

The Evil of Sin

PART TWO

By Milburn R. Cockrell
(1941 – 2002)

In my former message I treated on the definition of sin. I spoke of the fact of sin. Now I want to continue this subject again.



FAULT OF SIN

Sin in its nature is egotism. It causes a person to put self before God. Selfishness is at the bottom of all disobedience. Isaiah 53:6 reads: **"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. . . ."**

Sin causes us to set up ourselves and our own ways in competition with God and His ways. This is the fault of sin. It makes us walk stubbornly in the way of our own hearts and corrupt passions instead of walking obediently in God's way. The evil in us prompts us to be our own masters and to do our own things. **"In those days there was no king in Israel: but every man did that which**

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Are You An Exceptional Church Member?

By Tom Ross
of South Point, Ohio

(Editor's Note: This article is lengthy and I debated on breaking it into parts over several issues, but felt it was worth the extra space in one issue so it would be complete for future reference).

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved,

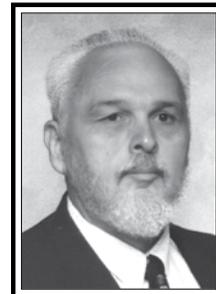


your election of God...So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything" (I Thess. 1:2-4, 7-8).

An Unwarrantable Stress on Baptism

By Curtis Pugh
of Poteau, Oklahoma

Baptists have often been charged with putting an emphasis on baptism that is neither justifiable or excusable, i.e. unwarrantable. Doubtless this has been the case from the days of the apostles when **"they went out from us"** (I John 2:19), and surely increased later when those who left the Lord's congregations adopted



the damnable heresy of baptismal regeneration. It certainly was the case in Britain during the ministry of Strict Baptist preacher Abraham Booth (A.D. 1734 to A.D. 1806). Because the Strict (closed communion) Baptists were being greatly slandered with this false charge he wrote a book in defense of the Baptists. We cite his lengthy title as one piece of evidence of the charges often laid at the feet of the Baptists. Take note of his title: **AN APOLOGY FOR THE**

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The church at Thessalonica was one of the most commended churches in the New Testament. Many consider this church to be an ideal example of what a New Testament Baptist church should be. Throughout Paul's inspired epistles to the church at Thessalonica there are many components and ingredients that blend together, revealing what it is that characterizes the make up of an exceptional member of the Lord's church.

As of this writing (May, 2017) I have been saved for nearly thirty-seven years. Not long after the Lord saved me, He added me to one of His churches by leading me to submit to scriptural Baptist baptism. I have counted it my solemn privilege to be a member of a true New Testament Baptist Church for nearly thirty-seven years. To be part of Christ's body is a privilege that carries with it some definite responsibilities. I look at church membership a lot like a spiritual job with specific duties that should be faithfully carried out. God is our Heavenly Employer, and He has placed us in His kind of church to be exceptional workers. I believe everyone who is a member of a sound Baptist church should strive to be good employees, exceptionally devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, I believe we are called to be the very best we can be for the glory of God. We should strive to be exceptional! No Baptist church member should settle for the status quo, or be satisfied with mediocrity.

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

The Evil of Sin

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was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6).

The fault of sin can further be seen when we look at what was necessary to redeem us from its penalty. Only the obedience and death of God's Son could atone for it. **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"** (II Cor. 5:21). The only remedy for sinners was for the sinless One to be made a sin offering for sinners.

The evil consequence of sin disclosed the fault of sin. It made an angel a devil! Ezekiel 28:15 declares: **"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."** It makes man to have less sense than an animal: **"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider"** (Isa. 1:3). How pitiful that animals know their owner and sustainer, yet poor man does not!

Sin has brought all the misery upon men that is in the world. **"The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor"** (Job 15:20). Of man the Apostle Paul said: **"Destruction and misery are in their ways"** (Rom. 3:16). Sin has made this world the evil place that it is. James calls this planet **"a world of iniquity"** (James 3:6).

That evil thing called sin wrongs man's soul: **"But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death"** (Prov. 8:36). It darkens the understanding: **"Having the understanding darkened"** (Eph. 4:18). It warps the judgment:

"And ye . . . are become judges of evil thoughts" (James 2:4).

Sin makes men call evil good: **"Woe to them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"** (Isa. 5:20). It impairs the ability of man to distinguish between truth and error: **"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"** (II Tim. 3:7). It stupefies the conscience; it numbs its sensibilities. It sears it with a hot iron: **"Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron"** (I Tim. 4:2). It perverts man's will: **"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life"** (John 5:40).

FOLLY OF SIN

When we sin we act against right reason and our true interest. Sin enslaves a man: **"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"** (John 8:34). The smoker, the drinker, the adulteress and the adulterer know that this verse of Scripture is true by their experience. They all want to quit and can not!

Those who make a practice of sinning are in bondage to a hard master. The worst tyrant a man can serve is his own selfish heart. By rejecting God's authority in the interest of supposed freedom, he sinks into the most hopeless slavery. Of him it may be well said as of Ahab of old: **"Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD"** (I Kings 21:20). A sinner does the work of sin and must receive its wages.

Sin is folly because it torments: **"He that is cruel troubleth his own flesh"** (Prov. 11:17). Look at the prostitute who offers her body to a man for a price. This action turns into a nightmare.

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There may be broken homes, alienated children, venereal disease, lost jobs and an eternity of Hell fire.

Consider the heroin addict. As he continues to commit his sin, his life wastes away and he is "hooked." The telltale witness to his miserable conditions are the needle track-marks up and down his arm. Then there are the glazed, staring eyes that reveal he has missed the purpose of life and turned aside to Satan.

Sin is folly because it breaks communion with God: **"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear"** (Isa. 59:2). What mischief there is in sin! It puts a partition wall between us and God. It provokes God to anger; it makes Him to withdraw His gracious presence from us.

Sin deprives the soul of happiness: **"There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked"** (Isa. 48:22) Why are people so unhappy? Why so restless and tense? Because sin abounds in men. Holiness is indispensable to happiness. **"O that thou hadst harkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea"** (Isa. 48:18). **"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them"** (Ps. 119:165).

Sins prevent God's blessings upon us: **"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you"** (Jer. 5:25).

Sin excludes one from Heaven: **"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth,**

neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). **"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie"** (Rev. 22:14-15).

FILTH OF SIN

Sin makes us odious to God. We, like the lepers of old, are all unclean: **"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away"** (Isa. 64:6). Our sins make us obnoxious to God's justice and odious to His holiness. We are guilty of that abominable thing which He hates and cannot look upon. Even our righteousnesses are corrupt. We are so corrupt that those who pass among us for righteous men are filthy rags, fit only to be cast into the garbage dump.

There is not only filthiness in our bodies, there is also filthiness in our souls. Man has a filthiness of spirit; he has corrupt inclinations and lusts that lurk in the spirit. It is possible that a life may be free from blame in the eyes of men like the Pharisees, yet be full of sin within his heart. **"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness"** (Matt. 23:27).

The filthiness of sin excites the wrath of God. The wrath of God continually abides upon the children of wrath. **"God judgeth**

the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11). **"And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed"** (Num. 32:13).

The very nature of God demands that sin be punished. He **"will by no means clear the guilty"** (Ex. 34:7). **"Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished"** (Prov. 11:21). The flood, the tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot's wife, and Calvary are monuments to prove that God punishes sin!

FRUIT OF SIN

The first fruit of sin is physical death: **"Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee"** (Ps. 55:23). **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death"** (James 1:15). **"For the wages of sin is death"** (Rom. 6:23).

Death is due to a sinner when he has sinned as wages are to an employee when he has done his work. Death is the wage of the least sin. **"But the sorrow of the world worketh death"** (II Cor. 7:10).

Achan sinned by stealing a Babylonian garment and some silver and gold. For his sin he was stoned to death in the valley of Achor (Josh. 7). Judas sinned by selling out Christ for thirty pieces of silver. He ended up hung by his neck until death. These examples prove how sin brings physical death.

Spiritual death is caused by sin: **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezek. 18:4). An immortal soul cannot cease to exist. In that sense it cannot die. The soul

is dead when separated from God, the source of spiritual life. Sin is the act of the soul. The body is only "the instrument of unrighteousness" (Rom. 6:13). Therefore the punishment of sin is "the tribulation and anguish" of the soul (Rom. 2:9).

Those who die in sin remain in sin for eternity, hence they must suffer **"the vengeance of eternal fire"** (Jude 7). Spiritual death is not mere non-existence, but wrong, wretched, debased, devilish existence. The second death, which is the final outcome of a life of sin, is defined in the New Testament as torment for ever and ever (Rev. 14:10-11).

Sin on earth has brought groaning to the lower creatures: **"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now"** (Rom. 8:22). Sin has brought the inferior creation into the bondage of corruption. Every sound produced by nature is in a minor key, speaking of the tragedy of sin. The sighing of the wind, the rustling of the leaves, the chirping of the birds, the murmuring of the brooks, all are nature's groanings under the suffering of sin.

FATHER OF SIN

The Scriptures speak of open sins: **"Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment"** (I Tim. 5:24). In opposition to this, there are secret sins: **"And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God"** (II Kings 17:9).

A secret sin is an evil act committed by a person of which the general public has no knowledge. It is a wicked deed that a person is afraid to commit publicly, lest he be scorned by his

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fellow creatures. Secret sins are heart sins (Matt. 5:28) and go no further than the heart in some cases. Though we may have sins that to men's eyes are hidden, they are an open book to God. **"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance"** (Ps. 90:8). Therefore our prayer should be: **"Cleanse thou me from secret faults"** (Ps. 19:12).

The Bible mentions willful sins: **"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins"** (Heb. 10:26). There are also sins of ignorance: **"And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance. . ."** (Lev. 4:13).

A willful sin is a sin committed presumptuously and deliberately with full knowledge and warning of its consequences. On the other hand, a sin of ignorance is the act of an offender who is ignorant of the law of God. However, ignorance does not excuse sin.

The Word of God tells us about sins of omission. Christ told the Pharisees: **"These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone"** (Luke 11:42). There are sins of commission. Both kinds are seen in Isaiah 1: **"Cease to do evil; Learn to do well"** (Isa. 1:16-17).

Many have the idea that sin consists in doing some terrible immoral evil, but it is sinful to refrain from doing good. To know right and not to do it, is as sinful as doing wrong. "He that does not the good he knows should be done, as well as he who does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned" (Matthew Henry).

Strictly speaking, all sin is committed against God (Ps. 51:4), but specifically speaking sin can be committed against the public (Ex. 23:8; Lev. 19:12), against persons (Ex. 20:13), against property (Ex. 20:15), against an animal (Ex. 23:5), and against self (Prov. 6:32). When one violates the first two of the Ten Commandments, he sins against God. When one breaks the other eight, he sins against man.

We must distinguish between sin and sins. Sin is that tendency to sin that we inherit from Adam; it is the principle of sin which dwells within each mortal. Paul called it: **"Sin that dwelleth in me"** (Rom. 7:20). Sins are specific acts of sin that we commit as the result of our tendency to sin.

CONCLUSION

The Lord commands that men repent of sin: **"Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin"** (Ezek. 18:30). He demands that we forsake sin: **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"** (Isa. 55:7).

The God of the Bible promises to forgive those who confess and forsake their sins. **"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"** (Prov. 28:13). Those forgiven are warned not to continue in sin: **"Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee"** (John 5:14). **"Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof"** (Rom. 6:12).



An Unwarrantable

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BAPTISTS. In which they are vindicated from the imputation of laying an unwarrantable stress on the ordinance of baptism; and against the charge of bigotry in refusing communion at the Lord's table to paedobaptists. So it is we borrow a bit of his title in giving a name to this present effort. (Paedobaptists, modern spelling pedobaptists, are those who in one fashion or another put water upon a baby thinking such an act bestows saving grace upon the recipient. Included in the group so named are the Eastern Orthodox etc. who dip at least a part of the infant's body, but nevertheless so "baptize" babies.)

