

Ninth Annual  
West Virginia Christian  
Lectureship

October 5-9, 2008

THEME

“Complete in Him  
A Study of the Book of Colossians”

Hosted by

Central Church of Christ  
90 Waverly Court  
Martinsburg, WV 25403-1212

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## Director's Statement

Has it been nine years already? That is when some brethren really began encouraging Albert Farley to use the influence of his paper *West Virginia Christian* to conduct a lectureship in various parts of the state each year. Here we are at the Ninth Annual West Virginia Christian Lectureship. You hold in your hand the written record of that event. This book will serve you as an excellent tool for study for many years to come.

The church in Martinsburg is humbly grateful for the privilege of having the lectureship return here. We anticipate a great week of study on a very important theme.

Thanks goes to so many people who have worked diligently to make this all come together. I want to thank:

- ◆Our speakers who have labored long and hard to present quality lessons
- ◆Our elders for their wisdom in bringing the lectureship here
- ◆A membership that faithfully follows their leadership
- ◆Ed Floyd for his invaluable assistance every step of the way
- ◆Those who contributed valuable time to proofread the manuscripts
- ◆Kay Kenney for spending many hours in assembling the manuscripts into book form

It is our prayer that the lord will continue to bless Albert Farley in the work he is doing with *West Virginia Christian*. This paper is truly a blessing to the church in West Virginia and beyond.

Warren F. Kenney



# **Ephesians -- The Glorious Church**

## **Clarence DeLoach**

*“That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).*

The book of Ephesians is Paul’s inspired treatise on the glorious church. He sets forth the importance, the beauty, the nature and mission of the church in God’s eternal purpose. The word “church” occurs nine times in the letter, and “body” is mentioned even more.

Sadly, many have never viewed the church as pictured in Ephesians. Unfortunately, they have seen it through the spectacles of denominationalism, factionism and human perversion. A popular book expresses the disenchantment many feel about the church. It is titled *I Like Jesus, but Not the Church*.

The books of Ephesians and Colossians are very similar, yet with a different emphasis. Both present the balance between Christ and His church. Ephesians focuses upon the Church of Christ, while Colossians emphasizes the Christ of the church. It is not Christ or His church, but Christ and His church.

### **The Glorious Church in Ephesians**

1. The church is the fullness of Christ (1:22-23). That means if we love Christ we will love the church because it is filled by Christ.
2. The Church is reconciled to Christ (2:16). It is in the body that enmity is destroyed and fellowship with God is restored.
3. God’s wisdom is exhibited by the church (3:10). Without the church, Jesus died in vain. And God’s eternal purpose would not have been validated.
4. God is glorified in and by the church (3:20, 21). You cannot glorify God in the world.
5. The church is fundamentally, essentially and actually one (4:4). Division blinds the world to the truth about Jesus. Unity demonstrates that God sent Him (John 17:20-21).

- All of the saved are added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:47). Christ is the Savior of the body-the church (5:23).
6. Christ is the head of, and the Savior of the church (1:22, 23; 5:23). All saved people are in the church. The church is not the Savior, it is the saved.
  7. The church will ultimately be presented to Christ as His chaste bride (5:27). The kingdom-Church will be delivered to God at the end when Jesus comes (I Cor. 15:23-24).
  8. The church is the beloved bride of Christ (5:31-32). We are married to Christ (Rom. 7:4). The church will be presented as a chaste virgin of Christ, without spot, but holy and without blemish (II Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:27).

### A Central Truth in Each Chapter

Paul's portrait of the church in Ephesians is especially refreshing in a time when men downgrade it and belittle it. Some get their exercise from bashing the church. Some say it is not relevant in our times. Others wish to restructure it to fit their preconceived notions. Some seek to change it to conform to the tolerant agenda of modern religion. Consider six significant facts about the church in God's design. One for each chapter in Ephesians.

Chapter 1: Christ is the Head of It (1:22, 23). God placed all things under His feet. It is the fullness of Christ. All spiritual blessings are in it. This fundamental truth forever settles the question of authority. Christ has all authority. Executive--He is head; Legislative--He is law-giver; and Judicial--He is the judge (Acts 17:31). No question is of greater importance in religious and spiritual matters than authority, and then such eliminates creeds, catechisms, confessions of faith, manuals, traditions and human reason.

