespectful age, a time when **"the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable"** (Isa. 3:5). People do not want to render **"honour to whom honour"** is due (Rom. 13:7). They ought not to be lightly esteemed, but esteemed **"very highly in love for their work's sake"** (I Thess. 5:13). The pastor is to be respected because of his office, not because of his person.

In New Testament times preachers were highly esteemed because they were men worthy of esteem. The Galatians received Paul **"as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus"** (Gal. 4:14). This was as it should have been for Christ Jesus Himself said to His ministers: **"He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me"** (John 13:20). The first century preacher was looked upon as the messenger of God and his message was treated as the message of God. Paul said of the Thessalonians: **"When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"** (I Thess. 2:13). This too, was as it should have been. Jesus Christ said: **"He that heareth you heareth me: and he that despiseth you despiseth me"** (Luke 10:16). The Apostle John declared: **"He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us"** (I John 4:6). So to reject the Lord's messenger and message is to reject and despise the Lord Himself; yea, to give evidence that one is not of the Lord's sheep, for His sheep

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hear His voice (Ex. 16:8; John 10:27).

Alas! So few pastors now enjoy the respect that the early preachers did and such respect as is demanded by the Holy Scriptures! People nowadays think of the pastor as a crackpot, an extremist, a bigot and an old fogey. Church members hear his message, knowing full well that they are not going to obey it; yea, they make fun of his message and denounce him for even preaching it. No better response than the preacher normally has to his sermon, one wonders why the doors of the church are not closed and the preacher sent back to the cotton patch.

Money Accusations

Public disrespect for pastors is from the fact that more than a few professed pastors are men unworthy of proper respect. A good many preachers have very bad credit references. In these days of the "new morality" it is not uncommon for a minister to divorce his wife and marry another woman. This is done in spite of the teaching of the Scripture that a bishop is to be **"the husband of one wife"** (I Tim. 3:2). Thus it is that the immorality of a few has brought the whole ministerial profession into disrepute to the man on the street. In many cases a pastor must prove himself to be a man worthy of respect before he can enjoy at least a portion of the ministerial respect due him.

It has been commonly rumored from time immemorial that preachers are out for the money. I do not doubt that there are some hirelings who **"careth not for the sheep"** (John 10:13), but I maintain that they are the exception and not the general rule. Most pastors are **"not greedy of filthy lucre"** (I Tim. 3:3) and have done much to make **"the gospel of Christ without charge"** (I Cor. 9:18). The average income of pastors is about \$25,000 a year. This is lower than any other profession. The man who decides to become a Baptist preacher to get rich quick, is not only a deceived and ignorant person, but a down right fool of the first rank. If the reader feels this is a radical and monstrous statement, I ask him to sit down and name all of the Baptist preachers who got rich preaching the whole counsel of God to Baptist people. Peradventure, the reader may name even one, I will gladly name one hundred Baptist preachers who died broke, and homeless for each rich preacher the reader may name. That there are some rich Baptist preachers I do not deny. But these preachers accumulated their wealth by devoting their time to some other work while making preaching a sideline job.

People think nothing about the governor of the state making \$100,000 a year, or the medical doctor making

\$150,000 a year, or the laborer making \$40,000 a year. But all precautionary measures must be taken to see that the preacher does not get overpaid. Some are more fearful of the pastor being over-paid than his being under-paid. The services performed by the medical doctor who cares for the member's body are well worth what ever he must pay for them, but the services of the spiritual doctor who cares for the churchgoers' soul are to be secured at a very cheap price. Some church members want a minister with the strength of an eagle, the gentleness of a dove, the grace of a swan, the eye of a hawk, the friendliness of a sparrow, the night hours of an owl, the industry of a woodpecker, the attractiveness of a peacock, the tough skin of a gander, and when they get the bird they want him to live on the food of a canary. Pastors are looked upon as charity cases, even though they have spent many hard and expensive years preparing for "the work of the ministry." Some members pay little attention to the words of Christ: **"The labourer is worthy of his hire"** (Luke 10:7). At least a few churchgoers just do not believe I Corinthians 9:14 which reads: **"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live (not just exist or survive) of the gospel."** When it comes to pastoral support, many pastors can ask with Paul: **"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ"** (I Cor. 9:11-12). Baptist preachers have not outstripped Peter of old who had to confess: **"Silver and gold have I none"** (Acts 3:6).

A Short Pastorate

It is apparent that few pastors stay much over two years at any one church. A great deal of the pastor's time is consumed in packing and moving his belongings from one pastorate to another. Such frequent moves are expensive and damaging to the preacher's furniture. His children may be compelled to change public schools at any time during the school term. The itinerant pastor often feels like the wandering Jew to whom the Lord said: **"Shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest"** (Deut. 28:65). His mind often goes to Heb. 13:14 which reads: **"Here have we no continuing city."**

A short pastorate is detrimental to both pastor and church, although few churches and pastors seem to realize this. The strongest churches of this land have been built by long-time pastors because it takes a man a certain length of time to get to know people well enough to be able to help them. Then why are churches no longer known for long pastorates? Why must the pastor be as a cloud carried

about the denominational skies by the unfavorable winds of disgruntled members? It is because multitudes of churches are plagued with a fairly good sized group of egg-headed trouble-makers, die-hards, rule-or-ruin, uncooperative, unyielding, and undedicated church members. This demon-controlled crowd finds it extremely necessary to move the preacher before he discovers their hypocrisy. When the time comes to call a pastor, these people say, "Let's get a man who doesn't know us." But what they really need is a man who knows them, peradventure he does not know them too well to even take the church. The existence of such a group in the churches is the reason why few pastors are ever called upon to return to a former pastorate.

The average church goes through a cycle. The first year of the new pastor's stay is usually pleasant. The second year the Devil begins to work more out in the open as the tares begin to sow **"discord among brethren"** (Prov. 6:19). This group begins to campaign to get the pastor voted out. This group enlarges until they vote the pastor out. The next few months after this there is trouble and crooked politics among the membership which usually results in some members going to some other church. During the time of trying to select a new pastor **"one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos"** (I Cor. 3:4). Then there is strife and division among those who are carnal and walk as men (I Cor. 3). But finally a new pastor is secured and the whole cycle starts over again and **"the latter end is worse with them than the beginning"** (II Pet. 2:20).

Now why does the average church go through such a cycle? Because the pastor becomes lazy? Maybe in some cases, but this is not the general rule. Then what is the real trouble? Usually the people get farther and farther away from the Lord, and they begin to notice the pastor's faults which have been present all along for he is just a man like anybody else. One has well said: "I have a minister. Time was when he was to me a good minister. I pronounced him great. His sermons were wonderful - as long as I liked him. His speech was passing fair - as long as I liked him. He was a clean liver - as long as I liked him. He was a hard worker - as long as I liked him. But my minister offended me, one day. Whether he knew it or not, I do not know. He is just an ordinary one now. Since that day my minister has ceased to be a good minister. His sermons are not so wonderful - since he offended me. His speech is no account - since he offended me. His faults are more prominent - since he offended me. He is not a hard worker - since he offended me. In fact, I am trying to get him voted out - since he offended me." Most churches need a change of congregations, instead of a change of pastors.

Discouragement

Recently I read where a pastor of a Baptist church committed suicide. He jumped out of a third story window of the city hospital. Christian people find it difficult to understand why any minister of the Word would deliberately kill himself. One member, who read this article, asked me if I was surprised to read of such an event. I told him that I was not surprised at this preacher's actions, but that I was surprised that more did not do the same thing. I fear that my member did not understand my answer to his question, for no one but another preacher really knows the constant, nerve-breaking, mental distress which a pastor endures each day of his life. The pastor often finds his soul discouraged because of the way (Num. 21:4) he sees his hopes fail to end in realization - **"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick"** (Prov. 13:12). His flesh has no rest and there are fightings without and fears within (II Cor. 7:5).

The pastor, like his Master, is **"a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"** (Isa. 53:3). His whole life is a series of **"many tears and temptations"** (Acts 20:19). When observing the disobedience of saints and sinners to God's precepts, he feels like repeating the words of David: **"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law"** (Ps. 119:136). The heart's desire and prayer to God of every preacher is that sinners might be converted. He yearns for the salvation of those who see no beauty in Christ that they should desire Him. Even though he ceases **"not to warn every one night and day with tears"** (Acts 20:31), he discovers he is a **"savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life"** (II Cor. 2:16).

The pastor who has not known moments of despondency is a novice. There is not one of God's servants who has not had his moments of despondency and discouragement. When Jezebel threatened Elijah's life, he **"went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die"** (I Kings 19:4). Moses, that great leader of the people of God, once cried: **"I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me... kill me, I pray thee"** (Num. 11:14-15). That great foreign missionary, Jonah, exclaimed: **"O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me"** (Jonah 4:3). The greatest souls that ever trod the highway of God's will have never escaped their moments of discouragement. (Edited CRC, 2010).



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that because salvation is by grace through faith, that the law has no implications for children of God. Others teach that salvation is kept by the keeping of the law on the part of the children of God. Neither is correct. The Scriptures are clear in that righteousness does not come by the keeping of the law, and that all sin is the transgression of the law (Gal. 2:16, 21). Righteousness comes through the One who fulfilled the law, Jesus Christ the Righteous. Jesus indicated that righteousness was necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven. **“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”** The scribes and Pharisees were the law-keepers of that hour. They lived more strictly according to the law than anyone else in the Jews’ religion. Nevertheless, by their righteousness they could not enter the kingdom of heaven; and by your righteousness, neither can you enter the kingdom of heaven. You require a greater righteousness than you have and than you can produce by your own seeming good works (Gal. 3:10, 11). Only by faith in Jesus Christ can you **“enter into the kingdom of heaven.”**

Jesus clearly indicates that the law should not be destroyed: nor was His intention or purpose to destroy the law, but rather to fulfill it. The law consisted of both the moral commandments of God and the ceremonial ordinances. Jesus fulfilled the moral commandments of the law in perfect obedience. He fulfilled the ceremonial sacrifices and observances by being their antitype (Heb. 10:1-14). Jesus fulfilled the moral law in His sinless life. He fulfilled the ceremonial law in His death for sin. **“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”** God did not set aside the law in order to save sinners; much rather, He fulfilled the law in the Saviour of sinners, Jesus Christ. God is not unrighteous in saving sinners; much rather, He declares His righteousness in saving sinners through the sin-atoning, sin-cleansing sacrifice of the sinless One, Jesus Christ.

We find that there is a three-fold righteousness with respect to those who are of **“the kingdom of heaven,”** those who are born again and made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We see that there is first of all an imputed righteousness. When something is imputed, then it is charged to a person, attributed to that person, and he or she is credited with that thing. Under the law of God, all human beings have sin imputed to them (Rom. 5:13; 3:19). The law declares the glorious righteousness

of God; and we find where the human race is concerned that **“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23). **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”** (Rom. 5:12). Sin is charged to all men, women, boys, and girls under the law of God. The law makes manifest the sinful nature, inclination, thoughts, and deeds of all people outside of Jesus Christ. Yet the Bible declares that God imputes righteousness to those who are in Christ Jesus by faith (Ps. 32:1, 2; Rom. 4:3-8). There is an imputation of righteousness to every one who believes on Jesus Christ. That is, the righteousness of Christ is credited to them. His righteousness is said by God to be their righteousness. Their guilt was credited to Jesus upon the cross by God, and His righteousness is credited to them by God (Rom. 8:33; II Cor. 5:18-21).

The second aspect of righteousness which is had by those who are of **“the kingdom of heaven”** is that of imparted righteousness. This means that God not only accounts them to be righteous, but that He actually makes them righteous (II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1-16). Those who are saved have not only a new standing, or position, but also a new nature which is implanted in them by the Holy Spirit in the new birth. **“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”** (John 3:6). **“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”** (John 6:63). Jesus not only died in order to put away sins legally, but He gives life to His people so that they may live unto righteousness (Rom. 6:17, 18). Both the law of God and the grace of God operate under one similar heading, which is righteousness. The law of God describes righteousness to the sinner and demands righteousness from the sinner. The grace of God gives righteousness to one who was a sinner and makes that person righteous. God has given you who are saved a new nature that is inclined, enabled, and activated to righteousness. He did not give you this new nature

BY the law, but BY faith through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Under the law, you were at enmity with God and that enmity was demonstrated. Under grace, God makes you to be reconciled to Him and that reconciliation is demonstrated in a new way of life.

The third aspect of righteousness which children of God have is demonstrated righteousness. This is the righteousness which we who are saved are to have before men. With imparted righteousness, “the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us” (Rom. 8:4). With demonstrated, or manifested, righteousness, others see God’s children living righteously. On the one hand, we are justified in the sight of God. On the other hand, we are justified in the sight of men (Rom. 13:8-10). This is the justification by works of which James writes in his epistle (James 2:14-18). This is an outward manifestation of the first two aspects of righteousness which are experienced inwardly, that of having righteousness imputed by God, and that of having righteousness implanted by God (I Pet. 2:12; 3:14-16). Law-keeping is not the emphasis of demonstrating righteousness; but the same kind of righteousness described by and declared in the law is demonstrated when a child of God walks according to the new nature which is implanted in the new birth (Rom. 3:31).

The religious persons of Jesus’ day went about putting on a display of “righteousness” so-called in order to obtain a righteous standing with God. They were trying to use the law to obtain righteousness, when the law demonstrates the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of man. Salvation is not by the law, neither are we kept saved by keeping the law. The nature that is implanted in a child of God in regeneration will manifest a righteousness that is in agreement with the law of God. The Holy Spirit that indwells a believer will direct and teach him or her to live in a manner that is in agreement with the principles of the law of God. So far from being any longer at enmity with the law of God, a child of God manifests that he or she desires to be under the moral government of God.

“I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22).



Natural Religion

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others in any way. Historic Christianity has always claimed to be a revealed religion. It has claimed to be exclusively the religion revealed by God Himself. Our great concern is this: modern Christendom has been permeated and therefore greatly affected by the basic concepts of this natural religion. This pollution of Christianity by natural religion has changed the Gospel from that originally preached and taught by the apostles into something quite opposite. Having observed the existence of natural religion – religion that exists apart from the written Word of God, the Bible, let us consider the essential nature of it. We are not concerned with the differences that exist between varying groups of peoples and their religious beliefs and practices, but with that cord that runs throughout and binds all natural religions together..

Many people the world over think to please Allah by making pilgrimages and mutilating their bodies as some faithful Moslems do. (I am careful to use their name, Allah, because the god of the Moslems is not the God of the Bible for many reasons, but that is another subject and one we cannot consider in this short piece. In spite of this, liberal media in the U.S. and around the world have used the word “God” in speaking of “Allah” and had great success in convincing the masses that these are one and the same person.) Some American Indians, like the Navajo, may kill a sheep and drain the animal’s blood into the ground as a kind of sacrifice, seeking to please their deity. Others may, in the words of a Tlingit Indian in the North of Canada, “seek to placate God” by leaving food out in the forest or by sacrificing tobacco upon a fire or upon a lake or river. Among the Iroquois of certain northern States and Canada, a white dog is sacrificed by burning once each year for the sins of the people. Others, like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) insist that in certain cases God can only be placated by the shedding of the blood of the guilty party. Hence, in the Mormon-founded state of Utah one option left to condemned persons is the firing squad. In this way those condemned Mormons who think to redeem themselves by placating God with the shedding of their own blood have the opportunity to do so.