First of all we assert that today's strict Baptists lay no more emphasis upon baptism than is warranted by the Word of God. Like our lineal forefathers through whom we claim a valid succession reaching back to the first congregation established by Christ, we continue the same baptism which they first administered. First of all we demand a proper candidate: a believer in Christ, i.e. one giving satisfactory evidence of regeneration before a congregation of Christ. As demonstrated by Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:37-38 so say we: **"And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."** The so-called baptisms of the pedobaptists conform neither in the character of the candidate nor in the mode of administration

to New Testament baptisms, for no records of either infants being baptized nor of anything other than dipping can be found in God's Book.

Not only do we demand a proper candidate, we require a proper mode. It is a thing of amazement to me that most of those who are so insistent that baptism is necessary for salvation are so loose as have no respect for the seriousness of the very nature of baptism: i.e. that there exists such a thing as a proper mode. Protestants generally will accept dipping for baptism (which is the meaning of the Greek "baptizo") and at the same time insist that sprinkling and pouring are equally legitimate. This claim of theirs that sprinkling is acceptable is completely baseless both from the meaning of the Greek "baptizo" and from the teaching and examples found in the Bible. If pedobaptist ministers were an uneducated lot we could perhaps excuse such inconsistency, but as they are generally educated above the level of most of their ordinary members, we think such inconsistency must be not due to ignorance, but rather to a disregard for the meaning of words themselves due to a prejudice for denomination or convenience above the Scriptures.

It is a notable fact this: every competent Greek scholar regardless of denominational affiliation admits that "baptizo" and related words signify and indeed demand the meaning "to dip" or "to plunge." No serious Greek scholar states that "baptizo" and related words mean to sprinkle or to pour! While there are multiple instances of historical evidence to be cited, strict Baptists of today cite not only the meaning of the word, but various Scriptures

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in support of the requirement of a proper or scriptural mode. We furnish one here: **“And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized”** (John 3:23). Weymouth translates **“much water there”** as “many pools of water there.” The Jordan was well known for the small amount of its flow during the dry season, but the place selected by John – indeed demanded by the nature of the ordinance – had pools or as we say “holes of water” sufficient for the dipping of repentant sinners. Today’s strict Baptists, like John the Baptist, require **“much water”** whereas protestant pedobaptists are quite satisfied with a tiny amount.

Perhaps we should interject here that since pedobaptists did not get their practice of sprinkling or pouring from the Bible it is worthwhile to ask whence this practice came. Sprinkling was occasionally accepted as baptism for reasons of health by the Catholic party after their formation. Generally, however, sprinkling remained at least somewhat suspicious among the Catholics until in A.D. 1311. That year the Roman Catholic council that was held in Ravenna, Italy proclaimed that sprinkling was equal to dipping as an acceptable mode of “baptism” among the Catholics. Of course this did not alter the practice of the Baptists of that day since they regarded the Pope as an anti-Christ and rightly refused to obey him. Sprinkling, then, is a part of the “baggage” brought out of the Roman Harlot by the Protestants in their halfway attempt to reform the evils of their mother. In obeying this practice it

is not the Bible which is obeyed, but ultimately Mother Rome.

In the third place we strict baptists demand a proper motive for our dipping of repentant sinners. Most protestants, along with most other pedobaptists (baby baptizers) teach that baptism is administered in order to convey necessary saving grace to the candidate be he adult or infant. We could cite numerous denominational statements that say the same, but as the Methodists are well known in our country their statements should be sufficient to prove what I say. From the United Methodist liturgy we quote the words specified by the denomination to be said by their minister: “1. The pastor makes the following statement to the congregation: Brothers and sisters in Christ: Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ’s holy Church. We are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God’s gift, offered to us without price.” After completing either the dipping, sprinkling or pouring (as may be demanded by the candidate or its parents if an unconscious infant or young child), the United Methodist liturgy specifies that their minister say, “Now it is our joy to welcome our new sisters and brothers in Christ. Through baptism you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit into God’s new creation and made to share in Christ’s royal priesthood. We are all one in Christ Jesus. With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you as members of the family of Christ.” (Anyone may “Google” the phrase United Methodist liturgy baptism and find the foregoing quotes on their official denominational site).

So it is that the United

Methodist church position on baptism is that the act is not a mere ordinance, but a sacrament, i.e. a conveyance of saving grace. To them it is an act by which unknowing and unwilling and unconscious babes are made disciples of Christ. Again we take space to offer one Scripture which clearly shows that the Baptist position is correct: baptism does not make disciples. **“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John”** (John 4:1). This verse clearly says that both John and Jesus (1) made disciples and (2) baptized disciples. It says that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John. Notice it is one thing to make a disciple and quite another to baptize a disciple and it is clearly stated that Jesus here baptized disciples. He did not baptize sinners in order to make them into disciples. They were already disciples when they were baptized if English words and sentences convey meaning at all! Strict Baptists today do what John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus (through His disciples) did: we baptize those who are already disciples! We do not think to make sinners into disciples via baptism or sprinkling as pedobaptists do.

And finally, in the fourth place, today’s strict Baptists demand a scriptural administrator. Such an individual who meets the Biblical pattern for valid baptism is (1) a man, (2) a baptized man, (3) a congregation-ordained male teacher and (4) a man in good standing as a member of a previously existing congregation of Christ’s having been given authority by that assembly. Thus the authority for baptism lies not in the man physically administering the ordinance, but in the congregation which authorized

his act. This is according to the New Testament pattern and is seen in that which is specified in Acts 13:1-4: **“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost...”** In this text God called, the congregation fasted and prayed. The Holy Ghost directed the congregation regarding the called men and after more fasting and prayer hands were laid upon the called men marking them out as set aside for special work. The congregation determined this, not a board, not a “bishop,” not a denomination nor an association or convention. In this way true evangelists were sent forth by the Holy Ghost to carry out the great commission left to the congregations. Anyone who knows the practices of today’s protestants will agree that they do not require what today’s strict Baptists require as meeting the Biblical standards for valid baptism.

But we insist that we lay no more emphasis upon baptism that do the Scriptures for at every turn we have shown by those very Scriptures that we do what was done in the days of Christ and His apostles. And while we insist as Tertullian said, “Doubtless those who are not baptized aright are not baptized at all,” we do not place the emphasis, the unwarranted

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unjustifiable emphasis on baptism that pedobaptists do, for they make baptism a necessity.

While strict Baptists insist that submission to Scriptural baptism as specified above is a righteous act – by it both the administrator and the candidate “**fulfil all righteousness**” (Matt. 3:15) by obeying the Lord who sent John the Baptist to institute baptism (see John 1:33). We do not lay the stress – the unscriptural stress – upon the act as do the pedobaptists. Today’s strict Baptists, like their lineal forefathers, insist that baptism is a matter of obedience and so teach and practice. But it is the pedobaptists who make what they term “baptism” to be critical, vital, and necessary for salvation. It is they, not we, who claim all importance for their so-called baptism! We require submission to the ordinance in the same manner and for the same purpose as we see in the baptism of John the Baptist, Christ, and His apostles. We say it is a matter of obedience.

It is rather the pedobaptists who insist that baptism is not a matter of acceptable service to Christ, but rather a saving act. We say scriptural baptism is necessary as a matter of obedience to Christ. It is they who claim for it something the New Testament does not. It is they who lay an unwarrantable stress upon baptism by making it a saving sacrament: a work that saves – if the one baptized keeps on working, of course for they almost always believe in what they mistakenly term “falling from grace.”

So, again it is seen that there are only two religions in the world: one of works and the other of grace. God says through Paul, “**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). And we cite the following: Romans 4:6: “**Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.**” Romans 11:6: “**And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.**” II Timothy 1:9: “**Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.**” Titus 3:5: “**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.**” (Note this last: it is the regeneration that washes. Regeneration is an act of the Holy Spirit not of man. No washing regenerates!) Biblical Christianity teaches salvation by grace, not by works nor by an imagined and impossible thing called works plus grace or grace plus works, for the attempted mix the two is to corrupt and change the nature of each. Grace is unmerited favor and is not earned, obtained, or attained unto by any work whatsoever. The result of work(s) is reward, payment, earned compensation or as Paul says, “debt” in Romans 4:4 where it is written: “**Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.**” The very idea that some act or acts or work or ritual can merit grace is contrary to the nature of grace. Wages are not unmerited, but rather are the debt owed to the worker.

Regardless of the name

given to the religion – whether Christianity or some other name – and whether the act is so-called baptism, or taking a bath in the Ganges River, or making a pilgrimage to Mecca, or doing “temple work” in Salt Lake City, or going door-to-door spreading a false gospel – there is as much saving grace obtained by any one of these acts as by another of them. Sincerity does not sanctify an unscriptural act whether it be a so-called baptism for salvation or any action unwarranted – unjustified – by the Scriptures.

So it is seen that it is the pedobaptists, not the strict Baptists, who lay unjustified stress and importance upon baptism – i.e. what they falsely label as baptism. Strict Baptists acknowledge that there are doubtless many like the thief lifted up beside Christ Jesus who was regenerated on his tree without baptism – many who shall be in Heaven never having obeyed the Lord in baptism for various reasons. Consistency demands that pedobaptists declare that since baptism has at least a part in regeneration all those dying unbaptized shall be cast into the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. Obviously, then, it is pedobaptists who lay unwarrantable stress on their so-called baptism and not strict Baptists. Let the pedobaptist glory in his priest-craft, for priest-craft it is when it is taught that God cannot alone by His Spirit regenerate a spiritually dead sinner, but that there must be another, a mere man, to administer regenerating water to accomplish the initial step in salvation. We say all glory to the Lamb that was slain for “**Salvation is of the LORD**” (Jonah 2:9), not by means of sprinkling or even by immersion!



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Some may not appreciate or even agree with all the finer points of this treatise. Others will probably be offended by my frankness. Those who know me, know that I want the very best for the people I am privileged to minister unto, and I want the best for the church I pastor. The very best thing that could happen to Baptist church members is to hear the Lord Jesus Christ say: “**..Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord**” (Matt. 25:21). Every Baptist pastor worth his salt wants the people he ministers unto to hear these glorious words when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ! Hebrews 13:17 declares: “**Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, THAT THEY MAY DO IT WITH JOY, AND NOT WITH GRIEF: for that is unprofitable for you**” (emphasis mine, TWR).

I ask the reader to solemnly reflect and examine their spiritual life and service to the Lord. Are you an exceptional member of the Lord’s church? Are you a pillar in the house of God? Or are you merely fulfilling a social obligation to ease your conscience or keep the preacher off your back? Do you do what you do to please the Lord, or to please men and gain their applause? Are you the best you can be for the glory of God? If not, why not? What follows are some components that I believe form the character and make up of a truly exceptional church member.

To be an exceptional church member you must first be:

SAVED BY SOVEREIGN GRACE

The first ingredient necessary for a person to be a good church

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member is to experience and partake of the reality of genuine salvation by the sovereign grace of God. I am convinced that one of the major reasons why some people never really have a desire to serve the Lord or have a taste for the things of God is because they have never truly been saved. I would venture to say that if you have never received a spiritual nature from God in the new birth, being a Baptist church member would be a miserable existence indeed!

Real salvation is marked by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, whereby He quickens the elect from a state of deadness to spiritual life in Christ. Regeneration is a sovereign work of the Spirit, a creative act whereby He brings the dead sinner out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ. The very moment the Spirit gives spiritual life, He also gives the gifts of repentance and saving faith, enabling the new born child of God the ability to turn from sin and believe the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Those once blind can now see! II Corinthians 4:3-6 describes this amazing work of the Spirit: **“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath signed in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”** There is a miraculous change that takes place in the life of one who has been saved by sovereign grace! II Corinthians 5:17 emphatically states: **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new**

creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” I have often told people that if they have never been changed, they have never been saved by God’s grace!

Notice what marked the members of the church at Thessalonica: **“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost...For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come”** (I Thess. 1:5-6, 9-10). The believers at Thessalonica were forever changed by the power of the Holy Spirit who gave them life and made the Gospel of the grace of God effectual. So much so they turned from their idols and began to follow the Lord. Even when trials, persecution, and afflictions came their way they followed the truth as it is in Jesus! The Gospel seed sown by Paul had fallen on good ground prepared by the Holy Spirit, who in turn began to produce spiritual fruit in them. Jesus taught this in Matthew 13:8 and 23: **“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold... But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”** If you do not have spiritual life, yea eternal life in Christ, you are incapable of bearing fruit that is pleasing to God. Thus if you have not been born of the Spirit, and exercised the gifts of repentance

and saving faith you cannot in any way be qualified to be an exceptional church member.