Chapter 2: Salvation Is In It (2:16, 17). All have sinned, Jew and Gentile (Rom. 3:22, 23). Because of sin there is enmity and separation from God (Isa. 59:1, 2). Man's greatest need is peace and reconciliation with God. This has been provided by the cross and in the one body--the church, "that He might reconcile them both (Jew and Gentile) to God in one body through the cross

thereby putting to death the enmity” (Eph. 2:16). This settles the question of essentiality.

Chapter 3: It Is According To God’s Eternal Purpose (3:9-11). What God intended to do through the church was a mystery in the Old Testament. It had not been clearly revealed. But, now through Christ and the gospel, the mystery is revealed. It is revealed clearly so men can understand it by the Holy Spirit to His holy prophets and apostles. That revelation is “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel”:(3:6). This is God’s eternal purpose. The church exhibits God’s divine wisdom. The church was no accident, or afterthought, not withstanding the claims of premillennialists.

Chapter 4: It Is Fundamentally and Essentially One. We have been called by the one Spirit, through the one gospel, by the one baptism, into the one body where there is the one hope. This is the essence of unity. It fulfills the prayer of Jesus in John 17 “that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Division is contrary to God’s purpose and plan for the church. The emphasis in chapter four is upon the truth, the life and the practice that produces the “unity of the Spirit”.

Chapter 5: The Purity of It. The first three chapters focus upon our wealth in Christ, while the last three emphasize our walk in Christ. The church is the bride of Christ, and purity is the essential mark of the bride. A certain lifestyle is prescribed (5:3-7). Christians must walk in purity. We are to “walk in love” an offering and sacrifice to God (5:2). Walking in the light will expose the unfruitful works of darkness (5:8-11).

Walking in the truth will enable us to “walk in wisdom” (5:15-17). The church is subject to Christ in all things, so “walk in submission” (5:21-26). The glorious bride will be presented as the pure bride when Jesus comes. The love of Christ for His church, and the submission of the church to Him is the greatest illustration of the relationship between husbands and wives (5:23-30).

Chapter 6: It Is God’s Army -- Strong and Militant. Christians are soldiers of the cross, and the church is God’s

spiritual army. In Christ we are in for the battle of our lives. It is not carnal warfare, but a spiritual battle against the forces of evil. There is no time for passivity, but we are admonished to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (6:10). Our strength comes from the Lord (Phil. 4:13). The enemy is clearly defined -- the “wiles of the Devil” (vs. 11). He is shrewd, crafty and tricky. His strategy is devious. He will take advantage if we fail to know His devices (II Cor. 2:11). The Lord has provided the equipment we need for the fight. Both defensive and offensive weapons are provided (6:13-17). Defensively, God has provided the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. Offensively, we are armed with the sword of the Spirit -- the word of God. But no greater offensive weapon is the ability to be in direct communication with the “captain of our salvation”. We can call upon Him in the thick of the battle. We must never neglect the awesome power of prayer. Prayer unleashes the power of God in the life of the Christian soldier.

### Conclusion

Every Christian should saturate his mind with the content of Ephesians. Therein, he/she will discover the inheritance of our “riches” in Christ and His church. Just think of them--acceptance, access, approach, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, wisdom, hope, sealed, called, alive, and seated with Christ. We need to uncover and apply the liberating, transforming truths that produce a sense of lasting joy, unbounded love and radiant faith.



## WOMEN PROFESSING GODLINESS

Cheryl Cozort

### ARE WE HOLY?

Modern society loudly proclaims many things concerning the role of women in the home, the workplace, sports, politics, parenting, to name a few. It is high time, yea maybe even past time to go back to the Word of God to find out what kind of woman God wants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are going to examine the type of lifestyle godly women should be living according to the scriptures. We can't possibly hit all aspects of this topic. Hopefully our study will encourage further study and examination on your part. Our lessons will be based on the text in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. As a background before we get into that text, we need to realize some truths about our wonderful, gracious God.

**“...but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’”** (1 Pet. 1:15-16). At the very root of the character of God we find His holiness. It is impossible to understand God without studying this vital part of His make-up. Because He commands us to be holy as He is holy, that means there must be a standard of holiness. We find that standard in God's “Holy” Word. In order to make wise choices in our lives, to reach the goal of godliness and holiness, we must know God. We need to understand who He is and what He expects of us.