Many other religious ideas and practices could be named but the aforementioned ones are enough to show that the common thread among all of them is the notion that a man or woman,

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STATION	TIME	DIAL	WATTS
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DXDS, Digos City, Philippines...	Sunday 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.	1161 Khz.....	1,000 AM

Natural Religion

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by doing something, by making some kind of sacrifice, can appease or placate an angry god. This idea is based upon the knowledge or feeling that there is a higher power or god of some kind and also that there exists in their own hearts and lives such a thing as sin and that they are guilty of incurring the displeasure of their god by their behavior. How can we account for such convictions among all the varied people of the world? I believe that God has given humankind three lights. The first light is the light of nature. As thoughtful and candid men observe the natural world around them it is evident that behind the existence of such intricate systems in plants, animals and the universe, there must have been an intelligent being. That this being was both wise and powerful in order to bring about such order cannot be doubted by the unprejudiced mind that looks at creation. The second light is the light of conscience. Conscience is that capacity in man to sense right and wrong. It is the awareness of the existence of good and evil in the world and in the personal life of ones own self. Because conscience can be seared as with a hot iron and thus desensitized it may not be relied upon as inerrant. However, there is a third and greatest light, the Word of God in written form. Revealed from God, it tells us about God, about our condition as sinners and about the way of salvation. This third light is infallible, inerrant, verbally inspired, preserved and designed by God to make known to us all that we need to know to be saved and to live a life pleasing to God.

Natural religion, then, is the religion of an incomplete revelation. It is based upon the inferior lights of nature and of conscience. And, as we have pointed out, the commonality among all forms of natural religion is this idea: man can and must do something to appease or placate God. And so we have set forth the origin of this natural religion. It is based upon nature or the observance of God's creation. God's creation reveals only a little about the character and person of God other than to set forth His wisdom and power. And it is based upon conscience, which while bringing about an awareness of sin and offense to the Creator, is unreliable and tells mankind nothing about the plan of God to save His people from their sins. In summary we may say that natural religion is the religion of the natural man apart from any idea of God's provision for guilty sinners. It admits the existence of a deity or deities. It admits the fact that man has by evil doing offended and is therefore guilty and subject to vengeance and punishment, but is lacking of any clear teaching of salvation by free grace.

As historic Christians (Baptists) we are rightly concerned about the inroads made by natural religion among Christendom. We submit that all the groups and denominations of Christendom have embraced or at the very least been influenced by the basic tenets of natural religion. Even among the Baptists are many to be found whose religion is in reality a form of this natural religion, although of course the claim is made that their religion is "old time" and "biblical." Since the writer is a Baptist "from the tip of his toes to the top of his head," let us confine the rest of our remarks to the Baptists. What we shall say about them is readily applicable to the various denominations and sects among what we choose to call Christendom. We use this term because we are not ready to admit that such polluted religious beliefs and practices – such "Christianized natural religion" can rightly be called Christianity in any historical and biblical sense. We dare say this because natural religion, whether "Christianized" or not, is based upon a fundamental concept that is contrary to the Word of God.

What is this fundamental concept that is contrary to the Word of God? It is, simply stated, this: natural religion of all sorts (Christianized included) insists that man can appease or placate God by doing something. Essentially then, all forms of natural religion are based upon the idea that salvation or forgiveness from God is based upon works. Various forms of natural religion insist upon differing ideas as to just what must be done to please God, but all insist that the way to enter into God's "good graces" is by doing something pleasing to him. Among the Baptists it has become accepted doctrine by the majority that "going forward" and "praying the sinner's prayer" or "making a decision for Christ" or some other such thing is the act whereby one initiates toward himself God's pleasure and thus his acceptance by God – in short, his salvation.

Our appeal is not to human reason for that is the source of natural religious ideas among the Baptists. Our appeal is to the Word of God. What saith the Scripture? Let us first look at Romans 8:7-9. There we read: **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."** (Emphasis added.) The Holy Spirit, writing through our Brother Paul makes it clear that there are two kinds of people. Those two kinds of people are **"they that are in the flesh"** and they that are **"in the Spirit."** (Incidentally, here also perishes the idea that being **"in the Spirit"** has reference to some kind of hyper-

emotional state as is believed by some called Pentecostals and Charismatics.) Paul writes that every true child of God, having been regenerated by and indwelt by the Holy Spirit is **"in the Spirit"** and **"not in the flesh."** But the concept we want to point out in this very practical passage is this: **"they that are in the flesh cannot please God."** Simply stated, there is nothing that an unsaved person can do to please God. There is nothing that an unsaved person can do to appease or placate God.

This means, then, that when an unsaved person "goes forward" at the end of a religious service in a Baptist Church (I said I would stick with the Baptists!) that person is not doing something that is pleasing to God. When an unsaved person makes a "decision for Christ" or "prays the sinner's prayer" neither of those acts is pleasing to God. That idea may be shocking to some readers, but it is the plain teaching of the Word of God! (Incidentally, where in the Bible did you ever read of any apostle or other New Testament preacher inviting people to "walk the aisle" or "make a decision for Christ" or "pray the sinner's prayer?")

I do not mean to say that it is wrong to pray. Born again (regenerated) children of God do pray! They are continually calling upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13, I Cor. 1:2). I am saying that unregenerate people act according to their hearts and that their hearts are wicked and unknowable. Therefore that which issues forth from their hearts is evil. Want proof? The following Scriptures need little comment. They prove that the heart of the natural (unregenerate) human is evil and evil things spring from it. **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"** (Jer. 17:9). **"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"** (Matt. 12:34). **"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"** (Matt. 15:18-19).

Natural religion, its ideas and practices come from the unregenerate heart of natural men and women – from the heart of those **"that are in the flesh."** These folk look at creation and sense that some things are right and wrong from their consciences and develop their religious ideas from these two lights. Someone says, "But what about those ideas that natural men and women get from the Bible?" "Don't those Baptists whom you say are polluted with natural religion use the Bible too?" Again we hurry to the Bible for our answer where we seek to let God's Word say what It says! Speaking of knowing (understanding in a spiritually profitable way) the revealed Word of

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God, we read: **"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (I Cor. 2:14). Two reasons are given that the natural (unregenerate) man does not "receive" (believe in a spiritually profitable way) the Bible. First of all, he thinks the things taught in the Word of God are foolishness. They are foreign to his natural ideas for he has ingrained in his thinking the idea that he can do something and "get in good" with God. Some Baptists do this! They omit the reading and study of certain portions of the Bible, especially of the New Testament because these portions don't "fit" with their preconceived ("natural") ideas. The idea that unsaved humans cannot do anything to please God is totally foreign to their **"natural"** religious ideas and so they think the Scriptures that teach against this idea are foolish. There must be another plausible interpretation – one that fits in with their **"natural"** ideas. But these 3 verses quoted above go much further. They say that **"natural"** (unregenerate) men are unable to know (in a spiritually profitable way) the things revealed in the Bible because they are **"spiritually discerned."** The unregenerate man – the **"natural"** man does not have the Spirit of God. Because of this he cannot – he does not have the ability – to profitably know what the Bible teaches.

And so many – dare I write "most" – Baptists insist that lost men and women must "pray the sinner's prayer," etc., so that God will look favorably down upon

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them and regenerate them. They twist the idea of the new birth (regeneration) and make it the result of an act of the will of a human being. This in spite of the clear teaching of the Bible which says in John 1:13: **“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”** Read the context! The preceding verse (John 1:12) speaks of those who during Jesus’ earthly ministry welcomed (“received”) Him. Verse 13, the verse last quoted tells us why some people received Christ. It was because they were **“born,”** i.e. born again. And it clearly says they were born **“of God”** – not of any kind of action of any thing that might be called **“the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.”** That is clear enough if you will have it!

But if the Bible does not command that people “pray the sinner’s prayer; etc., what does it command? First of all God commands **“...all men every where to repent”** (Acts 17:30). This is an obligation upon all men! And at the same time, the Bible says that God grants or gives or works repentance in individuals (Acts 11:18). Unlike natural religion, the religion of the Bible is one of free and sovereignly bestowed grace. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Eph. 2:8, 9). In spite of this passage and others like it, the influence of natural religion among many Baptists causes them to deny that faith is a gift. It causes them to insist that repentance and faith are not works, but at the same time they are things that must be done by lost people in order for them to qualify for God’s grace. If that is not salvation by works, I don’t understand the English language! Do not let the double talk fool you!

In conclusion it may be said that “natural religion” has made great inroads among the Baptists of our day. Long years ago it was not the case, but top-water studying and top-water preaching never plumb the depths of truth. As one country preacher said it, “Preacher-ettes preach sermon-ettes and produce Christian-ettes.” Oh reader! Hear the wise words of the Proverbs (16:25), **“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”** Natural religion, I would hasten to add, brings damnation and eternal death. God is not pleased with that religion that attempts to please Him and yet ignores and despises His Son, God’s gift, whose one sacrifice of Himself was enough. The Bible says of Christ, **“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”** Christ’s one sacrifice of Himself pleased God. God

does not need to be placated because He has already been placated by the death of His Son, Jesus Christ on behalf of lost sinners.

Cast away your natural religion and all its ideas! Look to the lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who was the acceptable sacrifice. He was and still is, in the words of John the Baptist, **“the Lamb of God”** (John 1:36). You cannot placate God because you, as a lost sinner cannot please God. But you do not need to placate God – you do not need to appease Him! The Lord Jesus Christ died to placate God and God accepted His bloody death and proved it in that He resurrected Him and seated Him at His own right hand. What do you think to add to that with your natural religion?



The Myth of Old

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convert to some religion or religious sect, or to some particular opinion, system or party. Thus a Gentile converted to Judaism is a proselyte”]. John’s baptism was not the so called proselyte washing that many Protestants attempt to assert that it was; merely a carry-over Levitical ordinance that Jesus partook of then changed. There is no scriptural ground whatsoever, that there even was such a Levitical proselyte baptism practiced by the Jews in the New Testament during John’s ministry and there is nothing in the Old Testament that even hints to

that assertion. I personally believe that Old Testament proselyte baptism is a myth used and oft repeated by baby baptizers to attempt to prove infant baptism and the universal church while at the same time, discredit John’s baptism and the truth of the Lord’s church. There have been numerous times I have been confronted by protestants, who while defending their own unscriptural baptism, casts off John’s baptism as being proselyte baptism; yet proof of that assertion is never given or even offered. There is no question that the proselyte baptism came into practice, but the key is to know when the Jews started proselyte baptism. History tells the story of the beginnings of Jewish proselyte washings; but more importantly the silence of Scripture shows that Jewish proselyte baptism started well after the Bible was penned.

Source after source repeats the same line about Old Testament baptism as a ceremonial immersion for Gentiles who believed during Old Testament times in support of false notions about baptism, without giving historical or scriptural proof. Men will dismiss John’s baptism as Old Testament and give a line about Jewish proselyte baptism, then move on without scriptural or historical evidence. Was John’s baptism Old Testament ceremony? Well, if so, prove it. Let’s first consider whether or not baptism was a Levitical ceremony for converts. There simply is no proselyte baptism in the Old Testament. Exodus 12:48-49, **“And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and**

will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.” We see here the Gentile convert, but what we do not see is baptism. The idea offered, by those who dismiss John’s baptism, is you take that passage along with Exodus 19:10, **“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes”** and PRESTO-proselyte baptism. This is the best Old Testament answer to prove proselyte baptism. There is simply no scriptural basis.

The first accounts of proselyte washing are found in the Babylonian Talmud, written in the 5th century. The custom, for lack of scriptural evidence, was inserted into the tradition. The grounds that are offered for justification of a proselyte washing of the Jews seem to come from ceremonial cleansings and circumcisions. The proselyte had to be circumcised and then had to be purified according to the Jews, not Scripture. Following tradition, the Jews had to offer sacrifices, but after the temple was destroyed, purification became the last yoke of the convert since they could not offer sacrifice. However, this was not limited to the Gentile convert because the Jewish boy ALSO had to be purified by washing because circumcision made one unclean according to their tradition. The purification or the washing was on account of the circumcison, not converting to Judaism. Historically, there is no basis for Jewish proselyte baptism prior to the fourth or fifth century. There are, of course, rules and regulations that accompany the ritual for the Jews after the 4th and 5th century, even down to how many gallons of water were to be used, but prior, history is silent. C.H. Toy wrote a very good paper published in the Baptist Quarterly [volume 6, 1872] on proselyte baptism in which he said:

“There is positively no evidence of the existence of proselyte baptism before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the negative evidence against it up to that time, is as decisive as negative evidence can be; that there are no clear proofs of its existence before the fifth century, while it is possible that it may have been gradually coming into use for a century or two that there are reasons why the Jews should have been led to adopt some such ceremony after the destruction of Jerusalem; that the form is such as their national observances would suggest; and the way in which this rite is mentioned, is just what we should expect on the supposition

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that it came into use first about the third century, gradually gaining ground till, in the fifth century, it was firmly established." I believe this is the ultimate in grasping of straws and it may have started, in part, to explain away John's baptism to the Jewish converts and Jews who were confronted with the New Testament.

Toy once more says:

"If the custom of proselyte baptism arose in the inter-biblical times, we should expect to find some reference to it at least in the apocryphal books, and in Josephus and Philo. ...It is difficult to see how a new (or indeed and old) ceremony of initiation could be passed over entirely without mention."

This lack of evidence becomes even more powerful when we consider those histories detail converts to Judaism, to which baptism is silent. Toy again:

"Josephus mentions four prominent cases [in his history] of proselyting that one of these is given at great length, with the debates on the ceremony required, by persons who would gladly have found some other ceremony than circumcision; that he writes minutely on the customs of the Jews; and yet throughout his voluminous writings, which are very full on our Lord's time, there is not a single reference or allusion to a proselyte immersion. We seem to be not passing the bounds of moderation, then, when we say that his silence amounts very nearly to demonstration of our position."

John A. Broadus in A Commentary on Matthew, as well as the work of John Gill on the history of this Jewish practice, tried and failed to find any historical record of Jewish proselyte baptism prior to the fourth or fifth centuries. In my search, I looked to churches that hold to this claim but did not support biblical or historical record to back up the claim. In regards to history, the earliest Christian writers are silent on the subject of Jewish proselyte baptism, which speaks volumes as they dealt much with the Jews in apologetic writings. Considering the false Jewish teachers who tried to pull Gentiles and Jews away from Christ back into the ceremony in regards to circumcision, why was there never an attempt to turn baptism into a similar work, or why was there never misunderstanding of baptism in the early days of the church?

"It is hardly conceivable that proselyte baptism, if it were known to them, should not appear sometimes in their writings. Yet no mention of the rite has been

produced." C.H. Toy.

The Pharisees were full of self-righteous hypocrisy in their strict keeping of the ceremonial law. Their counterparts, the Sadducees, were religious liberals who did not believe in the supernatural, and interestingly enough, many were priests. Both groups hated Christ and both groups relied on outward works for their justification. When John was baptizing, both groups then came to the baptism. If something new was going on, they wanted to know what it was. I supposed the final nail in the coffin of the Old Testament proselyte baptism is, if it was proselyte washing, why did they want it? Luke 3:7, **Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? We know from Matthew 3:7 these baptism seeking snakes were none other than the Pharisees. Here the pious religious leaders came to take part of the religious ceremony. If this was proselyte baptism, why would they want to be baptized?**

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" (John 1:19). "And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?" (John 1:25). First, we see that the Jews sent priests and Levites to find out who he was, and the Pharisees asked him "why do you baptize if you are not Christ, Elijah or that prophet?" Had John been performing a common Jewish ritual, why so many questions? It was recognizable to the Scribes and Pharisees that this was of Divine origin and their questioning tells us as much. Had this been a Jewish practice, the question would not have been "why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ" but the question would have been "why baptizest thou then these Jews as if they were Gentiles?" Why would the Pharisees ask who he was and what was the purpose of his baptizing? If John's baptism was an Old Testament practice, when Jesus asked in Luke 20:4, **"The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?" most assuredly the chief priests and scribes would have asserted Moses and the Old Testament, but by remaining silent, they loudly declare where and when baptism came into practice; with John. They would have said "our fathers have baptized since the wilderness." The Scribes and Pharisees were always quick to mention "our fathers" or Moses in debate with Jesus, why not here if they had a case and a claim to baptism? Are we to believe that even though circumcision was a major point of contention in the churches between Jews and Gentiles and false teachers, the baptism that followed was never questioned or pointed out to be separate from circumcision? With all the debate and division that circumcision**

was causing, had baptism flowed from circumcision, there would have been SOME mention of how they differ and why they differ and why it was changed to baptism. The Pharisees never questioned Jesus for having a proselyte baptism or His disciples for baptizing Jews already circumcised and never questioned why they baptized both men and women?