Salvation by sovereign grace does not make you a member of Christ’s body, it only qualifies you as a candidate for membership. This is a truth that separates true Baptists from Catholic, Protestant, and Reformed organizations. Baptists have always insisted on a regenerate church membership. Blood before water, and Christ before the church has always been the watchword of sound Baptists. This means before you can enter the waters of scriptural baptism you must be washed in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ. Before you become a member of the Lord’s church you must taste that the Lord is gracious, you must know Christ and experience His grace before becoming a member. Baptists have always insisted on a credible profession of faith before baptism and church membership. If this is clearly understood, the folly of “infant sprinkling” and baptismal regeneration practiced by Catholics, Protestants, and some Reformed is exposed as an anti-christian practice and an abominable heresy.

To be an exceptional church member you must have:

SCRIPTURAL BAPTIST BAPTISM

Baptism is a public declaration that you have been saved by grace through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. It is a symbolic picture that tells the story that you are dead to your old way of life. You are declaring symbolically that you are buried with Christ in the watery grave and risen with Christ to walk in newness of life. I consider scriptural baptism to be a solemn vow before God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the angels, the local church, and the world at large. In this holy vow and solemn act the believer is declaring his loyalty to the Lord and His church.

Salvation qualifies a believer as a candidate for church membership, whereas scriptural baptism inducts you into this sacred office as Acts 2:41 reveals: **“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousands souls”** (cf. I Cor. 12:13, 18). The believers in Acts 2:41 were added to an already existing church that had been started by Christ Himself during His earthly ministry. It is the very same church that He had given the promise of perpetuity and succession (Matt. 28:18-20; John 15:16). It is the very same church that He gave the Great Commission to. I believe with all my heart that the church that Jesus started was what we today identify as a Baptist church. True Baptists have always held that they alone have the authority from Christ and the Scriptures to administer the ordinance of baptism. It is for this reason that Baptists have insisted that every member of the Lord’s church have Baptist baptism that meets the following four requirements:

Proper Authority: Baptism is not a preacher ordinance, but rather a church ordinance. It must be administered by the authority of a true New Testament Baptist Church. This is why Baptists insist on baptizing those who apply for membership from other denominations. Protestants ultimately trace their authority to exist as well as their baptism back to the Roman Catholic Church. Baptists since the times of Christ have never identified with what eventually developed into the Roman Catholic Church or her Protestant daughters. There is only one kind of baptism that Christ authorized His church to administer. Insisting on Baptist baptism that is authoritative and authentic helps to promote unity in the body as Ephesians 4:3-5 states: **“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of**

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peace. **There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.**" Baptists who are earnestly contending for the faith that was once delivered must also recognize the baptism connected to that one faith, or system of teaching.

Proper Mode: Scriptural Baptist baptism is by immersion in water. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the river of Jordan (Matt. 3:13-17). Baptism is likened to a burial in Romans 6:3-5: **"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."**

True Baptists have always taught, preached, practiced, and insisted on baptizing by immersion in water! Baptists have always exposed the heresy of sprinkling and pouring as an anti-christian teaching not supported by the Holy Scriptures. Many Baptists have lost their lives at the hands of Catholics and Protestants who despised the scriptural mode of baptism.

Proper Subject: Only a believer in Christ is eligible to be baptized by the authority of a New Testament church. Baptist churches have always insisted that only saved people who have already made a valid profession of faith in Christ may be baptized. Consider the example of Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:35-38: **"Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain**

water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, IF THOU BELIEVEST WITH ALL THINE HEART, THOU MAYEST. AND HE ANSWERED AND SAID, I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD (emphasis mine, TWR). And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him." True Baptists have always rejected the heresy of baptismal regeneration or the idea that water, whether by sprinkling, pouring, or immersing someone with or in it, somehow confers salvation. Such a teaching is utter nonsense! If baptism were necessary for salvation it would mean that the person administering the ordinance would be a mediator who confers saving grace. There is only one Mediator between God and man, and it is the man Christ Jesus, not a priest or a preacher! Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone!

Proper Reason: Baptism is strictly a symbolic ordinance. It is not a sacrament, nor does it confer any saving grace. It is referred to as the **"likeness"** of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It is a picture of the Gospel of Christ which has already saved us. Water in no way, shape, or form has any saving magic or saving qualities. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can justify a sinner and make him right with God (Rom. 3:23-28; 5:1).

Volumes could and have been written defending the truths surrounding Baptist baptism. Let this brief exposition suffice for our purposes in examining the essential components of church membership. You cannot be an exceptional church member without the kind of baptism Jesus was baptized with, administered by the kind of church He started and promised perpetuity to, for the right reason, in the proper way, and as a

submissive believer in Christ.

To be an exceptional church member you must be:

SUBMISSIVE TO GOD'S WORD AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

I fear that this component of exceptional church membership is one that has somehow been neglected by many churches and members. Sometimes churches are so desperate to enlarge their membership they neglect to explain to prospective members the principles of submission and obedience to God's Word and the authority of the Lord's church. When we have folks interested in uniting with our church some of the things I ask is: "Do you believe it is God's will to join with our congregation, and are you willing to submit to His Word and the authority of His church? Do you really believe and are you convinced that the Holy Spirit is directing you to unite with this body of Christ? If they answer in the affirmative and they are sincere, they will understand our insistence on a credible profession of faith, as well as valid Baptist baptism. If they balk at such questions, and refuse to cooperate, it is a clear indication that our church may not be the right fit for them.

To be an exceptional church member there must be an earnest desire to receive, submit to, and obey the infallible Word of God. The members of the church at Thessalonica were exceptional in this regard. I Thessalonians 2:13 and 5:20-21 reveal: **"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 believe...Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."** God's Word provides us with all that is necessary to be a successful church member. We

should make it our daily duty to read, study, meditate upon, memorize, and apply the blessed commands of Holy Scripture. The Word is used for instruction and correction according to II Timothy 3:16-17: **"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."** When the Scriptures instruct us we must cheerfully submit to its teaching. When the Scriptures correct our errors and expose our sins we must humbly submit and repent.

When God calls and appoints a pastor to feed, lead, and instruct the flock of God, church members should follow him as he follows the Lord and teaches the truth (I Cor. 11:1). Pastors may never under any circumstance attempt to usurp the authority of the church by virtue of their office. However, God has charged them to feed the flock of God and to take the oversight thereof. I Peter 5:2-3 declares: **"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."** A sincere pastor who loves the Lord wants to lead the flock of God in a way that is right by precept and practice. When the man of God preaches the Word of God it is vital that church members receive and practice the truth. Hebrews 13:7 commands: **"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."** God's people should not reject or rebel against the truth preached by the man of God as they did in Jeremiah's day (Jer. 6:16-17), or as they did when Ezekiel prophesied

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(Ezek. 33:30b-32). Rather, church members ought to respond to the truth like the Israelites did when Haggai told them to **“consider their ways.”** Their response is recorded in Haggai 1:12-14: **“Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, OBEYED THE VOICE OF THE LORD THEIR GOD, AND THE WORDS OF HAGGAI THE PROPHET, AS THE LORD THEIR GOD HAD SENT HIM, AND THE PEOPLE DID FEAR BEFORE THE LORD** (emphasis mine, TWR). **Then spake Haggai the LORD’S messenger in the LORD’S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; AND THEY CAME AND DID WORK IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD OF HOSTS, THEIR GOD.”**

Also, I believe it is absolutely essential that church members realize that when they become a member of the Lord’s church they are part of something that is bigger and more important than their own self interest or personal agenda. Exceptional church members understand the importance of submission to church authority. If you cannot submit to the teachings, doctrines, and practices of the church you belong to, you are in the wrong church! How many churches are disrupted by unruly, contentious members who insist on doing things their way rather than submitting to the authority of the Lord’s church? Church members should endeavor to promote the peace, harmony,

and unity of the Lord’s church. When Paul instructed the church at Thessalonica in matters regarding church discipline he had confidence that they would submit to the truth as revealed in II Thessalonians 3:4-5: **“And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”**

To be an exceptional church member you must be personally committed to the:

SEPARATION FROM THAT WHICH IS EVIL AND A DESIRE TO WALK IN HOLINESS

It is absolutely essential for members of the Lord’s church to live a life that manifests the light of Christ and the holiness of His character. As God’s elect we are responsible to live and behave in such a way that manifests a marked difference between our way of life and the world’s way of life. We are called upon to manifest the fruit of the Spirit as outlined in Galatians 5:22-25: **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** The lost world at large does not have the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We once were among the number described in Ephesians 2:2-3: **“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”**

Now that we are saved by sovereign grace, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit we are not to walk in agreement with the world of unbelievers who are following the dictates of Satan and are in bondage to sin. By the Spirit of God working in us we must manifest a radical change in the way we live, think, talk, and act! This necessitates a separation from that which God considers evil and sinful, coupled with a sincere desire to walk in holiness by following the example of Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

The unbelievers in the First Century were engaged in all sorts of wickedness, sexual immorality, deceit, violence, hatred, and idolatry. Paul told the church at Thessalonica that it was imperative that they conduct themselves in a completely different manner than their heathen counterparts. I Thessalonians 4:1-7 declares: **Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”** God’s people should be consecrated to God, set apart from that which is sinful, and devoted to that which honors and glorifies the Lord. In short, we cannot live like we once did! We must live unto the

Lord, cognizant of His watchful eye and sensitive to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. We must love what God loves, and hate what He hates. The essence of true fellowship with God involves walking in the light of His holiness as I John 1:3-7 reveals: **“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”**

The transforming power of the Holy Spirit should cause us to be separate from the ungodly world at large as II Corinthians 6:14-18 commands: **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”** These inspired directives should influence every area of our

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lives. We ought to ask ourselves if we are in agreement with God or the world on any given issue or course of action. Am I pursuing a course of righteousness that agrees with God and His Word or am I embracing the darkness of sin and the infidelity of the world? Are my thoughts, words, actions clean or unclean in the sight of God? Do I desire to please the Lord, or am I capitulating and compromising with the wickedness of sin? Ephesians 5:7-12 declares: **“Be not therefore parkers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.”** Psalm 19:13-14 is a prayer that should constantly be upon our hearts: **“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the mediation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”**

The reason we are to be separate from the world and devoted to holiness is really very simple. As members of the Lord's church we must demonstrate to the unsaved world that the power of God and His salvation can free poor sinners from the captivity of Satan and the bondage of sin. We have a solemn responsibility to show the world that God can change the worst of sinners and give them peace, joy, and hope. To do this we must show them a

better way by the way we live. Jesus charged us to: **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”** (Matt. 5:16). Peter expressed it this way: **“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation”** (I Pet. 2:9-12).

One of the greatest hindrances to the spirituality and power of the Lord's church is when members are worldly and hypocritical. When the world at large observes members of a church living in an ungodly manner it brings reproach upon the name of the Lord. Lying, cheating, cursing, laziness, sexual immorality, immodesty, extortion, stealing, drunkenness, drug abuse, meanness, cruelty, bitterness, hatred, malice, envy, gossip, etc. as practiced by members of a church will ruin the testimony of the body of Christ. May God grant us the holy desire to obey the solemn admonition of II Timothy 2:19: **“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”**

Thomas Watson, the Puritan writer observed:

“The sins of the godly are worse than others, because they bring a greater reproach upon religion.

For the wicked to sin, there is no other expected from them; swine will wallow in the mire; but when sheep do so, when the godly sin, that redounds to the dishonor of the Gospel: ‘By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.’ (A Puritan Golden Treasury, p. 274).

To be an exceptional church member you must be:

STEADFAST AND FAITHFUL TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

Employers fully expect employees to show up for work and to faithfully carry out their various duties and responsibilities. What would your secular employer think if you only showed up for work when it was convenient for you, or when you felt like it? How would that same employer react if you showed up for work with a bad attitude and you only gave a half-hearted effort? What if the employer found out that you were trying to undermine his business by persuading other workers to have a bad attitude, show up sporadically for work, and only give a half-hearted effort? Truth be told, if you treated your secular employer in that manner you would not have a job for very long. Thankfully that is not the case for most people. As a general rule people with a Judeo-Christian work ethic respect their employer and value their job. They seek to contribute to the overall profitability of the workplace. They have come to understand that they must be faithful and cooperative if the workplace is to function effectively. One person not doing their job could hinder the whole enterprise.