There are several Hebrew words that are translated “holy” or one of its derivatives. *Strong's Concordance* defines one Hebrew word, *qodes* (6944), this way: “holy, or sacred thing, place, sanctuary; holiness; set apart dedicated to God, the holy of holies is the most holy place set apart exclusively for the Presence of God, with very limited priestly access.”<sup>1</sup> *Vine's* records, “All Israel is holy, (Ex. 30:31) separated to God's service, and therefore should keep itself separated to that service by observing the distinction between things holy (allowed by God) and things unclean (Lev. 10:10).”<sup>2</sup>

Another Hebrew word translated “holy” qados (6918), is the one used most frequently in the phrase or term, “the Holy One” referring to God and Christ. Part of the definition for this word, according to Strong’s, “focuses on God as unique, wholly other,” (meaning something ‘other’ than human).

The holiness of God is believed by many to be the foundational attribute of God. Roy H. Lanier, Sr., wrote a book, in which he gives several wonderful quotations from other sources. I won’t take the time to duplicate all of them here, but if you can get your hands on this book, I highly recommend reading chapters VIII and VIII B, pages 93-117 to get the entire article.

One of the quotes that brother Lanier used is from George Burder, “*By holiness, in the blessed God, we mean that essential rectitude of his nature, whereby he takes infinite delight and pleasure in that which is pure and holy, and hates, with a perfect hatred, everything which is morally evil.*” (Lanier, p. 93).<sup>3</sup> To consider the ramifications of this statement takes quite a bit of time. We, the finite, cannot imagine the delight and pleasure that purity and holiness brings to God. It is so far above us. Even if we think of the best, sweetest, purest person we know and raise the bar 10 times higher we still won’t have a picture of the holiness of God. Conversely, we cannot think about perfect hatred. Too often human hatred has many other elements mixed in: envy, maliciousness, desire to return evil for evil and such like. When the Bible speaks of “**Vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord**” (Rom. 12:19), it is speaking of the judgment of the completely Just God who knows the true hearts of men, who doesn’t judge prematurely, nor spitefully. We can’t fully understand this either.

Let’s notice another quote brother Lanier uses. This one is from Richard Beard,  
*“Holiness is the highest excellence of the divine nature. The other attributes of God imbued with holiness, modified, controlled by it as a vital spirit, are glorious and lovely. Without it they would be objects of terror. His justice would become cruelty; his mercy, weakness; his wisdom, subtlety; his power, tyranny; his zeal, furious madness. Without holiness, the Divine Being himself, in all his dispensations would become an object of terror. Combining*

*infinite wisdom and power, having all resources in heaven and upon earth under his control, what could he not do in the infliction of suffering? But his holiness modifies every attribute, and directs it to such a development of itself as to lead to the greatest interest of the universe. Infections fall only upon sin. The rebellious, the wicked may and should fear; all others may confide and rejoice. If God is infinitely and immutably holy, he can never do wrong, and none but wrongdoers may have any thing to apprehend from him, whilst those who seek after righteousness and holiness have everything to hope.” (Lanier, p. 97).<sup>4</sup>*

Our God is a mighty and awesome God. He deserves the very best that we can give Him. Not that He needs anything from us, but because of the delight we can give Him by our pure and holy lives, we should desire to please Him, our Maker and Judge.

Brother Lanier stated it this way, *“We have defined holiness in God as that essential element in his nature which causes him to hate, with perfect hatred, everything that is morally evil, and to love everything that is pure and holy.” (Lanier, p. 99).<sup>5</sup>*

In the book of Leviticus we find the word “holy” used 94 times and a phrase similar to this, **“ye shall be holy; for I am holy”** used at least 5 times. In Deuteronomy, Moses talks about **“thou art an holy people...the Lord thy God hath chosen thee...”** (7:6; 14:2). In the New Testament we learn that the church is the temple of God and the temple is holy (1 Cor. 3:17). In 1 Corinthians 6:19 it says our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost. Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:4, **“that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”** In Titus, Paul tells those men who would be elders to be holy (1:8); and the aged women to **“be in behaviour as becometh holiness”** (holy women) (Tit. 2:3). As I referred to previously, Peter records these words from the Old Testament, **“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”** (1 Pet.1:15-16). Then he records in 2 Peter 3:11, **“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”**