"Why baptizest thou then?" Why did John baptize? If this was proselyte baptism, why did the Jews want to be baptized? If this was a common Jewish custom, why did the Pharisees ask why he was baptizing? If this was common Jewish custom, why did the Pharisees marvel that he was baptizing, not being Elijah or the Messiah? The fact is this was something new John was doing and everyone knew it. The Jews knew this, realized it and wanted to be part of it since they perceived that John was a prophet. They saw another outward ceremony that they could be a part of, but the ax was struck to the root of their outward legalism. The biblical narrative shows without a shadow of doubt that what John was doing was a new and unique practice, something that God sent him to do. The whole idea of Old Testament proselyte baptism is a myth that is propagated and repeated as if it were a well documented fact of biblical history. Only one problem; Old Testament proselyte baptism is not found in the OLD TESTAMENT, or in the first centuries among any practicing Jews. You have to deal with John's ministry, but only the Baptists can faithfully and scripturally.



A Dose of Reality

"Common Sense Comments"

by Joseph Harris

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



God Bless Rednecks

I can't help but have a soft spot in my heart for rednecks, especially southern rednecks. I once saw a woman at an intersection with car problems. She was stranded beneath the red light. This guy behind her jumped from his TRUCK (all true, card carrying rednecks drive trucks) to help her. I parked and also got out and helped the guy push the frustrated woman's car to safety. Now this guy's appearance told me he was king of the rednecks, or at least their poster child. Cap, MOM tattoo, boots and his basic demeanor screamed "redneck and proud of it."

When I got back in my van (out

of breath and proud of it) my wife asked why rednecks are usually more than willing to help someone in distress. Good question. I thought a moment and then mused that maybe it was because they were just down to earth people, with still enough humility to feel their fellow man's pain and relate to the down-and-out. Being down to earth means they can afford to act on the instinct of common sense and help ease the load of someone who is burdened.

While I am bestowing laurels on rednecks, don't get the wrong idea. I do not condone, but deplore the beer drinking, cussing, vulgar, etc, etc, Jeff Foxworthy image that comes to mind when the word "redneck" is mentioned. Yet, most of those type rednecks will still give a hand in a jam. When I say redneck, I am speaking more of the guy with a Southern mentality who still believes the words "Ma'am" and "Sir" have merit, the guy who holds a door open for a lady, the guy who begins to get teary eyed at the mention of Mother and won't take kindly to defacing her memory. This redneck of which I speak is somewhat mannerly, often tactless, yet never minces words, and he still believes in valor, chivalry, and integrity. He is the one who will take his hat off during prayer, when the Star Spangled Banner is played or when a funeral procession passes. These anachronisms are, thankfully, still found in the South.

It is a custom in South Mississippi to pull off the road and stop your vehicle when a funeral procession passes. Once when I was in a funeral procession, I observed one redneck pull his truck over, take his hat off and hold it over his heart. Though he did not know the deceased, he did this act with all sincerity and reverence.....and with a plug of tobacco in his mouth that would choke a mule. Another time, I saw a sign painter on a billboard stop his work and stand at attention while the deceased was brought out of a church building and loaded into the hearse. After the hearse was out of sight, he continued with his painting. I can't help but almost get choked up when these things happen. And they usually happen with rednecks.

I close with a quote from Dr. Carl Hurley, "You can tell I'm a redneck. I drive a Cadillac.....with a gun rack in the back. You just never can tell when you may come across a brand new road sign. Last night I went out and got my limit.....2 "Caution, Rocks Falling" and 1 "Slippery When Wet", but they didn't dress out too good."

"Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool" (Pro. 19:1).





From the Pen of a Country Preacher

Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 - 2002)



The Doctrine of Sanctification

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (I Thess. 4:3).

Perhaps no doctrine of the Scripture is so poorly understood in this age as sanctification. The body of Scripture which deals with this topic is more extensive than it generally appears to those who read only the English version of the Bible. The same root Hebrew and Greek words which are translated “sanctify,” in its various forms, are also translated by two other English words, “holy” and “saint,” in their various forms. When all of these verses are added to the study of sanctification the field of investigation becomes exceedingly broad.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM

The root idea of sanctification is that some thing or some person is set apart from the sinful and secular to the spiritual and sacred. Genesis 2:3 says: **“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”** Here we see the seventh day is set apart from all other days and is dedicated to God. Exodus 29:37 declares: **“Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy.”** During a seven-day period of time an atonement was to be made for the altar that it might be sanctified or rendered ceremonially holy.

The word “sanctify” has two prominent meanings. First, it means to separate from evil. I Thessalonians 4:3 reveals it means to separate from the sin of fornication. This is the negative aspect of the doctrine. The other prominent meaning is to make holy. **“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”** (I Pet. 1:15-16). This is the positive aspect of the doctrine.

Theologians have given us various definitions of what is meant by the doctrine of sanctification. A. H. Strong says it “is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened” (Systematic Theology p. 869). L. Berkhof says it is “that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Spirit, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God,

and enables him to perform good works” (Systematic Theology, p. 532). Question 35 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism says it “is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”

A very comprehensive definition is given in the Second London Baptist Confession of 1677. Chapter XIII, Articles 1-3 read: “They who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, have a new heart, and a new Spirit created in them, through the virtue of Christ’s death, and resurrection are also farther sanctified, really, and personally, through the same virtue by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof, are more and more weakened, and mortified; and they more and more quickened, and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life; there abides still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence arises a continual, and irreconcilable war; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail; yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ the regenerate part does overcome; and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, pressing after an heavenly life, in evangelical obedience to all the commands which Christ as Head and King, in His Word has prescribed to them” (See Baptist Confessions of Faith by Lumpkin, pp. 267-268).

ITS THREE STAGES

In Holy Scripture sanctification may be viewed as instantaneous, progressive, and complete. The first stage is instantaneous and is contemporaneous with conversion. In I Corinthians 1:2 it is written: **“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints. . .”** Again speaking to the Corinthian church Paul said to them: **“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”** (I Cor. 6:11). It can

be seen from such verses that at the very moment a person is converted he is also sanctified.

Every converted soul is separated from sin and dedicated to God. This is the reason that all believers in the New Testament are called saints (Acts 9:13; I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 1:7; 16:2; Eph. 2:19; 3:8; 5:3; Col. 1:12; I Tim. 5:10; Jude 3; Rev. 5:8; 8:3-4). Sainthood is not something which the church confers on a person after he is dead. Rather, it is the condition of every person who is truly converted unto Christ.

There are two aspects of this initial stage of sanctification. First, positionally we are sanctified by the offering of the body and blood of Jesus Christ: **“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”** (Heb. 10:10, 14; cf. I Cor. 1:30). In this sense the believer is instantaneously and perfectly sanctified once for all time. We are **“perfected for ever”** as to our position in Christ our covenant Head.

Second, there is the beginning of practical sanctification. Because of the new nature received in regeneration there is a change in our desires and purposes that results in a change of conduct. The believer **“walks in newness of life”** (Rom. 6:4).

The second stage of sanctification is the progressive and is contemporaneous with the believer’s life on earth. The sanctified person walks closer and closer to God and strives more and more to please God (I Thess. 4:1,9-10). He must **“go on unto perfection”** (Heb. 6:1) and perfect **“holiness in the fear of God”** (II Cor. 7:1). The operation of the Spirit in him causes him to crucify sin and live more and more Christlike.

The third stage of sanctification is complete and is contemporaneous with the coming of Christ. **“To the end he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints”** (I Thess. 3:13). When Christ comes and changes our vile bodies and makes them like His own glorious body, we will be entire, wanting nothing, like Christ in all things. We will then be completely freed from sin and perfected in holiness. Oh, to stand before the throne of His glory clothed with robes of spotless white, emblems of immaculate moral purity!

SANCTIFICATION AND REGENERATION

Sanctification involves holiness of heart which leads to holiness of life. Regeneration is the beginning of holiness in the soul, for it creates a new man in the heart (Eph. 4:24). Regeneration implants the seed of holiness in the heart, and sanctification is the growth of this seed. A Divine operation upon the regenerated

man causes him to strengthen and develop this holy disposition which he received in regeneration. Regeneration and sanctification may be regarded as two parts of the moral process by which depraved man is restored to the image of God.

Regeneration is a necessary antecedent to the work of sanctification. A new nature must be imparted to a man which will cause him to seek after holiness and struggle toward it until it is obtained. Sanctification occurs only in those who have been regenerated and to whom a new heart and a new spirit have been given (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Regeneration is distinguished from sanctification as growth is from birth. Regeneration gives spiritual life, sanctification gives spiritual growth. Regeneration brings into being a spiritual babe in Christ (I Cor. 3:1), possessed of all the parts of a **“new man”** (Eph. 4:24), but needing spiritual diet (I Pet. 2:2), exercise (Heb. 5:13-14), strength (Eph. 3:16) and development (II Pet. 3:18). In regeneration this **“new creature”** (II Cor. 5:17) comes into being and exhibits all the conditions of a babe. Sanctification nourishes the babe in its growth to spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:13-14).

SANCTIFICATION AND JUSTIFICATION

Though justification and sanctification are absolutely inseparable, yet these two blessings are quite distinct. In sanctification God works by His Spirit in us the righteousness of Jesus Christ which He imputed to us in justification. Justification does not effect a change in our inner being, and therefore needs sanctification as its completion. Justification is judicial; sanctification is moral. Justification is an act; sanctification is a work. Justification is once for all, sanctification is gradual. Justification causes a change of state; sanctification causes a change of character. In justification sins are pardoned, in sanctification sins are subdued. Justification is equal in all; sanctification is unequal. Justification is from guilt; sanctification is from defilement. In justification Christ’s righteousness is imputed; in sanctification Christ’s righteousness is imparted. Justification gives us a title to Heaven; sanctification gives us a fitness for Heaven.

Justification cannot be separated completely from sanctification. The same person which God justifies He also sanctifies. Sanctification is the evidence of justification. Some try to separate these two doctrines completely. They talk about “carnal” and “spiritual” Christians. The carnal Christian is one who is controlled by the old nature. The spiritual Christian is one controlled by the new nature. According to this theory, one can be a carnal Christian and never forsake sin. He may go on living,

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Sanctification

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fornicating, blaspheming, and murdering for a lifetime and yet be eternally secure in Christ. This is nothing short of antinomian heresy, for it teaches that sin may win over grace.

This heresy also contends that a person may be justified and never be sanctified. Certainly sanctification is not the meritorious ground of justification, but there is a relation between the two. They are an indissoluble bond. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit begins to effect a real and positive change in the human nature of a regenerated and justified man. This operation of grace in the believer enables him to grow spiritually. According to the Bible, the new man overcomes the old man (Eph. 4:22-24). Colossians 3:9-10 says: **“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”** Galatians 5:24 declares: **“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”**

Those who dare to separate justification and sanctification claim to believe in spiritual growth, but it would seem to me that they do so without just cause. They say the old carnal nature cannot be changed, and that it may even become worse over the years. The divine nature is not subject to growth as it is already perfect. Then what grows? Is there some sort of third nature? No! Holy Scripture teaches that a truly justified man daily dies more and more to sin and lives more and more to righteousness (II Cor. 4:10-12). The corrupt nature by a miracle of grace is changed for the better (Prov. 4:18; I Cor. 6:9-11; II Cor. 3:18; Rom. 6:12-22).

Consider especially Romans 6 on the great change. Paul tells them **“ye were the servants of sin”** (v. 20). He also says: **“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness”** (v. 18). Then he adds in verse 22: **“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”** Where does Paul speak of those made free from sin who are still servants of sin? Will some one quote me the verse which says such? The Roman Christians were justified when they were freed from sin, and they were sanctified when they became servants of God.

A SUPERNATURAL WORK

It is wrong to make sanctification merely the drawing out of the living principle infused in regeneration by mere external means. Man without Divine help cannot sanctify himself any more than he can save himself. Sanctification is a divine operation upon the soul

whereby the holy disposition imparted at regeneration is strengthened and caused to grow and improve. God must sanctify our **“whole spirit and soul and body”** (I Thess. 5:23).

God effects this work of sanctification through the instrumentality of man as a rational being. In Philippians 2:12-13 we are commanded: **“... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”** God is pleased to allow man to cooperate with Him in this great work. We could not do the work without His help, and while He could do the work of sanctification without us He does not.

Man is required to work with God. This is seen from a number of things. First, man is warned to avoid temptations (Rom. 12:9, 16-17; I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:16-23). This implies that man is active in avoiding the temptations of life. Second, the Bible is filled with exhortation to holy living (Micah 6:8; John 15:2, 8, 16; Rom. 8:12-13; 12:1-2, 17; Gal. 6:7-8, 15). Such verses indicate the believer must use the means of grace for his spiritual improvement.

THE NATURE OF IT

The Scriptures represent sanctification as consisting of two parts. First, there is the crucifixion of sin or the old man. **“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”** (Rom. 6:6; cf. 6:13). Galatians 5:24 says: **“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”** Colossians 3:5 commands: **“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth. . .”** (cf. I Pet. 2:11). Romans 13:14 commands: **“... make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”** There is in the sanctified person an earnest and a constant effort to put sin in the flesh to death. A war of extermination is waged against every sin. Temptations must be resisted.

The death of crucifixion was a lingering death, and so is the crucifixion of sin. Christian soldiers fight sin from youth to old age. What a battle it is! The holy disposition given us in regeneration calls us to a holy war against sin in all its forms. Sin must be robbed of its power and displaced from its throne. As Christian soldiers we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies that we should obey it in the lusts thereof (Rom. 6:12).

Second, there is growth and improvement of the Christian graces. The most prominent of these are faith, hope, and love (I Cor. 13:13). Faith is capable of growth, for II Thessalonians 1:3 says: **“... your faith groweth exceedingly. . .”** As faith grows, the work of sanctification advances. As faith increases (Acts 15:9) the heart becomes purer and less and less accessible to the influence of the world. This process goes on until faith

overcomes the world (I John 5:4-5).

Hope may be increased as well as faith. Romans 15:13 declares: **“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”** This verse reveals that Christians not only possess hope, but that they may abound in hope. This must be so, for hope springs from faith (Heb. 11:1). The hope of a blissful immortality is a great influence on a Christian. Such hope has a sanctifying tendency: **“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure”** (I John 3:3). The hope of seeing Christ and being like Him causes us to strive to be like Him on earth.

Love can be increased: **“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another. . .”** (I Thess. 3:12). If Christian love to men can increase, then surely love to God can increase. God is love, and the more of love there is in His people the greater their moral likeness to Him. I John 4:16 says: **“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”** If those who dwell in love dwell in God, then love is the element in which sanctification takes place. An increase of love is an increase of sanctification.

Sanctification effects the whole man. When the heart is changed the whole man is changed: **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”** (II Cor. 5:17). Sanctification effects the spirit, soul and body (I Thess. 5:23; I Cor. 6:15, 20). II Corinthians 7:1 declares: **“Having therefore these promises, dearly**

beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

THE AUTHOR OF IT

Sanctification is sometimes attributed to God without reference to any distinction of persons (I Thess. 4:3; 5:23). At times it is ascribed to God the Father. Jude 1:1 speaks of “sanctified by God the Father” (cf. John 17:17; Heb. 13:21). At other times it is ascribed to Christ: **“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works”** (Titus 2:14; cf. Eph. 5:26; I Cor. 1:30; Heb. 2:11; 10:10).