I believe our Heavenly Employer expects His workers to be steadfast, faithful, and loyal to Christ and the church which He has purchased with His own blood. Ever since the Lord saved me by sovereign grace and added me to His kind of church I have felt as though it is absolutely imperative for me to be a faithful

member. It is my earnest desire to do all I can to promote the harmony, unity, well being, and testimony of the church where He has placed me. I often ask myself a soul searching question: “What if every member of Mt. Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church followed my example of service?” Have you ever personally applied that question to yourself? If every member followed your lead would they be faithful in attendance, have a good attitude, be a good example to the young people, pay their tithes, have a gracious spirit, and promote unity in the body? Dear brothers and sisters, members of Christ's church, please understand that we are all members one of another in the body! We all are responsible to promote the well being and unity of the body! Hebrews 10:23-25 declares: **“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith with wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see that day approaching.”** One of the best ways of obeying these verses is to simply determine to be faithful to God's house unless you are providentially hindered. I completely understand that there are times when members are providentially hindered by sickness or things that are entirely out of their control. What I am talking about is consistency, loyalty, a sense of duty and responsibility to the Lord and His church that motivates you to be faithful. The blessed fruit of victorious Christian living is vibrant service as I Corinthians 15:57-58 declares: **“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in**

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Exceptional Church

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the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” The Greek word for steadfast in verse 58 is *“hadraios”* and is derived from the root word *“hedras”* which means seated, and by extension to be morally fixed, settled, firmly planted. What a great word to describe an exceptional church member! It put me in mind of what the Lord’s church is, a firm, settled, unmovable bastion of truth. I Timothy 3:15: **“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”** Perhaps those who stand for the truth in the Lord’s churches will receive the reward that Jesus promised to the church at Philadelphia: **“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”** (Rev. 3:12). Oh, to be a faithful, steadfast, unmovable pillar in the house of God!

Paul commended the members of the church at Thessalonica for their steadfast faithfulness in I Thessalonians 1:3 and 3:7-8: **“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father...Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.”**

When we are faithful in church attendance we are setting a consistent example and providing a steadfast testimony to our

children, grandchildren, and one another. Each time we engage in public worship we are declaring to everyone our allegiance and loyalty to the cause of Christ. Every time we willfully neglect the house of the Lord our actions show that we have little respect for God, His Word, and His ways.

The late Milburn Cockrell wisely observed:

“The indifference of church members to the institution that stands for Christ is the greatest hindrance to the progress of Christ’s work. A person has no more interest in the souls of men and Jesus Christ than he has for Christ’s church.”

If there was ever a need for steadfast faithfulness to the Lord and His church it is the day in which we live. No matter where you look in our world there is a spirit of unfaithfulness. Oh, that we who belong to Christ and His church would not fall prey to the snare of unfaithfulness! May God help us to rise above prevailing practice and determine by the grace of God to be faithful to God’s house. May the Lord help us to have a spiritual desire to go up to the house of God to worship, sing praises, hear preaching, pray, and encourage one another. Oh that we could all say with the Psalmist: **“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple”** (27:4)...**My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God...Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah...For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”** (84:2, 4, 10)...**I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the**

LORD” (122:1)...**Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”** (133:1).

What joy must fill the heart of God when He sees His people assembling to worship Him in Spirit and in truth! Each time we assemble to praise and honor our glorious Head, the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe He gladly receives the glory due His name. Let us be careful never to undervalue the importance of assembling with the saints as the body of Christ in light of Ephesians 3:21: **“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”**

In order to be an exceptional church member you must have a:

SINCERE LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN

Jesus told the members of the First Baptist Church that He had personally started during His earthly ministry: **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”** (John 13:34-35). If you are going to excel as a member of the Lord’s church you must love the brethren. You must love those that God loves, those that Christ died for, those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. It is a command that has been issued from the Head of the church. Love for the brethren is the one thing that Jesus said would attract the attention of the world at large. Love for the brethren is a badge, a mark, a characteristic that confirms you as a genuine follower of Christ and a sincere learner in His school of grace.

To love the brethren means that you should have a compassionate regard for your brothers and sisters in Christ that is so extraordinary you are willing to prefer them above your own personal agenda. Philippians 2:2-5 declares: **“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, have the same**

love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” This means that our love for one another should resemble that of our Lord. Jesus Christ pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3), but put others before Himself as the ultimate example of compassion for others in need. If we truly have the mind of Christ and are committed to being more like Him we must love those that He loves.

Christ’s love for His people was not only compassionate, it was sacrificial. Jesus conveyed this truth to the first church in John 15:9-14: **“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”** The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to sacrifice His life for His friends, elsewhere referred to as His sheep (John 10:15). Love for the brethren is not merely something you say with your mouth. It is not a sentimental, romantic feeling that comes and goes. It is a love that is willing to sacrifice for others. I John 3:16-18 describes it accurately: **“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have**

The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

1. What is Calvinism and Arminianism? A prisoner in Virginia

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Calvinism and Arminianism are two diametrically opposing views relating to how God saves sinners. Both have been the source of heated theological debate for centuries depending upon which side of the argument you line up on.

Calvinism is falsely attributed to the theological writings of John Calvin, the Swiss reformer who rose to prominence in the 1500's. Calvin basically systematized what the Scriptures teach regarding salvation under 5 major points as follows: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints to form the acronym TULIP. I contend that a better label for this system of theology is the Doctrines of Grace. I prefer the terms Particular Redemption rather than Limited Atonement, and Effectual Calling rather than Irresistible Grace. These doctrines originate in the Holy Scriptures and are truths that Jesus Christ and the apostles earnestly contended for. They are truths that have been perpetuated by the Lord's New Testament Baptist Churches ever since Jesus established the church during His earthly ministry. It is for this reason I do not jump on the bandwagon of Protestants

and Reformers who say these teachings originated with John Calvin. A major problem I have with Calvin is his adherence to infant sprinkling, which is an antichristian practice that finds no warrant in Scripture. He was an amillennialist. Like most Protestants, he had no problem with the idea of a state church in any given country. However much I object, I must admit that the term Calvinism has stuck as the theological label for those who believe in the salvation of sinners by the sovereign grace of God.

If you were to define in three words the teachings of the doctrines of grace it would simply be GOD SAVES SINNERS. The doctrines of grace teach that man in his natural sinful state is totally depraved, spiritually dead, and totally unable to save himself. Before the world began, God the Father unconditionally chose or elected a specific number of individuals in Christ and determined to save them according to His own sovereign will. Jesus Christ agreed to particularly redeem each and every one that the Father chose by offering Himself and His precious blood as the only acceptable and efficacious sacrifice. The Holy Spirit agreed to regenerate and effectually call all that the Father chose and the Son died for in time. All those who are chosen, redeemed, and called are preserved by grace and enabled to persevere in holiness and fruitfulness to the end. This is a simple explanation of a system of teaching that has literally had hundreds of multi-page volumes

written about it through the centuries.

Arminianism is a system of theology that was basically formulated by the followers of James Arminius, a Dutch theologian who opposed the teaching of the Churches of Holland as stated in the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism. In 1610 the Arminians presented a protest of the doctrines of grace in what they called a Remonstrance. In 1618 the Synod of Dort responded to the 5 points of Arminianism and Calvinism was systematized into what is today referred to as the Five Points of Calvinism. Arminianism is in direct opposition to each of the 5 points, and they are especially fond of exalting the "supposed" free will of man in his own salvation. Arminians basically believe that man is not totally depraved, that his will is capable, that God did not unconditionally elect a people, that Christ died for all men without exception, and that a man who is saved can lose his salvation by his own actions. Most of professing Christendom in our day ascribe either in part or in whole to this heretical system of teaching. Sad to say many BINO's (Baptists in Name Only) are nothing more than "Whiskey Calvinists" believing only one-fifth of the doctrines of grace, namely preservation of the saints commonly referred to as eternal security. These two systems of thought, Calvinism and Arminianism really boil down to how men view the way in which sinners are saved. Arminianism ascribes salvation partly to God and partly to man in cooperation with each other, which is really grace mixed with works. Calvinism (the Doctrines of Grace) ascribes salvation

entirely to God apart from the works of sinful man. This is what the Scriptures teach as stated in Romans 11:5-6 and 36: **"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."**

Though J. I. Packer is no Baptist, he has an excellent summary of what the Five Points of the Doctrines of Grace really teach in his Introductory Essay:

"There is really only one point to be made in the field of soteriology: the point that GOD SAVES SINNERS. GOD—the Triune Jehovah, Father, Son and Spirit; three Persons working together in sovereign wisdom, power and love to achieve the salvation of a chosen people, the Father electing, the Son fulfilling the Father's will by redeeming, the Spirit executing the purpose of the Father and Son by renewing. SAVES—does everything, first to last, that is involved in bringing man from death in sin to life in glory: plans, achieves and communicates redemption, calls and keeps, justifies, sanctifies, glorifies. SINNERS—men as God finds them, guilty, vile, helpless, powerless, unable to lift a finger to do God's will or better their spiritual lot. GOD SAVES SINNERS—and the force of this confession may not be weakened by disrupting the unity of the work of the Trinity, or by dividing the achievement of salvation between God and man and making the decisive part man's own, or by soft-pedaling the sinner's inability

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The Berea Baptist Banner Forum

Submit your questions on any Bible topic.

2. What are the Watchtower and Jehovah's Witnesses? - a prisoner in Virginia

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In 1870, Charles Taze Russell started a cultic group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, by apostatizing and preaching heretical theology that denied the triune nature of God, the deity of Jesus Christ, predestination and the existence of Hell. Falling free-fall with no Scriptural clarity, the devil had no problem attracting numbers from area churches and communities to this "new" denomination of believers that basically believed everything Russell taught and wrote. Russell's writings from the start had more authority than the Holy Word of God, and so the congregations he established roamed far from the Jehovah God that they purported to serve. They call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses (as of 1931), but they are more properly named as they were called for many decades before political correctness simply Russellites. Followers of Charles Taze Russell, not Jesus Christ! Selah! Think about it!

One of the first things Russell did to attract followers, was to start a theory that the 144,000 Israeli's mentioned in Revelation 7 & 14, would be his followers, and that they alone would have an exclusive right to eternal life. The very definition of a "cult" is that those "outside" the cult are lost

and unsavable. Russell confirmed this for his followers and promised that only 144,000 would believe and be saved. He predicted the coming of Christ on particular dates, and declared that the coming would be both spiritual and physical. Obviously, Russell was wrong, and the dates had to be continually set back again and again. The Watch Tower Society (as they were officially organized) was sounding an errant trumpet and until Russell's death in 1916, Russellites would come and go, as these prophecies proved false, particularly after the tremendous focus upon Christ's return that never happened in 1914.

After Russell's death, Joseph Franklin Rutherford was elected president of the Watch Tower Society and he immediately led the group further away from the Bible. Rutherford extended the Jehovah's Witnesses assertion of non-violence and refusal to fight in World War I and later all of the other military actions of the United States and eventually each nation that this cult of Russellites spread into in the world. It was during this time period that the cult expanded undeniably past the 144,000 member limit imposed originally by Russell. Obviously, it was fairly easy to again morph the theological teachings and doctrinal stances to include the burgeoning multitudes that flocked to these congregations for various reasons and emotions (Matthew 7:13, II Timothy 4:3).

Rutherford made many drastic and foundational changes as he completed the seventh and

last creed book of the Watch Tower Society. Administrational modifications included an end to local congregational authority and in 1938 he eliminated all opposition and consolidated authority into a national headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, under the guise of the cult becoming a theocracy (ruled by God), and effectively Rutherford, the president became the pope, or mouthpiece of God. Rutherford expanded the evangelistic fervor of the Jehovah's Witnesses by institutionalizing the door-to-door witnessing, catechizing even further the so-called worship services, which were called Bible Studies, but where the Watch Tower magazine articles, edited by Rutherford, were the primary focus of the cultic teachers.