It is obvious that God has always expected His people to be holy people. But how? How can the created ever be holy like the Creator? This may be a crutch that is used by some who never submit in obedience to God even after they learn the truth. They figure they can't be "perfect" like God so why try. Brother Lanier can help us out here too. He writes, "*Jesus said, 'Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. 5:48). Some have been discouraged by this statement since God is absolutely perfect, which man can never be in this life. But by this statement Jesus did not mean that we are to be perfect in the sense of degree, but rather in kind....Jesus could not have meant that we are to have that degree of perfection which God has in all his attributes; for then we would be God.*" (Lanier, 98-99).<sup>6</sup> Thus, we are to be holy in kind. We are to do our very best to imitate, emulate, completely follow the example of holiness shown to us in the scriptures.

Such a blessing it is to have the Holy One to follow. There's no guess work involved. There is "only" the submission of our will to His. Of course, the "only" part is the tough part. We can mentally assent to all of God's commands, but doing them requires controlling our will and submitting it to His. Even though we know that His perfect holiness will only ask of us that which is in our best interest, it is still difficult - at times- to desire to bend!

How do we become holy? First, we must approach God in the way He desires. The apostles faithfully passed on the keys of entrance given to them by Jesus, through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as it is recorded in Acts 2. Peter stood up (vs. 14ff) and began to speak to the people who gathered after hearing the sound of a mighty rushing wind. Some honest souls were pricked in their hearts with the truth and asked what to do to be saved. Verse 38 records, "**Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.**" In Romans 10, Paul gives us more parts to the plan. In verse 17, he says, "**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" Just before that, in verses 9-10, he wrote, "**That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him**

**from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”** So, from these verses we can conclude that we must hear God’s word (hearing includes the physical hearing, and/or the reading and studying of it), this will build faith (belief) in Jesus as the Son of God. We must repent of our sins, confess that He is the Son of God before others and be baptized for the remission of our sins. This puts us into the body of Christ, the church, the kingdom (Acts 2:27; Col. 1:13,18; Eph. 1:22-23). Only then are we holy, sanctified, and set apart for service to God. At that point we belong to Him. From that moment on, we should strive to remain holy, to live a sacrificial life. We will still be tempted to sin, and unfortunately, at times, we will choose to sin again; at which point we need to confess our sins and repent (1 Jn. 1:7-9). So, to properly present our bodies as a living sacrifice, we must first learn to look at sin the same way God does. Do we **“hate every false way”** (Psa. 119:104)? Do we **“hate every garment spotted by the flesh”** (Jude 23)? Have we obeyed His command in 1 John 2:15, **“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world”**?

In the temptations of Jesus recorded in Matthew 4, we are shown how to continue to keep ourselves holy: know the word of God and use it. **“It is written”** are powerful words against the devil. We need to use them more. This is the beauty of the wisdom of God. He gives us His word, this powerful sword (Heb. 4:12), to wield in our battle to remain pure and holy. And, He never leaves us to battle alone. Jesus promised the apostles that He would be with them **“always, even unto the end of the world”** (Mt. 28:20). The faithful and obedient, those who have entered His Kingdom by His plan, are never without the cleansing blood of Christ keeping us sanctified and holy in the sight of God (1 Jn. 1:7,9).

People and nations are always expected to meet a moral standard. Brother Gary Summers, in a lecture entitled, *How Can I Be Holy As God Is Holy?*, stated, *“Therefore Christians are encouraged to remember that they have been made holy and that they must continually strive for holiness....In the Old Testament both the priests and the offering were holy; in the New Testament*

*the Christian is both the priest and the offering: '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.'* " (Rom. 12:1)" (Summers, p. 541-542).<sup>7</sup>

Did you catch that? Since we are now all priests of God (1 Peter 2:9), it is up to us to offer the sacrifice. But, the blood of Christ was offered once for all (Heb. 9:12), so now God expects the faithful to offer our entire lives. We have been bought with a price, the price of the blood of the Holy God's own Holy Son. When we choose to accept God's offer of salvation, we are committing ourselves to a life of *holy* living. God doesn't force us to obey, nor does He force us to be faithful after we have obeyed. The choices we make everyday, how to dress, how to speak, where to go, what to laugh at, our attitudes - our whole day-to-day existence, that is our sacrifice offered to our Holy God: the God who delights in the pure and holy and hates all evil perfectly.