Commonly in the Bible sanctification is ascribed to the Holy Spirit who is **“the Spirit of holiness”** (Rom. 1:4; cf. I Cor. 6:11; II Cor. 3:18). He is called **“the Spirit of holiness”** because of His nature and because He is the Author of holiness in the hearts of God’s people. We read in Scripture of the **“sanctification of the Spirit”** (II Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:2) and of **“being sanctified by the Holy Spirit”** (Rom. 15:16). It is the Spirit’s work to war against the flesh and enable us to bring forth fruit unto holiness (Gal. 5:17-22).

The Holy Spirit begins, carries on, and completes the work of sanctification in a very special sense. He enlightens the mind (John 14:26; I Cor. 2:9-16; Eph. 1:18; I John 2:20, 27). He gives spiritual strength (Eph. 3:16). He enables the believer to mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 6:13) and to purify his life by obeying the truth (I Pet. 1:22).

(Continued in next issue)



CELLBLOCK TO CELLBLOCK

By David G. Hoffman

Encouragement and thoughts from a prisoner to other prisoners and readers. **“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried”** (Rev. 2:10).



Greetings, grace, and peace to you, dear reader. I pray this finds you doing well and blessed above measure.

Allow me to apologize for missing the last couple of months. I had a small miscommunication with the publisher, but everything is back on schedule now and I don’t foresee any additional delays in the near future.

To catch you up a bit, dear reader, I’m having my hat handed to me by a biology class this semester. It’s the single most difficult class I think I’ve had in college. Please pray for my success in this class. After this semester I only need four more classes to complete my degree---I see a light at the end of the tunnel---and I hope it’s not a train.

I’m still working in the laundry, but hopefully not for much longer. There is supposed to be a regime change in the kitchen soon. When, or if, that happens I will try to

go back to work in the kitchen as a baker. Hopefully the next kitchen captain will be more professional than the one leaving. However, I pray the departing captain finds peace and tranquility in her new position.

Please pray for me, dear reader, as I continue to stumble and stagger down this pothole filled trial that is prison.

Proof!

Those of us who are true believers and diligent Bible student need nothing more than our God given faith to know the Scriptures are the very words of our Sovereign and Almighty God. However, it gives my heart special joy when I come across something that gives unmistakable concrete proof that the Bible is accurate and true.

The Bible student will know the story

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. In a nutshell, what is Sovereign Grace Baptist theology? - Mississippi

Matthew Stepp
Rt. 1 Box 1193
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor
Big Creek
Baptist Church
Rt. 1 Box 1193
Wayne, WV 25570



In a nutshell- God alone is God! Theology is the study of God and I can do no better than to quote an O.T. saint that passed his final exam with flying colors! Daniel 4:34-35: **"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"**

Proverbs 9:10: **"...the knowledge of the holy is understanding."** Sovereign Grace Baptists (SGB's) believe that God is the exclusive divine Being in the universe! Thus He is ALL-powerful (Omnipotent), ALL-present (Omnipresent) and ALL-knowing (Omniscient). All of Christianity pays lip-service to this doctrinal premise, but SGB's hinge every doctrine in the Bible on it! The immutability of God is the reason God is long-suffering and foreordains! The eternity of God is the reason God preserves and predestines! The sovereignty of God is the reason God is an Elector and Justifier! The holiness of God is the reason God rewards righteousness and condemns depravity, rebellion and apathy.

Daniel 11:32: **"...but the people that do know their God shall be strong..."** Application of theology will underlay every doctrine in Scripture with power and understanding. The difference of SGB's from other claimant Baptists is the adjectives: sovereign grace! By our name we affirm the sovereignty of God in grace/salvation to man. T-U-L-I-P succinctly reveals the reality of the God/man relationship-

1) Man is **T**otally depraved, unable to do good, God is immaculately sinless, unable to commit evil;

2) Because of man's total inability, God must sovereignly and **U**nconditionally elect;

3) Man has no inherent grace or worth

to warrant justification; God particularly redeems with a **L**imited, successful atonement;

4) Man will flee, hide, rebel and mock reconciliation with God; God with unfathomable, adopting love will **I**rresistibly and effectually call in mercy the purchased multitude of grace;

5) Man left to himself would fall and sully his righteous standing before God; God therefore **P**reserves and enables by sovereign grace His called, chosen and faithful to persevere unto eternal security.

Isaiah 58:2: **"Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways ...they take delight in approaching to God."** The more we learn about God/Theology, the better will be our understanding of His creation. Ezekiel 36:23: **"And I will sanctify my great name, ...and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD..."**

SGB theology in a nutshell abases man and exalts God! Matthew 22:16: **"...Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man..."** This is not easy for natural man to accept. Again, sovereign grace must impart this love of Scripture as well. **"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart"** (Jer. 24:7).

SGB's also believe in human responsibility, but that's not Theology, that's Anthropology- the study of man. I'm sure that question will come up another time- it always does!

Big subject and I'd like to go on- But that God might bless this nutshell, is our prayer!

MATTHEW STEPP

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



First of all, I will never put God's doctrine in a hard-shell. I have found Baptist religion in a "hardback book" called the Holy Bible, which, by the way, is also found in a soft binding of leather. The King James Bible is the only Bible I will ever use and I have been assured that what is contained in those pages is, and ever will be, the record of God's Sovereign Grace. **"We have also a more**

sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (II Peter 1:19).

Considering the preceding paragraph I most humbly submit to you that I am unable to do what you ask, and if any try, will fail to include all that you ask. The verse that first came to mind when I read the question was this. **"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen"** (John 21:25).

MIKE DEWITT

Roger Reed
20 Ledgewood Dr.
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of
West Jefferson Missionary
Baptist Mission
90 E. Main St.
West Jefferson, Ohio 43162



I don't know, a nutshell is awfully small, even a coconut shell! But in a nutshell "Theology" is the study of God. *Theo*, a combining form meaning "god" and *logy*, a combining form meaning "field of scientific study, discipline" that is according to "Webster's American Family Dictionary". With further study of the word, we have come to the same conclusion; "Theology" is the study of God.

Sovereign Grace Baptist "Theology" in my opinion, is a more sincere and unadulterated study for the truth of God's Word! The world's "Theology", and many religious organization's "Theology" is tainted and corrupt with error with their way of thinking, but it is not God's way. Several Scriptures come to mind;

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

"Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6).

"In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word

of truth" (II Tim. 2:15). Here again, I like how "The Amplified Version" puts it; "Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing - rightly handling and skillfully teaching - the Word of Truth."

There are many more Scriptures we could use and the reader would have a great blessing if they would study the "Biblical" word "Doctrine" in light of Sovereign Grace Baptist "Theology."

Allow me to tell you a little story about how I learned what the word "Theology" meant! A dear Brother in the Lord, that I love and have great respect for, and is very intelligent with an IQ greater than mine, worked with me at the same place at the time, went to the same church, and on occasions, at work on our break, and supper time, we would talk about the Lord. Well, I am not the brightest apple on the tree and he was talking over my head, at which I got a little frustrated and blurted out, I am not a "Theologian", and he very kindly and lovingly said, "Theology", is the study of God, *Theo*-meaning God and *-logy* meaning study. I learned a great lesson that day and received a wonderful blessing, "In a nutshell"! God Bless!

ROGER REED

Tom Ross
6339 County Rd. 15
South Point, OH 45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH 45619



A Sovereign Grace Baptist believes the following truths:

1. The Holy Scriptures are Divinely inspired (II Tim. 3:16-17), inerrant, pure (Prov. 30:5) and the final authority for all faith, doctrine, and practice (Isa. 8:20).

2. Salvation, from beginning to end, is the Lord's work bestowed on unworthy, polluted, depraved sinners who ascribe to the theology of Jonah: **"Salvation is of the LORD"** (Jonah 2:9).

3. In light of point number two above, all Sovereign Grace Baptists believe in the five points known as the doctrines of grace (not Calvinism, since these blessed truths were preached and practiced by Baptists long before John Calvin ever drew his first amillennial, baby-baptizing breath).

Total Depravity, the teaching that man by nature is dead spiritually (Eph. 2:1-3), without spiritual understanding (I Cor. 2:14), incapable of pleasing God (Rom. 8:7-8), unwilling and unable to come to Christ (John 6:44), and totally corrupted by sin (Isa. 1:5-6). The natural man's heart is deceitful and desperately

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. In II Peter 2:7 we read that Lot was vexed (troubled) and again in verse 8 we read that his righteous soul was vexed (irritated or annoyed) from day to day. Why then did Lot continue in Sodom and not leave?- Mississippi

Matthew Stepp
Rt. 1 Box 1193
Wayne, WV 25570

Pastor
Big Creek
Baptist Church
Rt. 1 Box 1193
Wayne, WV 25570



Separation or consecration; those were Lot's choices to avoid the vexation of the text. Either leave (separate), as the question indicates- or else consecrate himself and his family unto the LORD. And it's the same choices we have today in either Mississippi or West Virginia. The problem in both Sodom and modern America is open sin. No regard of God and His laws. "...vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: ...dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds..."

Let's put Lot in our shoes here. Why do we keep our TV's on when there is so much to vex our righteous souls? Why do we continue to vote for politicians that promote abortion, pornography and heresies? It would seem so easy for Lot to just pick up and go- or would it? Why do we stay in West Virginia when the lawmakers and judges in our land continue to vex us with the filthy conversation (lifestyles) of the wicked? Can we denounce America/Sodom for its filth and depravity and pick up and go to... where?

I started to answer that Lot's conscience was seared. Well, yeah. But I see that as more of a symptom than the problem. The real problem is a lack of consecration. When Lot chose Sodom, it doesn't necessarily follow that he had to leave God behind. When Abram left Haran and came to dwell among the pagan Canaanites, it didn't presume that he would accept their idolatrous practices and eventually all his family would be carnally involved to the point that Sarah would look back longingly on Hebron, when God poured out the wrath of brimstone upon that depraved city, and be turned into a pillar of salt as well. Selah! Think about it!

If Lot had been the father and husband he should have been, then things would've been different. Who was doing the vexing of Lot? Certainly he was not the only father and husband in the town. Were THEY being vexed? No, they enjoyed the sin of this present world. GOD ALMIGHTY was vexing Lot! Mercifully, methodically and

forbearingly, He was taking all of the joy out of Lot's life! And He was reminding him of his duties to his girls. He should've been thinking like his uncle did: **"And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac"** (Gen. 24:2-4). He should have provided godly husbands for them and a godly school for his kids, his grandkids. He should have continually been reinforcing their dedication and consecration to God with weekly and biweekly services to worship the Holy One (Maybe on Sunday and Wednesday?).

I don't think God was vexing Lot to leave Sodom, at least at first. He needed a witness there. He was vexing Lot to be RIGHTEOUS! And Lot failed Him. **"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day"** (Matt. 11:23). You know what's really sad? Abraham tried to save Sodom, but according to our LORD's words, Lot was the one who really had the opportunity! Sodom **"would have remained until this day"** if Lot hadn't neglected to bring the Mighty One with him to his new home.

Don't give up on America, just yet, beloved readers! Let's determine in our hearts to live consecrated lives unto our Master and let's see if God might have a blessing for us and our beloved country. May God bless these words to our hearts.

MATTHEW STEPP

Tom Ross
6339 County Rd. 15
South Point, OH 45680

Pastor
Mt. Pleasant
Baptist Church
6939 County Rd. 15
Chesapeake, OH 45619



This is a good question, but one I am not completely sure I have the answer to. We know that Lot was a saved, justified man who was delivered from the judgment of God unleashed upon Sodom and Gomorrha. Why he stayed

in Sodom for as long as he did is a mystery to me. In fact, Lot had to be physically removed by the angels that God sent to rescue him (Gen. 19:15-22). I personally believe that Lot was so out of fellowship with God he had lost his first love. He was apathetic, careless, and worldly. Lot cared more for his position in Sodom than his relationship to God. Lot loved the things of the world more than he loved God.

I think Lot was so entrenched in the wicked culture of Sodom that he lost his spiritual determination to separate from the ungodliness. Lot was miserable in his backslidden condition. He knew that what was going on around him was wrong and sinful, but he did not have the spiritual discernment to get out. I fear this is the condition of many professing Christians and Baptists in our day who are allowing the wickedness of the world to influence them. May God help us to obey the admonition of Romans 13:11-14: **"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."**

TOM ROSS

Mike DeWitt Sr.
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477

Pastor
Parkway Landmark
Baptist Church
PO Box 950
Springfield, OR 97477



Why did not Lot leave his place of residence when his soul was sore distressed? I suppose, for that is all I can do, there may have been two reasons.

First, I would like to say, why don't we leave the place we reside in? Do we receive the same torment, or are we sore distressed over the sinful acts and words of the wicked around us? It is easy to look at others and say, why don't they do this or that, or why don't they stop doing this or that. The elect need to examine themselves first in all things and judge by the Word of God.

That being said, the first reason absolutely was for God to reveal His Holiness in His righteous judgment upon the wicked and to deliver the just from temptations.

The second reason may have been the family roots that had been apparently started. **"And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters,**

and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place" (Gen. 19:12). Many times family holds us back from doing the right thing because we, as men of families, don't want our families disappointed. Next it is observed that Lot's wife was infatuated with the city they left. **"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt"** (Gen. 19:26). There may be times in which married men will look past some things to please their wives rather than to please the Lord. Case in point is: **"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat"** (Gen. 3:6).

This is all that I can tell you, we as the children of God are to please God rather than man.

MIKE DEWITT

Roger Reed
20 Ledgewood Dr.
Mansfield, Ohio 44905

Missionary of
West Jefferson Missionary
Baptist Mission
90 E. Main St.
West Jefferson, Ohio 43162



I will answer the question and then give my reason. Lot continued in Sodom because he did not have the strength or the faith to leave; he had all the tools (knowledge and understanding) but not the initiative (the ability to act on his own). Sounds like a contradiction doesn't it? but let me explain.

As a Christian, have you ever been in a backslidden condition? I have! In a condition where you could not find a way out of the situation? Me too! You know what to do, but can't seem to get back to the place of sweet fellowship with God? Yeah, been there, done that, too! Your children are unruly; you and your spouse are in a state of disagreement almost on every issue. If we were honest, we have all been there one time or another, (if you haven't then feel blessed). Well, this is the condition Brother Lot was in! I have heard some say Brother Lot wasn't saved but our text here in II Peter 2:7-8 says Lot was **"just"**, **"righteous"**, and was **"delivered"** by God, so I believe he was weak and backslidden but one of God's elect just the same.

Here shows the importance of the church in our day, Sunday Morning Bible School, Worship Service, Evening Worship, and Wednesday night Bible Study and Prayer Meeting, and anything else we can have as a reason to go to church that is Scriptural. The church I belong to, the Big Creek Baptist Church, makes good use of the ministry there and good use of the buildings they have. And

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Forum #1

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wicked (Jer. 17:9), his mind is blinded by Satan (II Cor. 4:4), his will is perverted and always chooses evil because of its enmity against God and the Gospel of Christ (John 3:18-19).

Unconditional Election, means that God chose a specific number of people out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Rev. 5:9) to be saved. God sovereignly chose the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-6, II Thess. 2:13-14, II Tim. 1:9). God's choice of His elect was not based on anything that He foresaw in them, but because of His love according to the purpose and counsel of His own will (Deut. 7:7-8).