The group has had several presidents since Rutherford's death in 1942, including Nathan Knorr, Frederick Franz and Milton Henschel. Knorr commissioned the translation of a "new" Bible that would support many of their heretical doctrines because they were having trouble defending them in the English King James Version, read mostly by both their congregations and detractors. While these leaders each put their stamp on the society, the board of directors has regained much of the authority back from the president, and as such, he has become mostly just a figurehead. Refinement of Russell's illogical doctrines have caused numerous changes to continue to be made down through the decades of this cult's existence. It differs strikingly from the immutable Word of God revered by the Baptist churches that has kept the Jehovah's New Testament Baptist churches from any changes at all from their Apostolic origin when the Lord built His Own church in

Palestine in 30 A. D. "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Selah! Think about it!

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The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom is the monthly magazine published by the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Watchtower along with their other publication Awake! are the primary means of disseminating the beliefs of the Jehovah's Witness cult. They claim that the Watchtower Magazine is the most widely circulated magazine in the world.

The Jehovah's Witness cult revolves around two prominent men in their history. Charles Taze Russell started Zion's Watchtower in 1879. He was largely exposed as a fraud in his day and was labelled a "no-heller" because of his adamant refusal to believe in a literal, eternal hell. Russell was followed by Judge Rutherford who ruled the Jehovah's Witness cult from 1916 to 1942. Rutherford claimed to be the mouthpiece of God in his day. He was a prolific writer who published over 100 books and pamphlets.

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a cult. A cult is a group or organization that claims to be Christian, but deviates significantly in one or more aspects of the faith and practice of traditional, orthodox Christianity. Cults usually deny the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Jesus

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Forum #1

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so as to allow him to share the praise of his salvation with his Savior. This is the one point of Calvinistic soteriology which the 'five points' are concerned to establish and Arminianism in all its forms to deny: namely, that sinners do not save themselves in any sense at all, but the salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be glory for ever; Amen."

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The term Calvinism comes from John Calvin who broke from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century. He is known as one of the early Reformers. Calvin is also credited as being the founder of Presbyterianism, the same as Luther is credited for being the founder of Lutheranism.

And many (except for true Baptists) credit John Calvin for the doctrines of grace! Most objections to and attacks on Calvinism focus on the "five points of Calvinism," also called the doctrines of grace (the term that I prefer and use), and remembered by the mnemonic "TULIP." Though many Baptists still use this term "TULIP" and to be honest it helped me as a young Christian and I suppose I use it still today to help with remembering what each letter stands for. But other than that I still prefer the term "the doctrines of grace" and they are as follows:

"Total depravity," also called "total inability," asserts that as a consequence of the fall of man into sin, every person is enslaved to sin. People are not by nature inclined to love God, but rather to serve their own interests and to reject the rule of God. Thus, all people by their own faculties are morally unable to choose to follow God and be saved because they are unwilling to do so out of the necessity of their own natures (the term "total" in this context refers to sin affecting every part of a person).

"Unconditional election" asserts that God has chosen from eternity those whom He will bring to Himself not based on foreseen virtue, merit, or faith in those people; rather, His choice is unconditionally grounded in His mercy alone. God has chosen from eternity to extend mercy to those He has chosen and to withhold mercy from those not chosen. Those chosen receive salvation through Christ alone. Those not chosen receive the just wrath that is warranted for their sins against God.

"Limited atonement," also called "particular redemption" or "definite atonement," asserts that Jesus's substitutionary atonement was definite and certain in its purpose and in what it accomplished. This implies that only the sins of the elect were atoned for by Jesus's death.

"Irresistible grace," also called "efficacious grace," asserts that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom He has determined to save (that is, the elect) and overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the Gospel, bringing them to a saving faith. This means that when God sovereignly purposes to save someone, that individual certainly will be saved. The doctrine holds

that this purposeful influence of God's Holy Spirit cannot be resisted, but that the Holy Spirit, "graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ." This is not to deny the fact that the Spirit's outward call (through the proclamation of the Gospel) can be, and often is, rejected by sinners; rather, it is that inward call which cannot be rejected.

"Perseverance of the saints" also known as "perseverance of God with the saints" and "preservation of the believing" (the word "saints" is used to refer to all who are set apart by God, and not of those who are exceptionally holy, canonized, or in Heaven) asserts that since God is sovereign and His will cannot be frustrated by humans or anything else, those whom God has called into communion with Himself will continue in faith until the end. Those who apparently fall away either never had true faith to begin with (I John 2:19), or, if they are saved but not presently walking in the Spirit, they will be divinely chastened (Hebrews 12:5-11) and will repent (I John 3:6-9).

John Calvin is given credit where none is due as far as I am concerned because Christ and all true Baptists since the early church have believed and practiced these "five points." We are unfairly called Calvinist because of John Calvin's followers writing "The Five Points of Calvinism."

Let me make it perfectly clear, I am not a Calvinist nor were Baptists in the Reformation. Baptists were in existence long before John Calvin was ever born.

I heard a tape of my first pastor when he was speaking at a Bible Conference say in his opening statement, and I quote, "I thank

God for John Calvin for the doctrines of grace." And then he said, "No, John Calvin wasn't even born yet when Christ gave us these doctrines." (End quote).

Not to be arrogant here, but as far as what Arminianism is, is not worth an explanation other than to say this; I have heard this argument for years and what Arminianism is based on is the theological ideas of the Dutch Reformed theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and is not worth the paper it is written on.

Here is a simple explanation of what Arminianism is: it is everything that opposes the doctrines of grace. Oh, Arminians will say they believe the the doctrines of grace but I pin them down, and here is what I ask them.

1. Do you believe all men (mankind) have the chance to be saved? They answer yes! No, that is not in the Bible!

2. Can you resist the Holy Spirit if He comes to indwell you, in other words can you reject the inward call (remember the inward call cannot be rejected)? They answer yes! No, that is not in the Bible. If you can resist the inward call of the Holy Spirit then you are literally saying that you have more power than God. Do you?

3. This is the last question I ask them, and this one tells all! Do you believe in the "free will" of man concerning his salvation? And again they answer yes! No, that is not in the Bible either.

As far as I am concerned, these are all damnable heresies. I will challenge anyone, that if you go in and read just the first three chapters of Ephesians prayerfully and Spirit-led you cannot come out believing in the "free will" of man for salvation. And if you do,

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Forum #1

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you have a real problem and you may as well tear out the book of Ephesians because it does not apply to you and can not be of any benefit to you. This question was not asked, but the difference between the doctrines of grace and Arminianism is that God does it ALL in the doctrines of grace, man does it all in Arminianism. And I for one am glad God did it ALL. God Bless!

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“Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom. 11:5-6).

The question has to do with whether one believes in salvation by grace alone, or salvation by grace with an additional involvement by man to exercise faith and/or other works to accomplish said salvation (Monergism vs Synergism). Calvinism and Arminianism are contrasting theological camps, which align themselves with 16th Century theologians John Calvin (grace alone) and Jacob Arminius (grace plus works) in their beliefs on salvation (Soteriology). But to go further back, these systems of belief were held diametrically oppositely by many other historical figures down through

the years, including Peter Waldo (grace) and Pope Alexander III (works) in the 12th Century; Constantine Silvanus (grace) and Emperor Justinian II (works) in the 8th Century; Augustine of Hippo (grace) and Pelagius (works) in the 4th Century; by the Apostle Paul (grace) and the Jewish Pharisees (works) in the 1st Century and ultimately Jesus Christ (grace) and the Devil (works) ever since the Garden of Eden. Selah! Think about it!

Before the time of Pelagius and his heretical views against original sin and total depravity, I really can not find much in Christian anthology to support Arminianism. Although the Apostle Paul had issues with the Galatians, no real champion of salvation by works, instead of “sola gratia” surfaces in my research. With many others, the Methodist John Clark Ridpath agrees: “I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist church as far back as A.D. 100, though without doubt there were Baptists then as all Christians were then Baptists.” Until possibly Origen, and then Pelagius, all of Christianity was calvinistic (sovereign grace, baptistic) in theology and practice. **“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).

The irregular churches (cf. J.M. Carroll’s “Trail of Blood”) that came out of the Apostolic churches did not immediately part on this important Soteriological doctrine, but mostly on doctrines concerning the local church (landmarkism), baptism (sacrament or ordinance), church hierarchies (Nicolaitanes) and church discipline (growing immoralities). Even as the Roman Catholic Church is seen evolving

from these irregular churches, the battle between Novatian and Cyprian is not over sovereign grace, but over Cyprian’s views on the literal “saving graces” of church membership. The cultic Catholic dogma of none being saved outside of their particular church is seen in its early stages.

The name “Calvinism” (because of the heritage of truth kept long by Baptists, Anabaptists, Waldenses and other “baptistic” groups all of the way back to Bible times) would be better replaced by “the doctrines of grace.” What Calvin’s followers did that was most helpful in systematically laying out this ancient teaching was appending the acronym TULIP to these precious Bible truths. The adjectives put with these doctrines specifically reject all heresy and doubt as to what God sovereignly does in salvation. “T-otal depravity,” “U-nconditional election,” “L-imited atonement,” “I-rresistible grace,” and “P-erseverance and preservation of the saints.” **“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his... (sovereign-tms) grace”** (Eph. 1:4-6). Selah! Think about it!

Conversely, while the name “Arminianism” is more popular and made famous by the Protestant Reformation, the appellation “Pelagianism” is more accurate. If salvation is not totally by grace, as “Calvinists” teach, then no middle ground is really valid, according to our text in Romans 11:5-6. Pelagianism is the only remaining option, which includes inherent “good”

found within man. Modern Arminians try often to attach “eternal security” upon their otherwise straight Pelagianism, causing an additional branch to be called semi-Pelagianism, but that is merely smoke and mirrors, because Biblically one can not be a one, two, or three point Calvinist. The doctrines of grace literally stand or fall together! Selah! Think about it!

MATTHEW STEPP



Forum #2

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Christ, the Personality of the Holy Spirit as God, the blood atonement of Christ, the literal, bodily resurrection of Christ, and the literal, eternal existence of Hell and the Lake of Fire. Added to this list of heresies by the Jehovah’s witnesses is their denial of the immorality of man’s soul. They believe the soul of the wicked is annihilated at death. They also hold a strange view of Heaven, claiming only 144,000 worthy Jehovah’s Witnesses will inhabit the celestial sphere throughout eternity. In order to accommodate their many heresies they conveniently publish their own version of the Bible called the New World Translation.

I have had many interactions with Jehovah’s Witnesses through the years. I never invite them into my house when they come to my door. They never invite me into their house when I knock on their door. I always preach Christ as the only Savior of sinners to them, and quote numerous Scriptures until they tire of my insistence that Christ is the only way of salvation and that it is all of grace apart from man’s works. I always try to drive home two

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Forum #2

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salient points: 1) A sinner cannot receive eternal life from someone who is not eternal. They claim to trust Christ as Savior, but deny His eternal existence. You cannot be saved by trusting in a created, finite being, nor can you derive eternal life from someone who does not have an eternal essence. 2) I always make the point that one of us is wrong, we both can not be right. If I am wrong I have nothing to lose, since my soul will simply be annihilated according to their false teaching. But if I am right and Christ is the only way of salvation apart from human works, they have lost everything including their immortal soul and will suffer in the Lake of Fire for all eternity. I never, under any circumstances, ever give an inch on the orthodox teachings of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Gospel, and salvation by sovereign grace.

TOM ROSS

abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 1:9-11).

The Jehovah's Witnesses are not Christian, they are a cult. They do not believe in the trinity and they do not believe in the deity of Christ, meaning they do not believe that Jesus Christ was God come in the flesh. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is God's only direct creation, that everything else was created through Christ by means of God's power, and that the initial unassisted act of creation uniquely identifies Jesus as God's "only-begotten Son." I guess we need to throw out John chapter one, huh? Their belief is towards God totally, not Jesus Christ. Saul of Tarsus's hope was on God only. He hated Jesus Christ and all who believed in Him, until Paul was saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, oh marvelous grace.