*"Striving for holiness begins with exercising self-control in the mind"* (Summers, p. 557).<sup>8</sup> The seat of all of our troubles stems from our mind (Mt. 15:18-20), so also the seat of the solution must come from there. **"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"** (Prov. 4:23). **"Purify your hearts"** (Jam. 4:8). Brother Summers continues, *"We must reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin and prevent sin from reigning in our bodies (Rom 6:11-12). We can succeed in this endeavor if we can recognize sin as sin... and if we can discern between worldliness and spirituality. A sister who decorates herself with abundant jewelry and dresses herself in tight-fitting jeans or miniskirts does not reflect either modesty or holiness. ... The people of Malachi's day offered the blind, the lame, and the sick to a holy God (who rejected them). A Christian could be comparable to those types of sacrifices if he is blind to sin in his own life, lame in his efforts to walk in the light, or lovesick for the world and its pleasures"* (Summers, p. 558).<sup>9</sup>

Holiness is something that must be pursued. Hebrews 12:14 reads, **"Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."** If our desire is a home in Heaven, if our desire is to serve God faithfully, we must pursue holiness, since God is holy.

It is upon this groundwork that our remaining lessons will be built. There are many other attributes of God that come into play: His justice, His love, His purity; hopefully it is established that His holiness is the foundation that holds everything together.

God loves us. He created us. While we were still in our sins, He redeemed us (Rom. 5:8). He has given us everything we need that pertains **“to life and godliness”** that we might be **“partakers of the divine nature”** (2 Peter 1:3,4). When we honestly look at the world and what it offers to mankind, and compare it with the magnificence and splendor offered by God, it isn't pale in comparison - there is NO COMPARISON. It is time we wholeheartedly commit our lives to God, to be holy in our attitudes, our speech, our attire, and our desires. The goal of this study is to take us through a self-examination in a few areas of our life to see if we truly are holy.

### “ADORN THEMSELVES”

If you ask most people why we wear clothes, you will likely receive something that falls into one of the following categories: to protect us from the climate, for decoration, to indicate status, and some might even say, to not be naked. The real reason we wear clothes today comes from Genesis 3. We dress today because God dressed Adam and Eve in the garden after they committed sin! It really is that simple.

Too many people, including Christians, don't think God has anything to say to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century about how to adorn our bodies. However, when the rules of hermeneutics are properly applied the truth jumps out at you from the Word of God.

In Genesis 2:25 we read, **“And they were both naked...and were not ashamed.”** The innocent state God created them in did not require them to even understand that they were naked. It wasn't until they disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they knew they were

naked. What was their first and thus natural response to their nakedness? Cover it!

The word for “aprons” used in Genesis 3:7 (KJV), is the Hebrew word 2290 in Strong’s Concordance. This word means, “covering, belt, sash”. The only other time “aprons” is used is in Acts 19:12, and Vine’s says this Greek word (4612) means, “a thing girded round half the body”. Let’s think for a moment about what Adam and Eve covered. At the minimum, they covered their loins, which would include the reproductive areas. At the maximum, they would have covered either the breasts to the reproductive areas, or from the waist down towards the knees. I don’t know exactly how much they covered, but I guarantee it wasn’t enough. Their conclusion, after sewing these fig leaves together, was that they were still naked. They were still ashamed to appear before God as He came calling. Thus, there are at least two biblical definitions of the word naked, “insufficient clothing” and “totally nude”. To remedy their nakedness God made coats/tunics for them.

Since God was through creating, where do you think these coats came from? I am of the opinion that animals were killed by God to get the skins needed for their coats. Since God required a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22) up to and including the death of Christ on the cross, it is reasonable to draw this conclusion. The sacrifice of the animals in the garden was a substitution for the physical death of Adam and Eve. Does this mean that God did not fulfill the promise to Adam and Eve that they would die if they partook of the tree? No, they died spiritually and were separated from God because of their sin (Is. 59:1-2). Do we not see the mercy of our wonderful God in this lesson? Remember, the holiness of God would not allow Him not to punish the sin that was committed. But His mercy intervened for those created in His image and He substituted the death of the animals for the death of Adam and Eve, just as He sent Jesus to the cross as a substitute for all of mankind.