Particular Redemption is the truth that when Jesus Christ died on the cross He was acting as surety and substitute only for the elect. Christ died only for those that the Father gave Him to redeem before the world began (John 17:2, 9). Christ did not die to redeem Satan, the fallen angels, Judas Iscariot, or anyone who ultimately dies in their sins and justly spends an eternity in the Lake of Fire. Christ died for many, not all (Isa. 53:12; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; Heb. 9:26-28). Christ died for the sheep, not the goats (John 10:11, 14-18, 26 cf. Matt. 25:33, 41, 46). Christ died for His friends (John 10:13). Christ died only for those He intercedes for (John 17:9 cf. Romans 8:29-35). Every word relating to the death of Christ has a definite meaning that reflects the particular nature of His sacrifice on behalf of the elect only (redeem, ransom, propitiate, remission, substitution, reconciliation, expiation). Christ's death on the cross was a success, not a failure which is why He could confidently say that all the elect would undoubtedly be saved (John 6:37-39 cf. Matt. 1:21). Jesus literally put away the sins of God's elect and made them positionally perfect and fit for Heaven (Heb. 10:12-14).

Effectual Calling is the truth that all the Father chose in Christ before the world began, all that Christ died for, will in time be effectually called by the invincible power of the Holy Spirit unto salvation (II Thess. 2:13-15). Effectual calling is personal (John 10:3, 16, 27), powerful and irresistible (Psa. 110:3; Dan. 4:35). The effectual call slays the enmity of man's will and makes the elect willing to submit to Christ as Lord as evidenced by the call of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9. Saul hated Christ, His people, and His church. God defeated and usurped the depraved will of Saul and caused him to meekly say: **"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"** The effectual call is the only reason why men come to a saving knowledge of Christ (John 6:44) as they have no ability in and of themselves to

come. It is a powerful work ascribed to God alone (I Cor. 2:4-5; 3:6-7).

Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints is the truth that all whom God has elected, Christ has redeemed, and the Holy Spirit effectually called are undoubtedly and forever saved and secure with absolutely no possibility of losing the Lord's salvation. God preserves the elect by His power (I Pet. 1:5) and the elect persevere in holiness because of God's preservation (Phil. 2:12-13; Jude 20-21, 24-25). Eternal security is based on God's purpose (Rom. 8:29-39), His power (II Tim. 1:12; 4:18), His immutability (Mal. 3:6), His wisdom (Acts 15:18), His promises (John 3:16; 5:24; I John 2:25; 5:11-13), the perfect work of Christ (Isa. 51:6; Heb. 7:25), Christ's intercession (John 17:11, 12, 15, 23-24), the work of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Phil. 1:6). Preservation and perseverance of the saints is consistent with the scriptural teaching of salvation by grace as opposed to salvation by works (Rom. 11:5-6; Gal. 2:16-20; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7).

4. Sovereign Grace Baptists stand for what is commonly referred to as "Old Landmarkism" or church truth, which points are enumerated as:

A. The first New Testament Church was organized by Christ during His earthly ministry.

B. The first church was in doctrine and practice what we would today identify as a Baptist Church.

C. Christ gave the authority to carry out the Great Commission to His kind of church.

D. True Baptist churches alone have the authority to baptize converts, administer the Lord's Supper, organize churches, and ordain elders and deacons.

E. Scriptural baptism is made up of four essential parts:

1) It must be administered by a scriptural Baptist Church, i.e. proper authority.

2) Only a believer may be baptized, i.e. proper subject.

3) Baptism is by immersion in water only, i.e. proper mode.

4) Baptism is symbolic and has no saving qualities, i.e. proper design.

F. True Baptists reject the ordinances and ordinations of Catholics, Protestants, and cults as invalid and without scriptural authority. As a result true Baptists will not receive alien immersion nor will they practice pulpit affiliation with non-Baptists.

G. Baptists believe the church is a local, visible called out assembly of baptized believers who have covenanted together to carry out the Great Commission. As such, true Baptists reject the Protestant notion of a mythical universal, invisible church as well as the Catholic notion of a universal church headed up by the Pope of Rome.

H. Baptists believe that Christ

promised perpetuity to His kind of church (Matt. 16:18; 28:19-20). There has been a holy succession of true Baptist churches from the times of Christ up until the present day (John 15:16).

I. Each New Testament Baptist church is independent and autonomous. As such no religious or political organization, board, or association may usurp the authority of the local church.

J. Only members in good standing may observe the local church ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Thus, the Lord's Supper must be restricted to those the church has the authority to discipline (I Cor. 5), meaning members only. The Lord's Supper is a local church ordinance, not a denominational ordinance.

K. Only saved people with scriptural baptism who are members in good standing of a true Baptist church are eligible to be in the Bride of Christ. All other believers will be guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9).

I heartily affirm that all of the above tenets are scriptural and God-honoring. Baptists have always hurt themselves by compromising their core principles in an attempt to be accepted and considered scholarly by other religious organizations. We don't need the approval of Catholics, Protestants, or the Charismatics. We need only please the great Head and Lawgiver of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote: **"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"** (Gal. 1:10). May God help Baptists in name only who are trying to please men by moving away from the old landmarks established by Christ in His church. May God grant us the grace to be fervent in our efforts to carry out the Great Commission and earnestly contend for the old landmarks until Jesus comes again.

TOM ROSS



Forum #2

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there are many other sister churches who do the same. Too bad all Sovereign Grace Baptist Churches don't. Brother Jesse Hille just had an article in the July issue of the Banner called "A Dying Church," a very good read for all of us. If Lot would have put everything aside and loved the Lord as he should have (as Brother Hille points out), he would have left Sodom a long time before this.

Let's take a brief look at what was going on in Brother Lot's life!

1) He made a bad choice right from the start, **"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan..."** (Gen. 13:10). Shouldn't he have lifted up his eyes to heaven? Next we read in Genesis 13:11-13: **"Then Lot chose him all the**

plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." Dear reader, shouldn't he have let God do the choosing for him?

2) Was it Lot's intension to convert those wicked men? Very possible. Apparently there wasn't any, for we do not read of any, nor do we hear of Lot again for another fourteen years, at which time he and all he owned was taken away by the enemy. Genesis 14:12: **"And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."** It took Abraham (Abram) to go and retrieve Lot and his possessions (Gen. 14:16) **"And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people."** Right here would have been the perfect opportunity for Lot and his family to get out of Sodom; you could say God gave them a way of escape. I Corinthians 10:13: **"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."**

3) After a person has lived in the wickedness and filth of this world they get to the place of giving up, if they are in a backslidden condition like Lot was. Talk about sex, pornography, and homosexuality (sodomy), Lot didn't need the TV, internet, or magazines; it was all out in the open, nakedness, all manner of sexuality, and lewdness. You might be saying at this point, how could Lot live in such a mess, I could never do that. Stop! Dear reader, there are thousands of Christian men, and women and teenagers who are exposed and caught up in pornography, fornication, and adultery today, yes, women and teenagers, too. Depravity has no bounds, and is not prejudice. And if you don't think it could happen to you, (and I don't suggest you do this, as the saying goes, don't try this at home) stop reading your Bible, stop going to church and start hanging out with some lost friends for a month and you'll soon see Lot's condition, because you'll be right there with him. He had fourteen years of this. You notice I didn't say to stop praying, because I believe someone in Sodom was praying. I would have to believe it was Lot, for we read in Genesis 18:20-21, **"And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I**

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will know. God is omniscient; He knew what was going on. Who was crying? Lot was (I believe). He was vexed. What does a vexed soul do? He cries out unto God in Heaven. Why did the Lord have to go down to Sodom? To get Lot out. Why? Because he could not do it himself!

I have counseled with Christian people, I have prayed with and for Christian people to help them come out of their backslidden condition and they still remain in that condition. Why? 1) Because they like it and don't want to give it up. 2) They are lazy. 3) They have lost their love for the Lord Jesus Christ. I have been, as a Christian, in a backslidden condition, and maybe you have, too, and it has taken a loved one in my family or a dear Brother or Sister to get me out. I knew what to do, I prayed, I read the Bible and could not get myself out, but praise God He has always sent someone to get me out. The difference with me and the ones I have counseled, I saw my sin and wanted out enough to listen, and thank God that His love for me is eternal.

I need to bring this to a close, but consider these things in light of the question, "Why then did Lot continue in Sodom and not leave?" Do you know how wives are usually more attached to their children and grandchildren than we men are? I am not implying we love them less, but women have this attachment. Well I believe Lot's wife was no exception. I can almost picture Lot saying to his wife at one point, "We need to get out of this city," and Lot's wife's reply was, "I am not leaving my children behind." Sound familiar? A careful reading of Genesis 19:12-14 says **"And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law."** See, Lot had other children, and maybe grandchildren as well, in the city, that means they were caught up in all that sin and wickedness of Sodom. Why did Lot's wife turn and look back? Her children were back there, at least that is how I believe it, and she paid for her disobedience by being turned into a pillar of salt (v. 26).

One last thought, it took the two men (angels) to literally take Lot, his wife, and two daughters by the hand and lead them out of the city. Genesis 19:15-16,

"And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." It is amazing, that in verse 15 the angels hastened Lot to get out and he still lingered (v. 16), even after their warning. O the mercy of our God.

For other examples about how God brings us out of a backslidden condition, read about Elijah in I Kings 19. How God had to bring him out of the cave. Even King David, do you think David would have come out of his sinful backslidden condition, on his own. No, God had to send Nathan the prophet to confront him. And what about Job and Jeremiah? They were in such a condition they cursed the day they were born, until God brought them out of it.

The best way to keep from getting into the same condition that Lot was in is; **"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment"** (Mark. 12:30). **"If ye love me, keep my commandments"** (John 14:15).

Read the Word, be a doer of the Word, be in church every time the door is open, and seek to have fellowship with God's people as often as you can, and finally **"Abstain from all appearance of evil"** (I Thess. 5:22).

My soul is vexed (troubled, irritated, and annoyed), with what I see and hear almost everyday, and I am sick to death of it. The saddest and most disturbing is, those that claim to be Baptists who are caught up **"with the filthy conversation of the wicked"** of this world! I choose to rise above it and serve God, what about you beloved reader, what way do you choose? **"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"** (Prov. 16:25). We would all be better if we would learn to do it God's way! God Bless!

ROGER REED



Cellblock to

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of the great famine in Egypt in which Joseph, the son of Jacob, was exalted above Pharaoh in everything except the throne itself.

"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume

the land; And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous" (Gen. 41:29-31).

An inscription that confirms this period of "great plenty" and "grievous famine" was discovered in the nineteenth century in southern Saudi Arabia. It was found on a marble tablet in an old fortress on the seashore of Hadramaut in present-day Democratic Yemen (Jeffery 34).

"An examination of the writing suggests that it was written approximately eighteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, a time that corresponds with the biblical narrative about Jacob and his twelve sons. This inscription was rendered in Arabic by Professor Schultens and was later translated into English by Charles Forster.

"This is his translation of this ancient inscription:

We dwelt at ease in this castle a long tract of time; nor had we a desire but for the region-lord of the vineyard.

Hundreds of camels returned to us each day at evening, their eye pleasant to behold in their resting places. And twice the number of our camels were our sheep, in comeliness like white does, and also the slow moving kine.

We dwelt in this castle *seven years of good life*--how difficult for memory its description!

Then came years barren and burnt up:

When one evil year had passed away,

Then came another to succeed it.

And we became as though we had never seen a glimpse of good.

They died and neither foot nor hoof remained.

Thus fares it with him who renders not thanks to God:

His footsteps fail not to be blotted out from his dwelling" (italics added: Jeffery 35).

This inscription from ancient Arabia gives us independent evidence that confirms the accuracy of the biblical account of the seven years of plenty and the famine that followed during the rule of Joseph as prime minister of Egypt.

There is also an engraved stone tablet found in the tomb of a rich Yemenite noblewoman which confirms the story of Joseph's careful management of the grain during the seven years of famine in Egypt. The tablet mentions Joseph by name and recounts the story of this noblewoman sending her servants to him with silver, gold, and pearls, but Joseph wouldn't sell to her because there was only enough for Egypt at the time. So she had the riches ground to dust.

These bits of ancient history independently confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible. And although we, as believers, may not need independent evidence to prove the Bible is true, it does come in handy when discussing the Bible with non-believers. Not to mention

the joy it will bring to your heart when studying this ancient history.

The historical evidence for this column was derived from the book, *The Signature of God: Documented Evidence That Proves Beyond Doubt the Bible is the Inspired Word of God*, by Grant B. Jeffery, W Publishing Group, 1998. Great reading for the believer, undisputable evidence for those who do not.

Continue to pray for me, dear reader, and until next time: Grace and peace to you!



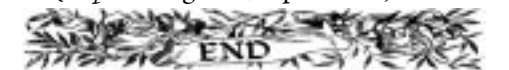
Anecdote of John Bunyan

"But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in sight of the keeper of the prison."

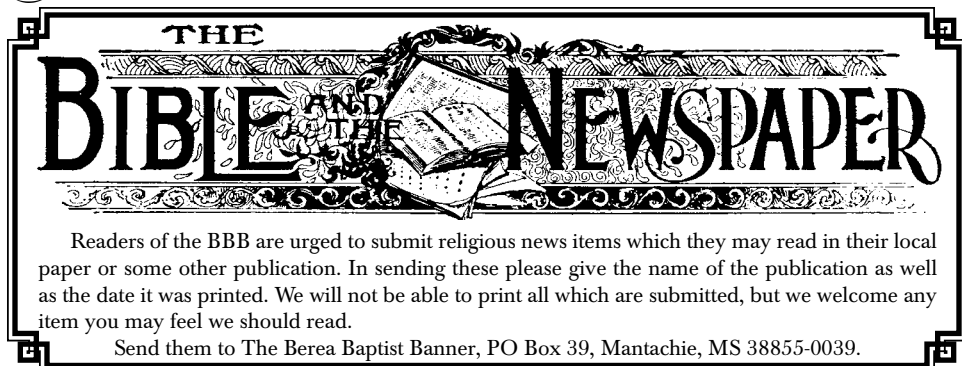
The respectability of Mr. Bunyan's character, and the propriety of his conduct, while in prison, at Bedford, appear to have operated very powerfully on the mind of the jailer; who showed him much kindness, in permitting him to go out and visit his friends, occasionally, and once, to take a journey to London.

The following anecdote is told respecting the jailer and Mr. Bunyan. "It being known to some of the persecuting prelates, in London, that he was often out of prison, they sent out an officer to talk with the jailer, on the subject: and in order to find him out, he was to get there in the middle of the night. Mr. Bunyan was at home with his family, but so restless that he could not sleep; he therefore acquainted his wife that, though the jailer had given him liberty to stay till the morning, yet, from his uneasiness, he must immediately return. He did so, and the jailer blamed him for coming in at such an unseasonable hour. Early in the morning the messenger came, and interrogating the jailer, said, "Are all the prisoners safe?" Yes, "Is John Bunyan safe?" Yes, "Let me see him." He was called, and appeared, and all was well. After the messenger was gone, the jailer, addressing Mr. Bunyan, said, "Well, you may go in and out again, just when you think proper, for you know when to return better than I can tell you."

(Baptist Magazine, April 1815).



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MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL DISTRICT'S SETTLEMENT WITH LESBIAN TEEN SEEN AS "PRECEDENT-SETTING"

(EP News)--Constance McMillen, who wanted to take her girlfriend to the prom, agreed to a \$35,000 settlement with the Itawamba County school district in Jackson, Miss.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued the district after McMillan and her date were not permitted to attend a school-sponsored prom.

Mississippi is seen as an ideal state for activist groups to promote gay activism. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life ranked Mississippi as the most religious state in the nation in 2009. Conversely, the state was also identified as the "most hostile" environment for gay-identified youth by GLSEN — the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

The school district was forced to become the first in Mississippi to add homosexual categories — sexual orientation and gender identity — as a special protected class by agreeing to implement a policy based on a student's self-identified sexual orientation or gender identity. And the American Civil Liberties Union hopes this won't be the last school district to conform.