The above verses in II John says it all, therefore I need not go any further. I have had family members and fellow workers who are/were Jehovah's Witnesses that I spent many hours talking to. I say were, because now they are dead, and if they died without coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, then I can only reply, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments..." (Luke 16:23).

If you do not come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ before you die you are doomed for eternity in the lake of fire. God Bless!

ROGER REED



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need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. If we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for the brethren, then certainly we should actively help them in time of need. This help may come in the form of prayer, monetary support, emotional support, or just being there for them in times of crisis. The point is that we are to be connected to one another in the body in an unbreakable bond of love that is unselfish and sacrificial. I Corinthians 12:25-27 declares: **"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."**

When you love someone, you do not gossip about them. When you love someone you do not seek to hurt or malign them. When you love someone you will enjoy spending time with them, communicating with them, worshipping God with them. This is how it ought to be in the Lord's church! We ought to look forward to every opportunity to assemble with our brothers and sisters in Christ to worship our Lord. There should be a sincere desire to edify and encourage one another in love. Our care, compassion, and unselfish actions for one another ought to startle the world at large and demonstrate the magnificent grace of our Lord! Paul commended the church at Thessalonica for their love one for another several times: **"And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love toward one another, and toward all men, even as we**

do toward you...But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another (I Thess. 3:12; 4:9) "...We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith growth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth" (II Thess. 1:3). Oh, that God would stir us to love one another in the Lord's churches! Our world is so filled with cruelty, meanness, and hate! In stark contrast the Lord's church should be a body of unselfish believers committed to God and one another.

In order to be an exceptional church member you must be committed to:

SHARING CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL WITH OTHERS

One of the most important aspects of the Great Commission given by Christ to His New Testament Baptist church as an institution is stated plainly in Mark 16:15: **"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."** Luke 24:45-48 declares: **"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."** We may conclude from the passage in Luke that you really do not have an understanding of the Scriptures if you fail to preach Christ and His Gospel to all nations! Acts 1:8 states: **"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."** These were actually the last words of the Lord

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The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom is an illustrated religious magazine, published monthly by Jehovah's Witnesses via the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Along with its companion magazine, Awake!, Jehovah's Witnesses distribute The Watchtower—public edition in their door-to-door ministry.

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that

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Jesus Christ to His church while on earth before He ascended up into Heaven. Certainly the command to share the Gospel of Christ ought to cause us to solemnly recognize our responsibility! Matthew 28:18-20 records: **“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”** Practically speaking, if the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ fail in the first part of the Great Commission, there would be no need for scriptural baptism, teaching, or pastors for that matter. Without converts baptism would be non-essential. Without baptized believers there would be no need to observe the Lord’s Supper.

All the Scriptures quoted above were spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ! Do we really love Christ Jesus, our Redeemer and Friend as much as we say we do? Jesus said: **“If ye love me, keep my commandments..Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”** (John 14:15; 15:14). If we really love the Lord then the command to preach the Gospel to every creature certainly should be foremost in our minds and hearts. The early churches took this command so seriously that they filled Jerusalem with the doctrine of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection as the only means of salvation (Acts 5:28). In spite of persecution and threats of imprisonment the members of the church at Jerusalem vigorously continued in their quest to share Christ as Acts 5:41-42 reveals: **“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they**

were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Later in the Book of Acts we find that the spread of the Gospel was so rapid and the influence of the early churches was growing so much, believers were identified as **“.. These that have turned the world upside down are come thither also”** (Acts 17:6). This tells me that the members of the early churches took the command to preach the Gospel to every creature literally. I believe every member of the Lord’s church should be actively engaged in sharing Christ with others, not just the preachers and elders. We have an example of this recorded in Acts 8:4: **“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”** The apostles remained in Jerusalem while the members of the church at Jerusalem were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1), sharing Christ as they went. The command to preach the Gospel was in no way limited to the apostles or to ordained preachers! Every member of the Lord’s churches should be a witness of the saving power of Christ and His Gospel! Every church member should be concerned about those who are lost and undone in their sins. How many of us can say with Paul: **“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.. Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”** (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1)?

How do we go about sharing Christ and the Gospel throughout the world? It should start in the home of every Baptist church member. As believing parents we ought to instruct, lead, and encourage our children in the

ways of Christ. We ought to remind them often of what Jesus said: **“..I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”** (John 14:6). We should use all lawful means as a church to spread the Gospel throughout all nations. We can do this by one on one witnessing to family, friends, coworkers, and strangers. We can do it through tract distribution and other printed materials. We can do it through radio, television, internet, and sermon audio. We can do it by knocking on doors and taking the Gospel to the streets of our communities. We can do it by supporting missionaries who are willing to take the Gospel to places we cannot or will not go. The bottom line is if we are going to be exceptional church members who are obedient to the Head and Lawgiver of our church, we must share Christ and His Gospel with everyone. We must overcome our fears, our unbelief, our coldness, stinginess, and our apathy if we are to carry out this all important task.

Instead of trying to explain away Proverbs 11:30, let us be wise and fully embrace the principle set forth therein: **“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”** What a joy it is to see people saved that God led you to witness to and share the Gospel with! There will be rewards in Heaven if we are faithful to share the Gospel of Christ with others. Daniel 12:3 declares: **“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”**

It should greatly trouble every church member as we see the wicked actively engaged in spreading the teachings of atheism, sexual perversion, evolution, abortion, and many other forms of ungodliness. They are bold and brazen in their efforts to blind people and captivate them. True Christians, and especially

members of the Lord’s churches are a decided minority. This means that our efforts in spreading the Gospel must be persistent, unflinching, bold, courageous, systematic, disciplined, and scriptural. Let us be up and doing!

C.H. Spurgeon wrote a book entitled *“The Soul Winner,”* what follows is a searching exhortation from its pages:

“Let us long to be used in the conversion of sinners...Let us long to be used, pray to be used, and pine to be used! Dear brothers and sisters, let us purge ourselves of anything we are doing, or leaving undone, any evil we are harboring, or any grace we are neglecting, which may make us unfit to be used of God, let us pray the Lord to cleanse, and mend, and scour us, till we are vessels fit for the Master’s use. Then let us be on the watch for opportunities of usefulness; let us go about the world with our ears and our eyes open, ready to avail ourselves of every occasion for doing good. Let us not be content till we are useful, but make this the main desire and ambition of our lives. Somehow or other we must and will bring souls to Jesus Christ. As Rachel cried, ‘Give me children, or I die,’ so may none of you be content to be barren in the household of God.”

In order to be an exceptional church member you must have a willingness to:

SACRIFICIALLY GIVE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR RESOURCES

Romans 12:1-2 declares: **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”** These verses

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are a call to surrender yourself to the Lord by making the ultimate sacrifice. Believers are urged to give themselves over to the service of the Lord by presenting their bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. It is a call that requires us to be willing to set aside our own interests and agenda to pursue a life course that is wholly dedicated to God. As I ponder this reasonable call to service, I am convicted by how often my life is driven by self interest and selfishness rather than sacrifice unto the Lord. Oh, how it troubles me that I am often so unwilling to obey the command of the One who gave everything to save me: **“Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it”** (Mark 8:34-35). If we are going to be exceptional church members we must learn to die to our fleshly self will and offer ourselves to God every day, to do with us as He pleases. Christ gave all, He pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3), and we ought to have the mind of Christ, willing to **“..very gladly spend and be spent..”** (II Cor. 12:15). It was this attitude and spirit that the Apostle Paul lived in and practiced, enabling him to say without reservation at the end of his days: **“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”** (II Tim. 4:6-8).

If we can consistently obey the command to present our body as a living sacrifice, it logically follows

that we will gladly give of ourselves, our time, our financial support to the work of the Lord. Paul commended the liberality and sacrificial giving of the church at Macedonia in II Corinthians 8:1-7. Even though they lived in deep poverty they were able to give to the Lord’s work and help others. I think verse four reveals the key to their liberal giving: **“And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.”** When we give ourselves to the Lord we will gladly pay our tithes and give our offerings to the work of the Lord and His New Testament church. God established the principle of tithing before He gave the Law (Gen. 14:20; 28:18-22) He incorporated it as a holy ordinance into the laws governing Israel (Lev. 27:30-32). God also commands that tithes and offerings be collected to support the work of the church and missions. Jesus Christ, the Head of the church receives tithes every time we deposit them into His appointed storehouse, the church (I Cor. 16:1-2). Hebrews 7:6-8 records: **“But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.”**

In the Old Testament tithes were to be brought to the storehouse to support the worship of the Temple and the Levites that ministered unto the Lord. Those who failed to pay their tithes were charged with robbing God. Those who gladly obeyed the principles of tithing were blessed. Malachi 3:8-12 declares: **“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the**

tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.” The Lord Jesus Christ commended the teaching of tithes and offerings during His earthly ministry, and even said the practice of paying tithes ought to be done. Matthew 23:23 states: **“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: THESE OUGHT YE TO HAVE DONE, and not to leave the others undone”** (Emph. mine TR). Luke 6:38 declares: **“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”** God has promised blessings to those who pay their tithes and offerings. Paul uses the principles of sowing and reaping as a way to guide and govern our giving: **“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”** (II Cor. 9:6-7).

Every member of the Lord’s church who earns an income, whether large or small, ought to contribute to the work of the Lord by faithfully paying

tithes and giving offerings. God expects us to be honest stewards of the time, money, and resources He affords us. I Thessalonians 4:11-12 declares: **“And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.”** Personal experience will prove that when you are honest with God and obey His commands that relate to tithes and offerings, He will see to it that 90% of your income will go farther than 100%. Pay your tithes, prove the Lord, follow His principles and see if He will not prosper you in the way. I believe the Lord will help you spiritually, physically, and financially when you follow His Word. A promise to that effect is found in Proverbs 3:7-10: **“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”**

Show me a church where members take the command to pay tithes and offerings seriously and I will show you a church where the work of the Lord is flourishing. Exceptional churches dedicated to the work of missions at home and abroad have members who are faithful tithers. May God raise up more church members who are willing to sacrificially give of themselves and their resources to advance the work of the Lord and the spread of the Gospel!

I would like to end this section with some powerful observations made by A.W. Pink in his booklet on *Tithing*:

“There are few subjects on which the Lord’s own people are more astray than on the subject of giving. They profess to take the Bible as their own

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rule of faith and practice, and yet in the matter of Christian finance, the vast majority have utterly ignored its plain teachings and have tried every substitute the carnal mind could devise..."

"Tithing is even more obligatory on the saints of the New Testament than it was upon God's people in the Old Testament days—not equally binding, but more binding, and that for two reasons: first, on the principle of **'unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required'** (Luke 12:48). The obligations of God's saints today are much greater than the obligations of the saints in the Old Testament times, because our privileges and our blessings are greater. As grace is more potent than law, as love is more constraining than fear, as the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the flesh, so our obligations to tithe are greater, for we have a deeper incentive to do that which is pleasing to God. Listen! The Christian should tithe for the very same reason he keeps all the other commandments of God, and for the same reason he keeps the laws of his country—not because he must do so, but because he desires to do so. As a law abiding citizen in the kingdom of God, he desires to maintain the government of God and to do that which is pleasing in His sight."

In order to be an exceptional church member you must demonstrate a:

**SINCERE LOVE AND RESPECT
FOR THE PASTOR GOD HAS
APPOINTED OVER THE
FLOCK**

If the Holy Spirit has been pleased to provide your church with a pastor that loves the Lord, honors God, and feeds the flock the truth from the Word of God you ought to be thankful. Demonstrate your gratitude to God by obeying the command to esteem and love your

pastor: **"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves"** (I Thess. 5:12-13). I do not believe that pastors are worthy of reverence or worship as the Papists teach. I do not believe any pastor should take to himself a title that only belongs to God such as reverend or Holy Father. There is absolutely no warrant from Scripture for this practice. To do so would encourage idolatry. I do believe that a faithful man of God who has committed his life to preaching the Gospel and ministering to the flock of God is worthy of sincere love and respect.