As the first clothing designer, God created a garment that was going to be the prototype for all of mankind to follow. This God, who created the entire Universe in six days, knew how to make a proper tunic. It was not the rough-looking, slung over one



shoulder, mid-hip rug used by so many artists to depict the covering as Adam and Eve were leaving the garden. Since God was the one making the garment, we must assume that whatever He covered satisfied His holiness. This Hebrew word, *kuttonet*, (3801) means “garment, robe, tunic”. Various sources have described this word for garment as covering from the shoulders to at least the knees, with or without sleeves. If the sources referred to have properly interpreted this Hebrew word, we may then assume that to be properly covered in God’s sight, one must be covered from the shoulders to at least the knees. As we continue through the Bible we will find other scriptures that additionally refine what must be covered to meet God’s holiness.

If you research clothing from the ancient times of the Patriarchs there isn’t much change with the children of Israel even to the time of Moses. It is pertinent to our study to look at the kind of clothing God required to be put on the Priests because of the status that Christians have in Christ’s Kingdom today as priests (1 Pet. 2:5). Remember Romans 15:4, these things are here for our learning.

Moses received instructions from God when he was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days concerning the priesthood. Included in this were instructions on clothing, food, drink, sex, sacrifices, clean and unclean, and so forth. As we notice the garments of the priests we see a distinction made between what was worn everyday and the garments donned by the High Priest once a year to wear on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:4, 23-24; Eze. 44:17-19). *"Priestly apparel for that day (day of atonement-cac) was to be what the priests wore commonly in their daily appearances in the Holy Place and not the more royal, rich garments associated with the high priestly attire. Prior to donning the prescribed attire he was to wash his flesh in water" (Taylor, p.196).*<sup>10</sup> *"Aaron then doffed (put off) his priestly apparel leaving it there and apparently never wearing it ever again. After washing his flesh in water he donned (put on) the royal and rich attire of high priestly apparel and offered what was prescribed for himself and the people" (Taylor, p.201).*<sup>11</sup>

Exodus chapters 28 & 39; Leviticus 16; and Ezekiel 44 are most helpful chapters to study when seeking information concerning what God required of the Priests. We will concentrate

on Exodus 28 for our purposes. One thing to notice, is that God designed the garments for “glory and for beauty” (28:2, 40). It is not beauty in and of itself that is sinful, it is how we use it. The attitudes and intentions behind the clothing of our bodies can make it sinful to array ourselves lavishly, yet, God designed clothing for beauty. He appreciates innocent, pure beauty. In verses 42 and 43 we find, **“And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, that they do not incur iniquity and die. It shall be a statute forever to him and his descendants after him.”** As you read through chapter 28, you realize that the trousers will go under the tunic, this is an undergarment. To cover from the waist to the thighs would mean to cover to the knees. What was the reason for this extra covering? To cover their nakedness when they were performing their duties as priests. These men were stretching and bending and lifting. God wanted to make sure that their “private parts” were in no way exposed as they were going about their work in and around the temple. Here again we see the wisdom of a holy God. He has provided extra security for his priests. They had a tunic and a girdle (sash, belt), but God decided that wasn’t enough to protect them from exposing themselves so He added another layer.

Brother Wayne Jackson writes the following, *“Jewish men normally wore an undergarment , an outer robe, a belt, sandals, and sometimes a hat. The undergarment was a tunic of light material (linen or wool) worn next to the skin that came down to the knees or ankles. To be clad only in this undergarment was to be considered naked (cf. 1 Sam. 19:24; John 21:7)”* (Jackson, p. 44).<sup>12</sup> *“Women’s apparel in biblical times was similar in form to that of the men’s in that both an outer and inner garment were worn. There were obviously, however, some significant differences as evidenced by the fact that the law declared: ‘A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment; for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah thy God’ (Deut.22:5). The woman’s outer garment was longer than a man’s, with a border and fringe*

*which covered even the feet. The female also secured her mantle with a girdle which could be manipulated to accommodate her robe-sack (cf. Ruth 3:15). The woman's girdle was often highly decorated; sometimes, as in the case of wealthy ladies, studded with precious stones" (Jackson, p. 47).<sup>13</sup>*

It is of interest to note the climate in the region where they were when they received these instructions. They are in a mountainous region that was very warm, some of it was desert. There were times during the 40 years of wandering that they didn't have a water supply and God had to provide them with one. This was a hot place in the summertime and not too hospitable in the wintertime. Did God design clothing that exposed the skin to the elements? No, He did not. He did command them to make serviceable garments with room to move, bend and function without exposing themselves to anybody else.