Candi Cushman, education analyst for CitizenLink, is disturbed by the ACLU's bullying tactics, repeatedly used to force school districts to sexualize and politicize an entire school environment. "We have documented this pattern by activist groups of enforcing special protections for homosexual categories like "sexual orientation," said Cushman, "and then using those policies as leverage to get the things they want into classrooms, such as homosexuality lessons for kids as young as kindergarten age."

Cushman said that forcing schools to identify certain categories creates a system ripe for reverse discrimination and sends the message that certain characteristics are more worthy of protection than others. "Instead of bringing more peace and unity," she said, "this can politicize the school environment and introduce divisiveness among different groups of students and parents."

TOUGH RESTRICTIONS FOR SEXUALLY ORIENTED BUSINESSES IN MISSOURI

(EP News)--Gov. Jay Nixon signed into law in July new location restrictions for sexually oriented businesses — a big win for families and communities. "The new law is a big step forward," said Joe Ortwerth, executive director of the Missouri Family

Policy Council. "Missouri has been plagued, as have many states, by the proliferation of these sexually oriented businesses that set up shop in communities along the highways." While it may be legal for adult cabarets, video stores and the like to operate in Missouri, he says something can be done about it. "The negative effects of these businesses can be combated through legislation that restricts exactly where they establish themselves," Ortwerth said, "and exactly how many hours they're open."

OBAMA BYPASSES SENATE, MAKES CONTENTIOUS RECESS APPOINTMENT

(EP News)--In what has been building up to be a contentious Senate confirmation process, President Obama chose to appoint Dr. Donald M. Berwick to the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) during Congress' 11-day recess in July. Praised by liberals as a health policy expert, Berwick will now have jurisdiction over the health care of nearly one-third of all Americans. Berwick is a Harvard pediatrician and founder of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. Berwick is on record praising Britain's socialized health care system — including its rationed care. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus, D-Mont., condemned the Obama administration for sidestepping protocol. Berwick's appointment expires at the end of 2011.

MISSOURI LEGISLATURE THWARTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AMENDMENT FOR THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR

(EP News)--A proposed religious liberty amendment to Missouri's Constitution failed for the third year in a row, due in part to opposition from liberal religious groups. The American Civil Liberties Union, the Americans United for Separation of Church and State, liberal Baptist groups, and Jewish organizations decried the bill as empowering the Christian community to "place its symbols and impose its prayers on others in the public square." Joe Ortwerth, executive director for the Missouri Family Policy Council, said, "While there is no question that it often takes two or three sessions of the Missouri Legislature to win ultimate passage of new legislation, there is no excuse for the continuing failure of this proposition. The proposal has overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers of the Legislature, and is being consistently blocked by the filibuster tactics of a couple of liberal state senators."

WHITE HOUSE AUTHORIZES IMPLEMENTATION OF GAY AGENDA IN HUD, FED AGENCIES

(EP News)--With the blessing of the Obama administration — and as a signal to other federal agencies — the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced in July a policy that "provides lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and families with further assistance when facing housing discrimination." The announcement was the fulfillment of several proposals outlined on Oct. 21, 2009, by HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. One of the most controversial of Donovan's initiatives announced the government's intent on redefining the term "family." The initiative, offered as a proposed rule change and open to public comment, will "clarify the term 'family'" and "the Department's intent to propose new regulations will clarify family status to ensure its subsidized housing programs are available to all families, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

HAWAII GOVERNOR VEToes CIVIL UNION BILL

(EP NEWS)—IN A HIGHLY ANTICIPATED announcement, Hawaii's Gov. Linda Lingle vetoed the civil unions bill, as it was too similar to the definition of marriage. The law would have allowed gay and lesbian-identified couples the same rights and privileges of married couples. In her veto message, Lingle stated that an issue as contentious as this should not be up to one person to decide. The liberal blog, Huffington Post, had promoted this decision as "mission critical," so this announcement was a devastating blow to gay activists. They immediately called for a boycott of the state. The American Civil Liberties Union and Lambda Legal are preparing to file a lawsuit. Currently, California, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington offer civil unions or domestic partnerships, while Iowa, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and the District of Columbia offer same-sex marriage.

FEDERAL APPEALS COURT AFFIRMS "IN GOD WE TRUST" ON U.S. CURRENCY

(EP News)--The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D. C. Circuit affirmed a lower court ruling Monday, which ruled that printing the national motto, "In God We Trust," on U.S. currency does not violate the Establishment Clause. Self-avowed atheist Carlos Kidd — who sued President Obama and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke — claimed U.S. currency violated the separation of church and state. Kidd also demanded that the government "destroy or recycle all circulating currency, and replace it with new currency without religious inscription." The three-judge panel cited concurring opinions by Justices Stephen Breyer and Sandra Day O'Connor — in *Van Orden v. Perry* (2005) and *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow* (2003), respectively — which said that "In God We Trust" did not violate the Establishment Clause.

GEORGIA VOTERS SAY YES TO PERSONHOOD AMENDMENT

(EP News)--Throughout Georgia on July 20, voters supported an amendment to the state constitution that said the "right to life is vested in each human being from their earliest biological beginning until natural death" and that right should be protected by law. In all 46 counties where the amendment was presented, it passed overwhelmingly by an amazing 75 percent. Georgia is the first state in the nation where voters have said "Yes" to the Personhood question. Georgia Right to Life (GRTL) chapters began work this spring in requesting that their local county parties place this non-binding "party" question on their local party ballots. Both Democrat and Republican parties were approached. Butts County was the only county to succeed in getting both parties to cooperate and approve the measure. In 2011, GRTL will use the results of the ballot to lobby the Georgia Legislature to place a constitutional amendment on the 2012 general election ballot. Pro-life observers say the success of the Georgia initiative demonstrates that the issue of personhood could be a winning one in statewide elections.

MARYLAND, NEW MEXICO EMERGE IN ABORTION HEALTH CARE SCHEME

(EP News)--The list of states poised to use taxpayer funds to cover abortion as part of the federal health care overhaul appears to be growing. Pennsylvania was the first state identified by the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) that planned to circumvent abortion restrictions through the "Pre-existing Condition Insurance Plan" (PCIP), which will provide temporary health care for those with preexisting conditions. Now, Maryland and New Mexico have surfaced as recipients. The news forced the Obama administration to affirm the president's executive order and promise that "under our plan, no federal dollars will be used to fund abortions." Even so, Jeff Meister with Maryland Right to Life is skeptical of the administration's assurances. "Right now, they can cover any type of abortion at any time for any woman for any reason that qualifies for this plan," he said.

FEDERAL HIGHER ED ACCREDITATION PROPOSAL THREATENS ACADEMIC FREEDOM

(EPNews)--The Department of Education is considering proposed regulatory changes that would alter the accreditation process — and, quite possibly, limit the academic freedom of private institutions. Up to now, colleges and universities — public and private — have been accredited by regional associations. According to Bill Armstrong, president of Colorado Christian University, the proposed federal regulations would establish a state authorization process. "This new notion is really a government takeover of the private educational sector." Kelly Shackelford, president and chief legal counsel of Liberty Institute, said, "This is really dangerous. The last thing you really want is the government

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Bible & The Newspaper

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taking control – even indirectly – of private institutions.” The proposed regulations could take effect as early as November.

AFA ANNOUNCES NATIONWIDE BOYCOTT OF THE HOME DEPOT

(EP News)--The American Family Association has called for a nationwide boycott of The Home Depot because of its support for the radical homosexual agenda, and in particular for exposing young children to homosexual behavior. Despite extensive communication between AFA and The Home Depot, HD officials remain unmoved and resolved to continue allowing their affiliates to sponsor as many pro-gay, pro-transsexual events as they'd like. Home Depot spokesman Stephen Holmes said, “At the end of the day here, we're not going to... forbid our associates to be involved in these pride festivals in any way.”

PORTLAND PLAGUED BY CHILD PROSTITUTION

(EP News)--Portland, Ore., just received a dubious distinction from The Huffington Post: “Pornland – a hub for the sexual exploitation of children.” Linda Smith, president of Shared Hope International, equated Portland to Amsterdam. “We've investigated both Amsterdam and Portland, and they do look similar in the fact that men are going to be tolerated as buyers of children, not because law enforcement is lax,” Smith said, “but because the laws are lax and there's cultural acceptance for buying commercial sex in this kind of venue.” In 1987, the Oregon Supreme Court put an end to the state's obscenity laws and restrictions on sexually oriented businesses; thus, setting out the welcome mat to all forms of adult entertainment, pornography and indecency. Portland, a city of 500,000, now has 20 times the number of nude entertainment businesses as Los Angeles, a city of 3 million.

CBS ADDING MORE GAY CHARACTERS

(EP News)--An annual “Network Responsibility Index” survey done by GLAAD – the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation – was released last week, ranking network and cable programming on the inclusion of gay-identified and transgender characters and issues. Five broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, The CW, Fox and NBC) and 10 cable networks (MTV, ABC Family, TNT, Showtime, Lifetime, HBO, FX, USA, A&E and TBS) were evaluated.

On cable, MTV ranked “excellent,” followed by ABC Family, TNT, Showtime, Lifetime and HBO. USA, A&E and TBS ranked last. On network television, the CW ranked at the top, with CBS in last place. CBS president Nina Tassler apologized for the network's programming track record during a fall preview session of the Television Critics Association.

TRADING PLACES: BRITISH HEALTH SYSTEM DECENTRALIZES AS AMERICA'S CENTRALIZES

(EP News)--In a paradoxical about-face, the British government announced it will decentralize its overwhelmed National Health Service, at the same time President Obama attempts to imitate the failing centralized system. Obama recently reappointed Donald Berwick, an avid supporter of the British health system. He called it “one of the truly astounding human endeavors of modern history.” Berwick will lead the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Britain's system has been unable to keep up with cost and demand of the bureaucratic giant. Proposed changes include plans to dole back money and authority to local practitioners, remove layers of bureaucracy and give patients more choices.

NEW JERSEY SUPREME COURT REJECTS ASSAULT ON MARRIAGE

(EP News)--New Jersey's highest court turned away a request by six same-sex couples to redefine marriage. The court split 3-3, with a tie going against the couples. They had sought to take their case directly to the state's Supreme Court, without going through the lower courts first. Len Deo, president of the New Jersey Family Policy Council, said, “We were hoping the Supreme Court would just reject the application outright. Nevertheless, we believe it was significant setback for the homosexual activists in their quest to have the courts redefine marriage, as opposed to the Legislature.” Gay activists are pushing for civil unions in Hawaii and Montana; however, in New Jersey – the only state where civil unions are legal – they want it turned into marriage.

DOCTORS PROTEST AMENDMENT TO BRING ABORTIONS TO MILITARY BASES

(EP News)--More than 200 physicians, who served in the U.S. military, sent a letter to Senators in early August, asking that they vote against an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill which would pay for abortions on military bases. Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., sponsored the amendment. The letter, sent by the Christian Medical Association (CMA), said, “Such a drastic and controversial change in longstanding federal policy could disrupt military medicine in a time of war and also undermine military physician retention and recruitment.” Gene Rudd, senior vice president of CMA, said that if the amendment is enacted, it will ultimately threaten religious liberties and the effect on morale and military readiness. “In addition to facilitating further destruction of unborn life,” Rudd said, “the provision will place military physicians with life-honoring convictions in the unenviable position of either disobeying orders, abandoning their conscience, or seeking objector status.” A scientific survey of faith-based physicians reveals that 95 percent will actually leave medicine if pressured to compromise their life-affirming ethical commitments.

“SHOW ME” STATE VOTERS REBUKE OBAMA ON HEALTH CARE

(EP News)--On one of the hottest days in Missouri, voters showed up in droves in early August, showing more interest in

casting their ballot for or against Proposition C, than to vote for primary election candidates. The end result: Missourians resoundingly supported Proposition C – which rejects President Obama's new health care law's “individual mandate,” requiring all Americans to purchase health insurance. State Sen. Jane Cunningham, who sponsored the referendum – also known as Health Care Freedom Act (HB1764) – credits Tea Party movement and citizen groups with the victory, and hopes the vote will send a loud and clear message to Washington, D.C. More than 71.1 percent of Missourians voted to “deny the government authority to penalize citizens for refusing to purchase private health insurance or infringe upon the right to offer or accept direct payment for lawful health care services.”

GAY CURRICULUM AIMED AT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

(EP News)--A textbook publishing company is releasing middle school curriculum to address the needs of gay, lesbian-, and transgender-identified students. In response to the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) national school climate survey, which indicated that just 6 percent of school libraries contained gay-related resources, Mason Crest Publishing will introduce this fall a 15-book series called, “The Gallup's Modern Guide to Gay, Lesbian & Transgender Life.” The curriculum purports to address significant topics, including social and political stigmas, bullying, family structures, etc. “For us, it's a crucial age where you can develop the thinking and the awareness and the open-mindedness to students,” says Louis Cohen, principal and creative director for Mason Crest Publishing.

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Pro. 22:6).

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS ARGENTINA FIRST LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY TO LEGALIZE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE, ADOPTION

(EP News)--Argentina is the first Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage and gay adoption. Despite efforts by the Catholic Church and faith communities, the country's Senate on July 14 approved the measure 33-27. “The legalization of same-sex marriage in Argentina sets a very negative precedent for Latin American nations,” said Yuri Mantilla, director of international government affairs for CitizenLink. “The decision deconstructs one of the most important historical foundations of any nation, which is marriage as the union between a man and a woman.”

UN COUNCIL ACCREDITS GAY-ACTIVIST GROUP

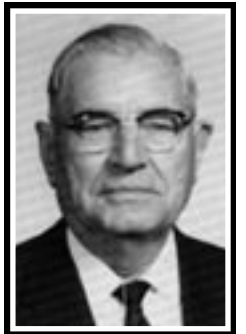
(EP News)--After 10 years, the United Nations nongovernmental organizations (NGO) committee voted to give accredited status to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission Association. When organizations are approved for official NGO status within the U.N. framework,

they are officially empowered to have input – and influence – at varying levels within its decision-making structures. The ultimate goal of the gay activists is to carve out special recognition – and, in effect, protected class status – for sexual orientation and gender identity within the framework of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights.



Good Fishing

By Joseph Emaziah Cobb
(1890 - 1969)



“Cast the net on the right side. . .” (John 21:6).

Do you like to fish? Many people do; some for one reason, some for another. Some fish for pure sport; some fish for the reason they like fish to eat, and they seek to catch some fish to eat; some fish for a livelihood. Fishing is their occupation. The first disciples of the Lord were fishers of the last named sort; they fished for a livelihood, or as an occupation. Such an occupation or vocation is perfectly honorable; there is nothing wrong in it. The Lord, evidently, knew there was some sort of analogy between literal fishing and fishing for men. We remember when He called the first disciples He said to them, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” ---It is really interesting to observe a real fisherman fish. He seems to know the best time, the best place, and the best way, or manner, to fish. In order to be a good fisherman it is necessary to know something of the nature, habits, etc., of fish. All this will apply with equal force in fishing for men. There is certainly much significance in the statement of Jesus, “Cast your net on the RIGHT side. . .” (emph. JEC). Let us prayerfully consider, for a little while, the statement under consideration and its related events and incidents.

I. A Peculiar Appearance (Verses 1-2).

Jesus, at this time, made a rather peculiar appearance to His disciples. There were together Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two other disciples who are not named. They were discussing something which, no doubt, to them seemed of very grave importance. Peter said, “I go a fishing.” ---The rest said unto him, “We also go with thee.” ---Then we are told that they immediately went and entered into a ship. Then we note the disappointing announcement, “and that night they caught NOTHING” (emph. JEC). ---We know this must have been somewhat of a disappointment to them for, no

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Good Fishing

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doubt, they had expected to make a large haul, as we sometimes say. But they had rowed and toiled, and no doubt tried everything fishermen knew to try, in order to get some fish. They were, in all probability, in need of money; this is the way they had been accustomed to earning money, now, after a hard night's toil they had nothing to sell, neither anything to eat, and, we suspect, they were hungry. In the very midst of this disappointing affair, one appeared to them, but they did not know Him. It is well sometimes to be taken unawares. Jesus, very likely, made a very deep impression just in the manner in which He chose to appear unto them. It is well we think sometimes for a preacher to be in a group for awhile unrecognized; in such a way he may be able to accomplish things he might not be otherwise able to accomplish. It is good sometimes to, as we often say, slip up on the blind side of folks. Deeper and more lasting impressions may be made on the hearts of people in that way.