Every member of one of the Lord's churches should understand that pastors are Divinely called and appointed by the Holy Spirit. Acts 20:28 declares: **"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."** When a church calls a pastor it reveals that God has called that man specifically to minister to that particular flock. The church is only confirming what God has ordained and ordered according to His sovereign purpose. It would be good for all pastors and members of the Lord's churches to remember this solemn truth! God the Holy Spirit has been pleased to grace your church with the pastor of His choosing. Jeremiah 3:15 states: **"And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."** When we understand God's leadership in the appointment and selection of a pastor it should move us to respect the sacred office, and to pray fervently for the man of God. If you recognize that God has

called, appointed, and selected your pastor to minister to the church you are a member of, you will be less apt to be disrespectful to the man of God. Churches where the pastor is not loved and respected are often unfruitful, filled with a contentious spirit, and lacking in unity. Nobody wants to be a member of a church that is filled with strife and disharmony. One way you can promote peace and unity within the church is to love the pastor and the truth that he preaches.

Another reason to love and respect your pastor is to prayerfully consider the work God has called him to do. The proof that a pastor loves the Lord is found in his commitment to feed the sheep. Jesus explained this truth to Peter no less than three times in John 21:15-17: **"...Feed my sheep."** Thank God for men who spend their ministerial life committed to this solemn work and holy task! I Peter 5:2-3 declares: **"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."** Pastors who labor in the word and in doctrine are a tremendous blessing to a church. The responsibility of the pastor to lead, feed, and rebuke requires moral courage and fortitude. It is for this reason Paul told Timothy: **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry"** (II Tim 4:2-5). If your church has a pastor who is striving to obey these admonitions

you are blessed! Our religious world is filled with churches who would rather hear their pastor entertain and coddle them in their sins, instead of preaching the truth. Thank God for a pastor who preaches what you need to hear rather than merely what you want to hear. Those pastors who faithfully preach the Word are bound to offend some folks because the truth can be offensive especially when it hits those in sin. To rebuke and reprove those who are disobedient and wayward can bring bitter persecution to the man of God bold enough to preach the truth as it is in Jesus. The ministries of Christ, the apostles, Stephen, and Paul all attest to this fact. If the world at large applauds the message and ministry of your pastor he probably is not preaching the truth. I Corinthians 1:18 and 21-23 state: **"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God...For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness."** Paul explained to the Corinthian church how many viewed his ministry: **"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day"** (I Cor. 4:10-13).

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Perhaps the greatest demonstration of love for the pastor is when church members respond to the truth he preaches by way of cheerful obedience. John the beloved wrote: **“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”** (III John 3-4). Paul commended the church at Thessalonica for receiving and practicing the truth of the Word of God: **“As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. 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 believe”** (I Thess. 2:11-13). Oh that God would be pleased to raise up pastors who lovingly, but firmly, feed the flock and church members who cheerfully obey the Word, and willingly walk in its precepts.

Finally, exceptional church members recognize their responsibility to support the pastor as best they can prayerfully and financially. Many pastors are hesitant to preach on this responsibility of church members because they feel it may appear to be self serving. Every member of the Lord's church ought to pray for their pastor. Pray that God would grant him a desire to study, prepare, pray, meditate, be bold, and have spiritual discernment. It is a solemn and holy task to prayerfully prepare and preach 3 to 4 times a week. It requires discipline and an unswerving commitment to the

work of the ministry. Pray that God will mold your pastor into a spiritual leader who is able to encourage, edify, reprove, and rebuke those he ministers unto. Pray that God will cause your pastor to lead the church in the work of evangelism. Pray that God will make your pastor a blessing to his wife and children. There is much to pray about when it comes to your pastor! It is also important to support your pastor financially as you are able. I believe the pastor is the church's first missionary. Support him and free him up to do the work of the ministry as much as you are able. I Timothy 5:17-19 declares: **“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.”** It is a fact that many churches are not large enough to support a full time pastor. Many pastors are bi-vocational meaning they must work a secular job along with performing the responsibilities of the pastorate. There is no doubt this is not an ideal situation. These men are in special need of prayer as they do the work God has called them to do as well as the work necessary to supply the needs of their family. I have heard some, who no doubt are well meaning, say that if he is truly called of God he should just live by faith and not work a secular job. I have witnessed men who have taken this route unnecessarily and put their families through privation and sometimes beggary. There is no shame for a pastor to work a secular job to provide for his family. Let us be careful to give such pastors deference and not disparage them. I think it is a far greater shame for a pastor not to pay his bills or allow his family to go without the necessities of life. In

such cases it is imperative that the man of God seek employment or do something on the side to support his family.

A word of caution should be issued at this juncture. Church members should never use the bi-vocational pastor as an excuse not to pay the preacher. It should always be the aim of God's people to do what they can to lighten the load of financial stress and pressure on the pastor.

In order to be an exceptional church member you must determine to:

STAND FOR THE TRUTH

Paul exhorted the church at Thessalonica to: **“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good... Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle”** (I Thess. 5:21; II Thess. 2:15). It is absolutely necessary that church members know what they believe and why. Baptist churches should be bastions of truth and godliness. There must be a genuine desire to believe and practice the truths of the Word of God. Every church member has an obligation to the body as a whole to unite with and earnestly contend for the faith once delivered. Jude 3 commands: **“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”** In order to earnestly contend for the faith you certainly must be acquainted with the doctrines and practices that are associated with the system of belief. New Testament Baptist churches have been defending since Jesus Christ started the first church during His earthly ministry. Our Baptist forefathers faced innumerable hardships, trials, afflictions, privations, and persecutions as they strove to please God. Many Baptist

worthies were tortured, publicly whipped, imprisoned, burned on the stake, drowned, and dismembered by Catholics and Protestants alike. In spite of all these horrific acts of violence aimed at intimidating them, they would not capitulate or compromise with heresy. They would not recant to save their own life. Rather they believed that the truth as it is in Jesus was worth dying for. I marvel at souls so courageous and so filled with the Spirit of God! Oh, that God would make me one of the number who will not back down from the truth no matter what the cost!

In an age when it seems as if people place so very little value on the faith once delivered, it is imperative that churches stand firm on the bedrock truths of the Holy Scriptures. Philosophy, fables, entertainment, social justice, and political pablum are all the rage in many religious organizations of our day. Little or no emphasis is placed on expository preaching, sound doctrine, holy living, missions, church discipline, concern for lost souls, earnest prayer, family life, the training of children, worship, and scriptural observance of the ordinances. As a result churches have devolved into mere entertainment and social centers aimed at marketing to the masses so the pews and the coffers remain full. In the mean time churches grow doctrinally weaker and spiritually impotent. There is little difference between the world of the ungodly and those who congregate in religious assemblies every Sunday. May God help us to answer the clarion call of Scripture to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered! Church members must remain watchful, zealous, and vigilant for truth and godliness! We must get back to the place where glorifying God and exalting Christ govern everything we do in all aspects of life. Colossians

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Exceptional Church

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2:6-8 declares: **“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”** If we earnestly obey this admonition to walk in Christ and remain steadfast in the faith we will not be so easily influenced by worldly philosophy and godless deception.

As a member of one of the Lord's churches, are your doctrinal views in line with the Scriptures? Do you believe in the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Holy Scripture? Do you believe that God is the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of Heaven and earth? Do you believe that God is holy, righteous, omnipotent, immutable, eternal, sovereign, and gracious? Do you believe that salvation is all of grace (Eph. 2:8-10) and entirely bound up in the finished work of Jesus Christ? Do you believe that all men are sinful and in need of the Savior? Do you believe that the only saving Gospel revealed in Scripture is **“..how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”** (I Cor. 15:3-4)? Do you believe that repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation (John 14:6)? Do you believe that the church is a local, visible, congregation of baptized believers under the Headship of Christ? Do you believe that the Lord's church must be actively carrying out the commands issued in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20)? Do you believe in Baptist baptism as revealed in the New Testament (Matt. 3:13-17)? Do

you believe that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance to be observed by only the members of the congregation in good standing (I Cor. 5; 11:23-28)? Do you believe in the new birth, justification by faith, sanctification by the Spirit, and the promise of everlasting life? Do you believe in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? All of these questions have to do with the faith once delivered to the saints. Many other finer points of doctrine and practice could be listed. Every church member should be eager to learn about them and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. The spiritual health and well being of a Baptist church is closely related to the doctrinal soundness of its membership. It is absolutely essential that churches believe what is right and scriptural, so that they may practice what is right and scriptural. What we believe as a church largely determines how we behave as a church. We should never underestimate the vital connection between doctrine and practice if we are to be pleasing to the Lord. Let us labor to not only be doctrinally sound, but also holy in our practice, fulfilling the sacred admonition of Colossians 3:14-17: **“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called, in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”**

As church members we ought to desire to please God in believing and practicing the truth. However, as a church we must be united in this effort. We must learn to function as a unified body of Christ. I believe

that each New Testament Baptist Church is the body of Christ in that given location. I do not believe in a mythical, universal, invisible church that never meets, worships, or observes the ordinances. Only a real congregation of baptized believers under the Headship of Jesus Christ can actually function as a body that is unified in its efforts to carry out the Great Commission. Paul the apostle, under the Divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, identified the church at Corinth as the body of Christ whose members had been Divinely placed in the congregation (I Cor. 12:18). Paul acknowledged the church at Corinth as the whole church in that location when he wrote: **“If therefore the whole church be come together into one place..”** (I Cor. 14:23a). Each church is an independent, autonomous body of Christ under His Headship and the administration of the Holy Spirit. Only a local church body could ever hope to be unified in doctrine and practice! With that said, how vital is it that every member contribute to the well being and unity of the body as a whole?

I Corinthians 1:10 declares: **“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.”** Ephesians 4:1-5 states: **“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”** Let each church member learn to fulfill his or her role in the body and conscientiously endeavor to promote unity of faith,

and discipline in the Lord's church. Oh, that God would impress upon each of us our responsibility to do nothing that would hinder or destroy scriptural unity within the body.

Finally, while earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered, we must not only stand for the truth, we must do so graciously and lovingly. May God rid us of any pride or arrogance in our attitude and demeanor as we serve the Lord! I have met some Baptists who are doctrinally sound but are as mean as a sack full of rattlesnakes. We cannot expect to be used of the Lord to lead others in a way that is right and true if we are not humble, gracious, and kind. Ephesians 4:15-16 and 21-24 declares: **“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, Taketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love...if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”** May our stand for truth be tempered with an attitude of love and a spirit of humility!

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND APPLICATION

No doubt, many more things could and should be written regarding membership in one of the Lord's churches. My prayer is that those who read these pages will be stirred to faithfully serve the Lord in the congregation He has been pleased to place you. May God help us to

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Exceptional Church

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understand the solemn privilege and honor of being a member of a New Testament Baptist Church.

There are alarming trends in the religious world at large that prompted me to write this treatise. I fear that many churches are becoming more like social clubs and entertainment centers that reflect the worldliness of our hedonistic culture. Churches are falling prey to what A.W. Tozer identified as “the great god entertainment” way back in the 1950’s. If living today, Tozer would no doubt be horrified at the gimmicks and gadgets churches are using to attract and keep customers.

Tozer wrote:

“...Today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly replacing the serious things of God. Many churches these days have become little more than poor theaters where fifth-rate producers peddle their shoddy wares with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defense of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.

The great god Entertainment amuses his devotees mainly by telling them stories. The love of stories, which is a characteristic of childhood, has taken fast hold of the minds of the retarded saints of our day, so much so that not a few persons manage to make a comfortable living by spinning yarns and serving them up in various disguises to church people. What is natural and beautiful in a child may be shocking when it persists into adulthood, and more so when it appears in the sanctuary and seeks to pass for true religion.

Is it not a strange thing and a wonder

that, with the shadow of atomic (now nuclear, TWR) destruction hanging over the world and with the coming of Christ drawing near, the professed followers of the Lord should be giving themselves up to religious amusements? That in an hour when mature saints are so desperately needed vast numbers of believers should revert to spiritual childhood and clamor for religious toys?” (The Best of A.W. Tozer, pp. 127-128)

I remember years ago when the late Pastor Al Gormley warned me that whatever a church uses to attract people is what they must use to keep them interested. Oh, that our churches would exalt Gospel preaching, expository studies of the Word of God, godly music, and a spirit of sincere worship to feed and keep the sheep coming back for more!

In my lifetime I have witnessed a declining morality and spirituality in Baptist churches. There seems to be less emphasis on Bible study, prayer, witnessing, and holiness. I am troubled by the scourge of antinomianism that has infected the thinking of many in our day. More and more Protestant organizations are capitulating to the demands of the homosexual and progressive agenda. Many Protestant clubs are ardent supporters of homosexual “marriage” and many of their ministers are eager to perform the abominable Sodomite ceremony. Rabid feminism has spawned women “preachers and deacons.” It is permissible for members of many churches to live in sin outside the sacred covenant of marriage. Drunkenness is tolerated under the auspices of “social drinking.” You may object and say that such things are acceptable in Protestant organizations, but not in Baptist churches. Give it time. There will be Baptists in name only (BINO’S) who want to appear to be more tolerant, inclusive, and accepting who will compromise in order to get and keep new members. It is rare

to find Baptist churches in our day who practice any form of church discipline as recommended by Paul in II Thessalonians 3:6, 11, 14-15: **“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us...For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies...And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”** May God help us to reflect the glorious image of Christ rather than the pollution of the world in our churches!

Our young people are facing a culture that is openly hostile to the teachings of the Word of God. If they attend government schools or universities they are bombarded with atheistic rhetoric and socialist/communist propaganda. Our children and grandchildren may face real persecution in the days ahead. May God give our churches the grace and spiritual fortitude to teach the truth to our young people! We must live in such a way that they can see we have been transformed by the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit! We must be fully invested in serving the Lord and providing the right kind of example for our youth. Proverbs 23:23 and 26 declare: **“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding...My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”** What a challenge that the members of the Lord’s New Testament Baptist churches must embrace! Little eyes are watching us! May we ever be mindful of our solemn responsibility to educate our children in the ways of truth and godliness.

Finally, let us be motivated by love for the Lord Jesus Christ to serve Him faithfully with every fiber of our being. Oh, that we would be stirred to dedicate ourselves afresh and anew to being better Christians, parents, and church members for the glory of God. May our hearts be filled to overflowing with the love of Christ! May others see the sincerity of our profession of faith in Christ as we serve Him faithfully in and through His church.

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:11-14).

“Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

“And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12).



THE BIBLE AND THE NEWSPAPER

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

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

FEDERAL COURT OKS MISSISSIPPI RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LAW

(WNS)--The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals gave Mississippi the green light on Thursday to begin enforcing broad protections for religious liberty adopted by the legislature last year. The law allows county clerks to recuse themselves from issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples and protects business owners who do not want to provide services for same-sex weddings. The plaintiffs, who claim the measure legalizes discrimination, plan to appeal the decision. A three-judge panel of the 5th Circuit ruled the plaintiffs did not provide enough proof they would be harmed by the law, a theme echoed by Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) attorney Kevin Theriot: "The sole purpose of this law is to ensure that Mississippians do not live in fear of losing their careers or their businesses simply for affirming marriage as a husband-wife union. Those who filed suit have not and will not be harmed but want to restrict freedom and impose their beliefs on others by ensuring dissenters are left open to the government discrimination that has already occurred in states without protective laws like this one." ADF has defended several business owners against discrimination claims brought by state or local civil rights commissions.

CMP REQUESTS JUDGE'S REMOVAL OVER PRO-

ABORTION STANCE

(WNS)--Lawyers for the Center for Medical Progress (CMP) want the judge presiding over an ongoing lawsuit removed from the case because of his potential pro-abortion conflicts of interest. Judge William Orrick is presiding over a lawsuit filed by the National Abortion Federation and Planned Parenthood against CMP over undercover videos the abortion groups say CMP filmed illegally. Last month, Orrick ordered one of the videos removed from YouTube, saying it was under temporary injunction. CMP's request to remove Orrick claims he has been dishonest about his connections to Planned Parenthood through Good Samaritan Family Resource Center (GSFRC) in San Francisco. The facility provides space for a Planned Parenthood abortion center. Orrick claimed to have severed ties with GSFRC, but CMP discovered he has remained a board member and continues to give the organization large sums of money.

DELAWARE LEGALIZES ABORTION THROUGH ALL NINE MONTHS

(WNS)--Delaware gave pro-abortion advocates a rare but big win recently when Gov. John Carney signed a bill making it legal to kill unborn babies through all nine months of pregnancy. Proponents of the bill drafted it out of fear the Supreme Court might someday overturn the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion

nationwide. "This is a reaction from the abortion lobby to President Trump winning, and Neil Gorsuch's confirmation, and the anticipation of President Trump appointing additional Supreme Court justices," Susan B. Anthony List spokeswoman Mallory Quigley said.

NO CHILD CARE? JUST FREEZE YOUR EGGS

(WNS)--This summer Apple unveiled its new \$5 billion headquarters: Apple Park. The state-of-the-art donut-shaped building is surrounded by 9,000 drought-resistant trees. And though the office dreamland includes a 100,000-square-foot gym, critics note it has no on-site child care. While the company does not appear to value live children, it wants female employees to know it cares about their potential future prodigy: Apple pays for two rounds of egg freezing.

SPEAKING OF TITLE IX ...

(WNS)--The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights issued a memo June 6 to teachers and public schools warning that a refusal to address students with their preferred pronoun could trigger a federal investigation. Conservatives see the directive as a bad sign because it forces schools to recognize gender identity as reality. But LGBT activists aren't happy with the memo either because it does not list failure to provide restroom and locker room access as an investigation-triggering offense. Title IX's definition of "sex" remains at the center of these debates and the federal response to transgender issues. LGBT activists hope the U.S. Supreme Court eventually will side with the Obama administration's definition, negating the need for Congress to make gender identity a protected class—and that would be a tough sell in the Republican-

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BEREA BAPTIST BANNER Financial Report 6-1-2017 to 6-30-2017

Beginning Balance	\$1,275.82
RECEIPTS:	
Amazing Grace B. C., Stockdale, TX	100.00
B. C. of Brimfield, Brimfield, IL	50.00
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	300.00
Berea B. C., Stonington, IL	60.00
Bethel B. C., Pasadena, TX	50.00
Big Creek B. C., Wayne, WV	200.00
Carol Willett, Edgewater, FL	50.00
Citrus M. B. C., Inverness, FL	25.00
Emmanuel B. C., Oldtown, KY	200.00
Faith B. C., Lynn, AR	12.50
Gail Knowles, Scarborough, ME	20.00
Grace B. C., Rural Hall, NC	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Marion, IL	50.00
Grace M. B. C., Tulsa, OK	35.00
Indore B. C., Indore, WV	100.00
Logan Gusler, Frankfort, KY	15.00
The Lord's Church, Goose Creek, SC	50.00
Michael Sherman, Ashland, KY	35.00
Mt. Pleasant B. C., Chesapeake, OH	100.00
New Testament B. C., Goshen, IN	50.00
Parkway L. B. C., Springfield, OR	100.00
Philadelphia B. C., Decatur, AL	100.00
Portland B. C., Plumerville, AR	50.00
Providence S. G. B. C., Tupelo, MS	100.00
Southside B. C., Fulton, MS	25.00
Sovereign Grace B. C., Northport, AL	100.00
Victory B. C., Courtland, VA	25.00
Subscriptions	133.00
Anonymous	1,210.00
Dividing checks	0.00
Sub Total	\$3,395.50
TOTAL	\$4,671.32
EXPENDITURES:	
Printing	490.00
Postage	710.06
Wages	2,300.00
FICA	175.96
Dividing checks	0.00
Bank Charge	13.00
Total Expenditures	\$3,689.02
ENDING BALANCE	\$982.30



BEREA BAPTIST BROADCAST Financial Report 6-1-2017 to 6-30-2017

Beginning Balance	\$4,944.68
RECEIPTS:	
Berea B. C., Mantachie, MS	225.00
Calvary I. B. C., Sumas, WA	200.00
.....	425.00
TOTAL	5,369.68
EXPENDITURES:	
Radio Time	1,251.94
Program production	195.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,446.94
.....	3,922.74
Interest	+0.03
ENDING BALANCE	\$3,922.77

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mount Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church of Chesapeake, OH, and Pastor Tom Ross will be hosting a Fellowship Missions Conference on Saturday, August 12th starting at 9:30 am.

Elders Frank James, Jeff Short, and Jack Holbrook will be preaching the Word of God.

Good Baptist food and fellowship to follow services. All are invited to attend.

The Bryan Station Baptist Church of Lexington, KY is printing a new booklet by Elder Tom Ross entitled *Are You An Exceptional Church Member?*

You may order copies from Bryan Station Baptist Church, 3175 Briar Hill Rd. Lexington, KY 40516 or visit their website at www.bryanstation.com

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

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

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Caldwell, KS is in need of a pastor. For more information please contact the church in writing at SGBC, 400 N. Main St.,

Caldwell, KS 67022, or by phone Brother Darin Wiley 620-863-2431.

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

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



Bible & the Newspaper

(Continued from page 23) ◊
controlled House.

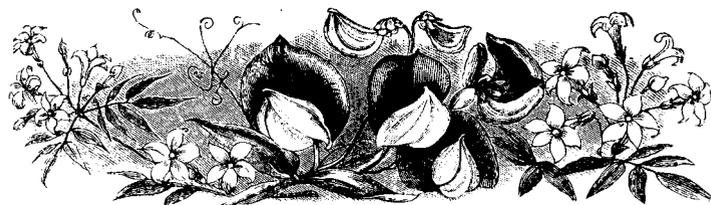
TWITTER CENSORS PRO-LIFE ADS

(WNS)--If you want to advertise on Twitter, be sure not to criticize Planned Parenthood. At least that is how pro-life activist Lila Rose understood a recent interaction with the social media company. Her organization Live Action lost its ability to pay to promote tweets after Twitter's ad bots flagged numerous tweets as infractions of the social

media's "hate, sensitive topics, and violence" advertisement policy. Among the flagged tweets were a fact-checking video of Planned Parenthood CEO Cecile Richards, a map of community health centers that do not do abortions, a video of Rose saying children have a right to life, and references to undercover videos by the Center for Medical Progress. "I think it is clear that Twitter is discriminating against the pro-life voice," Rose said.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS GENDER-FREE BABY

(WNS)--Canadian officials recently issued a baby born in November a health card without a gender. The infant, Searyl Atli Doty, is believed to be the first baby issued a card marked "U," presumably for "undetermined" or "unassigned." Health cards in Canada allow a person access to the state-run medical system. Kori Doty, who identifies as a non-binary transgender, said her baby was born at home and therefore did not undergo a medical "genital inspection." She refused to designate the infant either male or female. Officials initially declined to issue Searyl a card but finally agreed last month. Doty, part of the Gender Free I.D. Coalition, is now trying to obtain a genderless birth certificate for Searly.



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NO MORE 'LADIES AND GENTLEMEN'

(WNS)--Riders on London's underground will no longer hear the long-standing phrase "ladies and gentlemen" after a recent decision to switch to gender-neutral greetings. Transport for London (TfL) announced it would change its prerecorded greeting and instructed all employees to stop using gender-binary phrases. The move comes after months of lobbying by LGBT activists. "We want everyone to feel welcome on our transport network," said Mark Evers, director of customer strategy at TfL.

MALTA LEGALIZES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

(WNS)--The Mediterranean island of Malta legalized same-sex marriage on July 12. Only one lawmaker out of 67 voted against the measure. Malta joined 24 other countries, mostly in Europe and the Americas, that legally recognize same-sex marriage.

FORCED EUTHANASIA IN THE NETHERLANDS

(WNS)--Doctors in the Netherlands euthanized 431 people in 2015 who never requested to die, according to data from the country's latest report. The report, published once every five years, shows a continued upward trend in the total number of doctor-assisted deaths over the course of a decade. In 2015, doctors helped 7,254 people die, and nearly 6 percent did not request it. Euthanasia Prevention Coalition's Alex Schadenberg noted that even after legalization, "covert euthanasia continues to occur." The 2010 report showed 4,050 doctor-assisted deaths, 310 of which were not requested. The 2005 report showed 2,425 assisted deaths, with 550 deaths not requested.