II. A Gentle Rebuke (Verse 5).

Jesus asked these disciples a very simple question, but it, no doubt, struck home to their hearts. **"Children, have ye any meat?"** ---This is an instance of Jesus asking His disciples a question, not for information, because He knew they had no fish, but He asked it, no doubt, to provoke some deep thinking upon their part. Jesus was not without resources when it was necessary to rebuke; His rebukes were, for the most part gentle, but they always went home to the heart. These disciples were out of their places, and they, no doubt, realized it in their hearts, but Jesus made it really burn in their hearts.

III. Service In Self Will (Verse 3).

There is nothing wrong, as has already been pointed out, in fishing; it is altogether honorable to fish; hence these disciples did not commit a sin merely in going a fishing. But Jesus had called them, and had made them to become fishers of men. They had, some three years previous to this, forsaken their nets to follow Jesus. But Jesus did not send them on that fishing trip; this was one of their own appointments. They had not even consulted their Lord, or Master as to whether they should go on this fishing trip. This trip was occasioned by their own faithlessness. Jesus had been crucified, but He had risen from the dead as He had told them He would do. But they had been so slow of heart they had not understood nor believed Him.

They had desponded; they had given up; right when they should have been the most diligent in the work of the Lord they had despaired. Thinking all was lost, Peter said, **"I go a fishing."** There is nothing to this new system we have

been following anyway; I go a fishing; I'm going back where I can make a living. How many have you heard talk like that? People absent themselves from the services of the Lord's house on the Lord's day for no reason other than they want to go somewhere else more than they want to go to the Lord's house. They don't take time to pray over the matter; they don't consult the Lord about it; they just go out of their own self-will. Then when they do go fishing they catch nothing. Is it any wonder that some professed Christians never win souls to Christ? Only those who are yielded to Christ can hope to become soul winners.

IV. A Wise Command (Verse 6).

"Cast the net on the right side of the ship. . ." ---How strange that these disciples had been toiling and rowing all night with a bountiful supply of fish on the right side of the ship; their failure lay in the fact they cast their net on the WRONG side of the ship. How many times do we fail for nothing less nor more than simply casting our net on the wrong side? What are some of the wrong sides on which we may cast our nets? We'll mention one;

Non-church attendance. How many who are members of our churches never, or very seldom, darken the church doors on the Lord's day, or attend the mid-week services? They'll always have some silly excuse, but, listen, friend, there are no excuses for not attending the house of the Lord to worship. They are saying in their hearts, no doubt, "I don't have to go to church." Well, one doesn't have to go to church. They can do as they please about it now, but, listen, hear what God says: **"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."**

There are so many ways to cast the net on the wrong side; there is the pleasure side; the side of vanity and pride; the side of covetousness. But many there are who are casing their nets on all these sides, and they are the wrong side of the ship.

V. A Willing Obedience (Verse 6).

"They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." ---The disciples, by this time, were willing to take advice and counsel from others. They had failed utterly; if some one could tell them what to do they were willing to try; they were willing to obey the voice of any who could tell them how and where to catch fish. They had lost that spirit of self-will; they have learned they do not know it all. They have learned a lesson on the dependency of man upon others than himself. That is one lesson all of us must learn; we are not independent.

IV. A Grand Result (Verse 6).

What a wonderful result they had

when they obeyed the voice that said, **"Cast the net on the right side."** ---Their net was so filled with great fish they could not bring it to shore. Their hearts were, no doubt, thrilled with the sight. We almost wish we could hear the ejaculations of the Apostle Peter as they were bringing the net to shore filled to the brim with fine fish. But friends, it will be so every time; when we, at the command of our Lord, cast the net on the right side of the ship, we shall find. But we may learn from this; yea, we must learn from this incident that we are not to have our own will in the matter of casting our net into the water; we must respect the will of the Master.

VII. A Glorious Revelation (Verses 7-14).

All this was done before they knew who it was that was administering affairs at this time. But, no doubt, things had been running through their minds, some of them, at least, while some had thought nothing of whom it was so capably guiding them. But we see John slipping over to where Peter was, and whispering, **"It is the Lord."** ---Poor Peter! He was not in a fit condition, he thought to meet his Lord, so into the waters he jumped! When Jesus comes, there will be, perhaps, some who will not recognize Him, just as Peter failed to recognize Him on this occasion, and when the realization does reach their hearts, like Peter, they will want to get away and get clothed. See II Corinthians 5:2-3. Jesus was revealed to them: (1) Personally, they recognized Him as their Lord. (2) He was revealed in His power to provide. They did not need the fish they had caught; Jesus had provided both bread and fish. (3) He was revealed in His mercifulness, **"Come and dine."**



A Bible Study

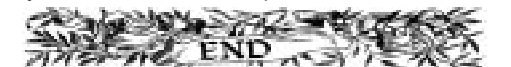
Man becoming sinful by the disobedience and fall of his representative, Adam, is without recourse or ability to relieve himself from condemnation and sentence to eternal death, because he is an absolute moral bankrupt. Justice is one of the chief attributes of God and He cannot exercise mercy at the expense or suspension of justice, which demands that the violation of His infinite law must be satisfied and the penalty duly inflicted. If ever relieved from his self-helplessness, hopeless condition he must

have help from an outside higher source, with greater power; actuated by divine grace and love---

"Grace must contrive the way,
To save rebellious man."

God, in omniscience, knew, before He created man, that he would disobey His command, and graciously provided a plan of redemption, a way of salvation; and for this purpose a covenant was made between the persons of the Godhead, known as the "Covenant of Grace," in which man could have no part because he was not yet created.

God, in great love and mercy, did make covenants with men; with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and others, which we may notice in future studies. (News & Truths, 1931).



The Beginning of Sorrows

By Philip C. Parks
of Flint, Texas

(Matthew 24:1-8)

BACKGROUND:

i. Jesus Christ and His disciples had journeyed from Galilee to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover. During this joyous festive celebration, the disciples viewed the temple and were enthralled by its architectural impressiveness. They could not help themselves to invite their Lord to share their viewing and to become equally spellbound by the temple's grandeur. This is implied in verse one: **"His (Jesus') disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple."**

John MacArthur supplies an interesting quotation describing why the disciples would react in such a way while viewing the temple's magnificent construction:

"The Temple was awe-inspiring by any standards, but to a group of common men from rural Galilee it must have been a breathtaking marvel.

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Beginning of Sorrows

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They could not conceive how such an enormous structure could have been built or decorated so magnificently. The Roman historian Tacitus reported that it was a place of immense wealth, and the Babylonian Talmud said, 'He that never saw the temple of Herod never saw a fine building.' Some of the stones measured 40 feet by 12 by 12 and weighed up to a hundred tons, quarried as a single piece and transported many miles to the building site." (*The MacArthur New*

Testament Commentary: Matthew 24-28, Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1989, Mt. 24:1-2, page 8.)

ii. With the great and impressive showing of the Jewish religion's accoutrements including the temple's magnificent expansions as well as their high emotions during this feast time, it was natural for the Jews, and especially Christ's disciples, to figure it was time for their Messiah to usher in His eternal kingdom (Luke 19:11): **"they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear."**

iii. Instead, Jesus secretly revealed the temple's destruction (v. 2).

Read Matthew 24:1-8 (esp. v. 8).

INTRODUCTION:

i. The "object" of the sorrows listed in these verses is argued. Examples of the arguments include:

- Jerusalem and the Jewish nation.
- The Roman Empire.
- All God's people throughout the church age.
- Christian persecution during the tribulation.
- An intermingling of all the above.

ii. The "time span" covered during verses 1-8 is also argued:

- Concluded when the temple was destroyed.
- The span of the church age till Christ's 2nd coming.
- The seven-year tribulation period.
- An intermingling of all the above.

iii. It is my own personal interpretation that the events recorded in verses 1-8 are characteristic to all times, places, and peoples. I must emphatically emphasize that certain events recorded in the verses following verse eight are still unfulfilled and are appointed to the future. These events include:

(v. 15) **"abomination of desolation."**

(v. 21) **"great tribulation."**

(v. 29) **"the powers of heaven** (viz. sun, moon, stars; may also include principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness (see Eph. 6:12) **shall be shaken."**

(v. 30) **"the sign of the Son of man in heaven."**

iv. My own personal interpretive general timeline for verses 4-31 is as follows (!! I reserve the right to revise my interpretation as the Lord gives me deeper insight !!):

- vv. 4-6 includes the time from Christ's Olivet Discourse with His disciples until the destruction of the temple.
- vv. 7-14 covers the perils of the whole church age (possibly to also include the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation period).
- vv. 14-22 spans the seven-year tribulation period (especially the second 3 ½ years).
- vv. 23-26 generally describes our current **"spirit of antichrist"** (I John 4:3; see also I John 2:18 and II John v. 7).
- vv. 27-31 encompasses Christ's apocalyptic Second Coming and the Battle of Armageddon.

v. I have no doubt that there are many who may respectfully disagree with my previously stated timeline, but all must agree that regardless of the specific people involved or when the specific time occurs, the time of the end will be perilous as Apostle Paul stated (II Tim. 3:1): **"in the last days perilous** (dangerous; fierce) **times shall come."**

TRANSITION: Verses 4-8 describe the **"beginning of sorrows"** of the last age.

I. SORROWS BEGIN WITH GLOBAL DECEPTION IN CHRIST'S NAME (vv. 4, 5).

(1) THE END WILL BE PRECEDED WITH GREAT SPIRITUAL DECEPTION (v. 4).

Jesus warned, **"Take heed that no man deceive you."** The word **"deceive"** means to be seductively led into spiritual error and sin.

(A) Apostle Paul listed at least three spiritual seductions used by deceivers:

1 -- Man's traditions (Col. 2:8): **"Beware lest any man spoil** (lead away from the truth) **you through philosophy** (skilled in worldly knowledge) **and vain deceit, after the tradition** (teachings in authoritative rituals) **of men, after the rudiments** (elementary speculations) **of the world, and not after Christ."**

2 -- Superstitions accepted by those who reject sound doctrine (II Tim. 4:4): **"they** (the deceived) **shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned** (twisted; dislocated) **unto fables** (mysterious tales)."

3 -- Seducing spirits (I Tim. 4:1): **"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly** (very

clearly), **that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."**

(2) THE DECEIVERS ARE ANTICHRISTS (v. 5).

Our Lord warned, **"many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."**

The word "antichrist" is not used in this verse or in this discourse for that matter. But that is exactly what they are when examining them under the light of the contexts where the word in its singular and plural forms is used. An antichrist is one who "opposes" Christ or one who says he is Christ (an imposter). There will be **"many"** antichrists and they will **"deceive many."** The still yet future person described as the eschatological antichrist will deceive many with a **"strong delusion"** (II Thess. 2:7-12).

II. SORROWS BEGIN WITH GLOBAL POLITICAL UNREST AND WARFARE (v. 6, 7a).

(1) WAR WILL BE THE WORLD'S MOST PREVALENT ACTIVITY (v. 6).

Our Lord likewise forewarned, **"ye shall hear of wars** (plural) **and rumours** (plural reports) **of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet."** (I have underlined the final letter "s" in these words to emphasize the plurality.)

(2) EVERY GROUP OF PEOPLE WILL BE AFFECTED (v. 7a): **"For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."**

(A) In this context, the word **"nation"** may be defined as ethnic groups or people sharing a common skin color, heritage, nationality, etc. These "nations" are not necessarily associated with political and geographical boundaries. Modern examples of racial nations without borders include the races involving the red, yellow, black, and white races. The Palestinians are a nationality of people who are considered to be without a border. It is not uncommon to hear of heated hatred and unrest between these unbordered groups.

(B) Contextually, the word **"kingdom"** may be defined as a people within, and patriotic to, a common geographical and political boundary. Mixed peoples within a border are also known to be aggressive against peoples across their borders.

(3) GLOBAL CHAOS WILL ONLY GET WORSE (v. 6b). Jesus Christ warned again, **"but the end is not yet."** I believe Christ used the phrase, **"the end,"** to mean His apocalyptic Second Coming to fight the Battle of Armageddon. Christ also used the expression, **"not yet,"** to explain that the temple's destruction would not be the final climax that would end this age.

(4) THESE EVENTS SHOULD COMFORT GOD'S PEOPLE (v. 6). Our Lord Jesus knew His warnings would unsettle His disciples as well as us who read His warnings. That is why He added this consolation: **"see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass."**

When we witness our current global chaos, we should take comfort in the visible proof that God's plan is coming to pass and our anticipated Rapture followed by Christ's Second Coming is imminent.

III. SORROWS BEGIN WITH GLOBAL CALAMITIES (vv. 7b, 8).

In these verses, our Lord listed a plurality of sorrows (7b): **"there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places** (literally, 'place after place')."

(1) FAMINES (plural): We all know that famines occur naturally when little or no rainfall over extended periods of time causes a minimal or no harvest at all. Contextually, the sinister causes for these famines seem to be attributed to wars between "nations" and "kingdoms." The resulting effects are widespread hunger, thirst, and more fighting. These conditions cause whole populaces to disperse to find food often having to fight others in the process.

(2) PESTILENCES (plural): Pestilences are epidemics of deadly infections. Wars and famines are a major cause for these epidemics.

(3) EARTHQUAKES (plural): An earthquake is a geological shaking that usually causes great destruction of property and loss of lives. It is suggested that these earthquakes may be interpreted euphemistically as political insurrections, commotions, and wars (See Adam Clarke's Commentary on the N.T., Matt. 24:7).

(4) THESE ARE JUST A FORETASTE OF WHAT'S TO COME (v. 8). Jesus followed these warnings with a menacing declaration: **"All these are the beginning of sorrows."**

(A) The word **"beginning"** has three aspects:

- the first of a future series;
- there is more to come;
- that which is to follow will increase in frequency and intensity.

(B) Likewise, the word **"sorrows"** (plural) also has an ominous tone for it is synonymous to the intolerable pains of childbirth.

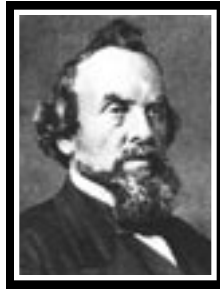
CLOSE:

From now on, beginning with verse nine, these sorrows become more and more personal for it initiates a new wave of pains (think of the rhythms of childbirth pains) beginning with the word, **"Then,"** meaning 'at that time.'



Happy Today

By John Ashworth
(1813 - 1875)



house, and gently putting her hand on my mother's shoulder, said, in kind, cheerful, encouraging words,

"I am glad you have arrived without any accident, and very well pleased to

see you.' Then, turning to us all, she said,

"The Lord bless you, my children. Come, my little dears, cheer up; we have a good fire for you, and plenty of new bread and butter and good warm tea.'

"That blessed woman who spoke so kindly to my mother, and tried to put a little joy into the hearts of her poor, fatherless children, was the lady at whose house you have been stopping. I am sure we all looked upon her as an angel from Heaven that night. She got two men to help to unload the cart, and fix the beds and scanty furniture in their places. When she had done all she could, she looked around upon us all, told us to pray to God and be good children, and a brighter day would dawn upon us, and then feelingly bade us good evening, promising to call and see us in the morning.

"I have often thought that the good lady will never know in this world what a weight of sadness she lifted from ten anxious hearts, and what hope and comfort she imparted that evening. When she was gone, we could talk about nothing else but the good lady. One said, 'She patted my cheek'; another, 'She put both hands on my head'; another said, 'She laughed at me'; and the little one that could hardly talk said, 'Hoo dave me tiss?' I am sure we prayed for her that night. She called to see us several times during the week, and took good care we did not want. Three of the eldest were got into the factory. On the Sunday morning, according to arrangement with my mother, she came to take us to the Sunday school. She had provided us with many articles of clothing, yet we were poorly clad, but clean as a new pin. There were a great many boys and girls in the school---we had never seen so many before---and all looked like little ladies and gentlemen, they were so well dressed. She knew there would be a great contrast betwixt us and the other children, and fearing we might be discouraged, she thought it better to go with us and give us the benefit of her influence; and it was well she did. She called us her own children, and requested the teachers and scholars to be kind to us. We soon began to get wages at the mill, and in a few years were all at work; and as she said, 'a brighter day did dawn,' but she had much to do with making it bright. In course of time changes again came---some got

married, and others removed to other situations, and some are in Heaven; but to us all, the very name of Mrs. Kay is precious."

The train's arriving cut off the end of the man's story, but not before he had got the good he promised him self by telling me of the early struggles of his family, and the kindness of a friend in the time of need. He was evidently grateful, and gratitude for the goodness of God, or the kindness of man, always softens the heart, mellows the soul, and increases our joy, and this is one of the uses of adversity; trials sanctified, troubles past, dangers overcome, and storms over, give us a conception of our blessings we should never have had without them. But what of those who reached out to us a friendly hand in the hour of sorrow, and helped to wipe the tear in the day of distress? These are large sharers in our felicity, inseparable partners of our happiness. We cannot enter the garret or the humble cottage carrying a sweet flower to please a sick child without ourselves smelling the perfume. We cannot know that we have given a moment's comfort to another without in a measure sharing in that comfort. God has so ordered it. And this very lady, so affectionately mentioned by the man, and at whose house I had been for a short time sojourning, showed how true this is by another of her kind actions; for on my coming downstairs about seven in the morning, and on entering the breakfast room, she, as was her custom, sat beside a small table reading her morning portion from the Word of God. She had just finished when I entered, and she rose, offering me her hand, saying,

"Good morning to you, sir; I do hope you have had a good night's rest after the labors of yesterday. What a mercy to have a painless night of sound sleep. Do you know, I have just been thinking it is very likely I am going to be happy today."

"I hope you are, and I think you are happy most days. But how do you know?" was my inquiry.

"Well, I know we are not absolutely certain what a day or an hour may bring forth, but there are probabilities, and it is very probable I shall be happy. For several days I have had an impression that a poor but worthy family of my acquaintance are just now in difficulties. I know how close and reserved they are, and how anxious they will be to keep it a secret; but the fault of their present state is not their own, and they have tried hard to prevent it; but a little timely aid will save them from greater losses. I have dreamed much about them this last night, and in a few hours I am setting out to lend them what they need---for I durst not offer to give it: I should offend them if I did. Now, sir, I know that errand will be to me a very happy one; and my husband quite approves of what I am doing. I am glad to be able to help anybody, for what is the

use of having money if you do not enjoy it? and I think the best way of enjoying it is to honor the Lord with it by trying to help the helpless."

I did not ask the kind-hearted lady who the persons were she was going to help out of trouble, nor did she tell me, for she is careful not to boast, regarding herself as merely a steward; but I think she would realize her prediction. It is in the nature of happiness to communicate itself to others and yet find itself no poorer. Giving does not impoverish, but increases the store. Those who have no care for any but themselves, little know how much they lose by their selfishness; it is those who water others that are themselves watered. This the good lady, with every Christian worker, proves; and I have no doubt she was happy that day.

(Simple Records, 1871).



Reason Why I Believe the Bible Was Inspired and Given By God

(Last Sermon of John Newton Hall)
As Noted by J. A. Scarboro

1. *There is a God.* All the universe proclaims this truth.

2. *The Bible is the only book in the world in the language of God, and the best language of men.* The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the language of religion and law. The Old Testament is now a text book in Hebrew and a student cannot graduate from a university of languages unless he has read the Old Testament in Hebrew, and no man is considered educated by scholars unless he reads in Hebrew. God is master of languages, and He selected the Hebrew as the language in which to give us His will as revealed in the Old Testament.

The New Testament was written in Greek, the best and purest human language. It puts the largest thoughts into the shortest sentences and words, and God selected that language in which to complete His revelation. When God had completed His revelation in these tongues He petrified them. Other languages change. These do not. So perfect are they that one who can read or speak Hebrew or Greek now could have conversed intelligently with speakers of those languages in the time of David and our Savior.

3. *Because there are mysteries in the Bible.* Men are too ignorant to comprehend God's thoughts, and for this reason many things which God says men cannot understand. Shall we refuse to believe it because it is mysterious? Since it

◊ (Continued on page 419)

Reason Why I

(Continued from page 418) ♦

claims to be a revelation from a God of mysteries, how could we believe it was from Him if it contained no mysteries? Nature is from God, and we know nature is mysterious. If the Bible is from God, it, too, will therefore contain mysteries. What is the attraction of gravitation? We are told it is the natural tendency of free bodies to move toward the center of the earth. But what makes Mother Earth reach out her hands to call her children to her breast? Nobody knows or can tell. What is death? Who can tell? What is life? We do not know. Scientific men have argued eighty-five principles to explain the mystery of life, no two of which agree. What is electricity? How does it work? Marconi and Edison say they do not know.

There are thousands of such mysteries within and about us---nature is full of them. We do not refuse to believe in nature because she is mysterious and refuses to yield up her secrets to our weak minds. Shall we refuse to believe the Bible because we do not understand it? **"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."** The mysteries convince me the Bible is from God.

I read Butler's Analogy of Religion and went to sleep over it. Then I read Bogarty's Analysis of Butler's Analogy and he woke me up. He understood Butler.

Men could not have indicted or invented the Bible, because it is above human comprehension, just as nature, the other book of God, is above it, and therefore I know that both nature and the Bible are from God.

(1) God is. It makes that perfectly plain.

(2) I am a sinner. It makes that perfectly plain.

(3) Man needs salvation. That is perfectly plain.

4. *Because it is so simple.* It makes all that is necessary, for our happiness, for us to know, perfectly plain.

(5) Jesus came to die for us and give us eternal life. That is perfectly plain.

Thus God in the Bible makes present conditions and needs plain, and promises to make the future plain when we need it.

5. *Because the Bible is so brief.* If God wrote it then it will be pregnant with truth. It is pregnant with truth. Therefore God wrote it.

McClaren preached one hundred and sixteen sermons from one text. How long would it take a man to explain all the truth in the Bible, even if he understood it, on that basis?

Lofton preached or wrote sixteen sermons on the word "so," in the text **"God so loved the world."** How that word "so" does grow and expand as the

preacher goes on with it. But how long would it take him to preach all the truth in all the words of the Bible?

When I was a boy, quite young, not more than twelve, perhaps, I heard an old Methodist preacher preach from the word "eternity." He said it was used one time in the Bible. But as he preached and the thought and truth grew on me, I felt I was but an infinitesimal atom in God's universe and God's "eternity."

The Bible is not like any other book. If men had written it, it would have been like other books. Therefore, we know that God wrote it.

Addison's History of the Creation of Light is one of the finest books man ever wrote. But the Bible puts more in one verse than there is in Addison's history. **"God said, Let there be light."**

One man wrote an evolutionary history of the world. The Bible tells the whole story in one verse: **"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."**

Another wrote five volumes on the life of Washington. The Bible puts the biography of Enoch, who lived much longer than Washington, into one verse: **"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."**

Still another wrote two volumes on the life of Christ, showing he was both human and divine. The Bible tells the whole story in two words: **"Jesus wept."**

Men cannot write that way. God can. The Bible is written that way. Therefore the Bible is from God.

6. *Because the Bible deals honestly with men and tells the truth on them faithfully and impartially.*

Fiction manufactures heroes and tries to produce faultless men.

If the Bible had been written by men evil would have been concealed. It is not in human nature for men to reveal their own evil thoughts and bad conduct. But the Bible tells the truth just as it is. It tells how that great and good man, Abraham, lied. It tells how Moses did not please God. Of David committing murder, adultery and falsehood. It tells the truth on Peter and Paul. Some modern folks claim perfection, but we do not read of such folks in the Bible. God speaks the truth. You must face the truth just as it is, so you had best be careful.

7. *Because it is adapted to every need.* Here is warning, instruction, help, comfort, guidance for everybody and every class and condition of men.

No man or men could write a book adapted to the needs of all men and conditions in all ages, covering their wants, material and spiritual.

The Bible is a book that does this. Therefore, the Bible is from God, not of men.

I could go on thus much longer, but I must regard your patience and my strength.

"Oh! I forgot to quote my text! Let me

read it to you." **"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that that believe"** (I Thess. 2:13).



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Silsbee, TX and Pastor Jose' Serrano would like to announce their upcoming 25th Annual Bible Conference to be held, our precious Lord willing, October 15-17, 2010 starting at 7 p.m. A light dinner will be served starting at 5 p.m.

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

Our current services: Sunday school at 10:00 am, Worship service at 11:00 followed by lunch, and an afternoon service at 1:00 pm. Wednesday services are at 7:00 pm.

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

The Bethel Bible Baptist Church, PO Box 85, Mansfield, LA is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elder should call Connie McMellon at 318-872-1647.

The Landmark Baptist Church of Collinsville, IL is in need of a pastor.

Any interested Elders may call (618) 288-4236 for more information.

Any church that is without a pastor, please feel free to send your information in regards to the pastoral position for publication in these announcements.

BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 7-1-2010 to 7-31-2010

Beginning Balance.....	\$10,337.05
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Berea B. C., Westpoint, TN	50.00
Briar Creek B. C., Williamsburg, KY	100.00
Grace B. C., Corbin, KY	100.00
.....	475.00
TOTAL.....	10,812.05

EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	600.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	600.00
.....	\$10,212.05
Interest	+ .43
.....	10,212.48
Less Corbin, KY des.	-1,563.72
ENDING BALANCE	\$8,648.76

CORBIN, KENTUCKY REPORT

Beginning Balance.....	\$1,723.72
RECEIPTS:	
TOTAL.....	1,723.72
EXPENDITURES:	
WCTT	160.00
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,563.72



BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 7-1-2010 to 7-31-2010

Beginning Balance.....	\$1,791.42
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RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX.....	25.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	17.91
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	441.14
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL.....	60.00
Berea M. B. C., West Point, TN	150.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	100.00
Bible Believer's B. C., Naples, ID	50.00
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Sovereign Grace B. C. Warren, OH.....	75.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
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Dividing checks	150.00
Anonymous	1,341.00
Sub Total	\$4,379.55
TOTAL.....	\$6,170.97

EXPENDITURES:	
Printing.....	581.00
Postage	716.86
Supplies	127.17
Wages	2,300.00
Wages*	224.00
FICA	236.40
Dividing checks	150.00
Total Expenditures	4,208.26
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,962.71

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

Requirements in Order to Pray an Effective Prayer

By E. G. Cook
(1898 - 1986)



thank and praise our wonderful God for past blessings before we supplicate (or ask) for more blessings. And it must be done in the Spirit, that is, we must let the Holy Spirit guide us in our praying. Then in Psalm 119: 58 David says, "I entreated thy favour with my whole heart." There is no place for half-hearted praying. Then when we have met the requirements we are told in Hebrews 4:16 to "Come boldly unto the throne of grace." But, as we come to the throne of grace boldly let us remember it must be done in humility and whole heartedly. Then in Luke 18:1 Jesus says, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." That is when we have met the requirements we should not become despondent and quit praying because God does not answer our prayer immediately. In Daniel 10, Daniel prayed for three weeks before the answer came. And the one who hindered the answer to Daniel's prayer is still in the hindering business today.

Then on what ground should we pray? Paul says in Ephesians 2:18 "Through Him (Jesus Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." We go to the Father through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In John 16:23 Jesus says, "In that day (this church age) ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." For us to ask in His name means much more than to just tack on His name at the end of our prayers. It includes His merit before the Father, and, furthermore, it means to be in accord with His will as set forth in His Word. In John 14:13-14 Jesus says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask

anything in my name, I will do it." In John 16:23 He says the Father will give it you, He says He will do it, but there is no contradiction here. In John 10:30 He says, "I and my Father are one." By that He means they are one in purpose and in performance. What one does the other does. In John 15:16 we read, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

Then in I John 5:14 we read, "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, he heareth us" (emph. EGC). It must be according to His will. And in James 1:6-7 we read, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." If we cannot believe that we will receive the thing we are asking for it is better for us not ask for it at all. But if we are to qualify as one who is effectual in his prayer life, here is the clincher, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). This word "abide" (MENO) means to continue in. It does not mean that we can pay our Lord a visit on Sunday, and keep His Word in us during the Sunday School hour and still receive what we ask for. It means that we are to just be at home in Christ, He is talking about fellowship with Him here. We must continue in sweet fellowship with our dear Lord, and keep His Words ever at hand if we would prevail in prayer.

TO SUM IT ALL UP

For us to be able to pray an effectual prayer we must first be born again. We must pray to the Father in the name of, or on the merits of Jesus Christ, and according to His will. It must be done in, and by, the power of the Holy Spirit, and in all humility. It must be specific, and at the same time it must be in according with His will and His Word. It must be earnest (not frantic), and whole heartedly. It must be in faith, nothing

wavering. Unless we can believe that we will receive it, we should not ask for it. To ask just to be asking without faith is sinful. We should always thank God for past blessings before we ask for more of them. He likes to be appreciated you know. We must keep His teachings, and do the things that are pleasing to Him, and we must continue to just be at home in Him, and to just let His Word be at home in us if we are to prevail with Him in prayer.

Is it any wonder that so many prayers never get through the ceiling? Is it any wonder that so many who call themselves praying never get an answer? God does not play with us, so let us ask ourselves, Do I qualify for effectual praying?



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All of us should be interested in just what requirements we must meet in order for us to be able to pray an effective prayer. So may we consider some of those requirements? David says in Psalm 5:3, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee." So our prayer is to be directed to God. In Psalm 65:2 he says, "O thou that hearest prayer." David says God is the one who hears prayer, but under just what condition does He hear our prayer? Jesus Christ says in Matthew 7:7, "Ask and it shall be given you." On the surface this seems to be a blank check that we can just fill out to our heart's content. But Peter tells us in II Peter 1:20 that "no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation." This does not mean that we must go to the Catholic Church, or any other church in order to get the interpretation of a Scripture. It simply means that we are to interpret any given Scripture in the light of all the other Scriptures on the subject.

So, under what conditions can we ask and it shall be given us? Jesus says in Matthew 21:22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, BELIEVING, ye shall receive" (emph. EGC). So one of the conditions that we must meet is that we must believe that we will receive the thing we are asking for. But who is it that believes? In John 9:31 we read, "We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and DOETH HIS WILL, him he heareth" (emph. EGC). The Psalmist says in Psalm 80:18, "Quicken us (that is, make us alive spiritually), and we will call upon thy name." We see here that we must first be born again, be a worshipper of God, and be doing His will. But there are still other requirements that we must meet. In Psalm 10:17 we read, "LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble." So humility is another requirement that is essential to effective praying.

Then in Philippians 4:6 one translation says, "Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer." So another requirement is that we must not worry. It is a sin for us to worry when we are told not to do that. A person simply cannot worry and trust God at the same time. Those two things just do not go together.

Now that we have seen some of the requirements for effective praying let us consider how we are to pray. In Ephesians 6:18 we read "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." This simply means that we must