We can conclude that during the Patriarchal and Mosaical ages, from the Bible's standard, men and women of God wore layers of clothing. To be without an outer garment was to be insufficiently clothed, thus naked. To expose the thigh was considered nakedness (Isa. 47:2), likewise the breast/chest area is also mentioned in condemnation (Eze. 23:3, 8; Ho. 2:2). So, to be in obedience to God, men and women needed to cover sufficiently the shoulders to the knees.

Garments worn by the Jews in the 1st century didn't vary much from those worn centuries earlier. One change that is mentioned is that of the Scribes and Pharisees. They were adding extra details to their garments in order to draw attention to the "special role" they had in the Jewish religion (Mt. 23:5; Num. 15:38-40) and were condemned for their hypocrisy in so doing.

Jesus discussed clothes often. One of the best known passages is in Matthew 6. **"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?... So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is and**

tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (vs. 25-33). Clothing is a high priority. It is rated right up there with food and drink that are necessary to sustain our lives. However, God placed them secondary to seeking the Kingdom and seeking His righteousness! Jesus tells us that if we seek righteousness and His Kingdom we will receive the necessary food, drink, and clothing.

Jesus expects His followers to put clothing into its proper perspective. Have you ever thought that part of this lesson from Matthew 6 could also be applied to being content with the clothes God gives us? Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:6-11, “**Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**” This sounds like what Jesus said, with a few more details added! Do we know people who desire to “look” rich, even if they aren’t? Do we know people who go into credit card debt to keep up with the latest fashions? Do we know women who work for the luxuries of life, not the necessities, to the neglect of their God-given duties in the home? It is also important to recognize that it isn’t only women who enjoy lavish, expensive clothes. Men have been purveyors of fashion for centuries. In times past it was the men who were the fashion leaders and the women followed them. Our western culture has focused more on the women’s fashions in recent centuries.

Unfortunately, the focus is more to visually stimulate than to modestly cover!

In both Matthew 6 and I Timothy 6 we have the words “seek” and “pursue”, these words can be synonyms and require diligent, thoughtful, intensive searching. But, are we commanded to seek and pursue clothing, food and drink - the physical? No! Instead, we are commanded to seek and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness.

There are specific passages dealing with God’s expectations for women’s dress in the 1st century. Paul and Peter both address this issue.

I Timothy 2:9-10 reads, **“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold; or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works”** (KJV).

When time is taken to examine the meanings of these words, we arrive at a combined definition that goes something like this: *Women are to put in order, their general attire, in a well-arranged, decent, modest way; with a sense of shame, yea, even moral repugnance of being indecent. Their shamefastness would restrain these good women from such unworthy acts. They will not substitute braided, woven or plaited hair with gold ornaments or pearls, nor costly garments, for holiness; but, will, as is proper and fitting of women who proclaim to worship and to reverence God, in a show of holiness be involved in activities for Christ’s sake which are good and beneficial.*

It isn’t only what she wears on the outside that will totally define her holiness, but her good works combined with her adornment. However, her good works can be overshadowed, yea, even negated, by ungodly clothing. A real interesting insight from these passages occurs in the transition from verse 8 into 9 with the words, **“in like manner.”** This expression compares two equal things: praying men - **“lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”** and **“women professing godliness.”** The holiness required of the men who pray is the same holiness required by the women in their manner of dress! Are men supposed to be holy all of the time? (The word “men” in verse 8 is the Greek word that

means male not mankind). Yes, men are to be holy all of the time. Likewise women are to be in modest apparel at all times. But, lest we miss it in these passages, Paul restates it in another way in verse 15. **“Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control.”**

“Childbearing” is a synecdoche, one word standing for the whole of something. Childbearing is uniquely a woman’s role. So, Paul is saying if women continue (in their God-given role), in faith, love and holiness she will be saved. Paul is not saying only women who bear children will be saved. Continuing in holiness would require women to know how to cover their bodies, at all times, in a way that is pleasing to God.

You might wonder how these descriptions helped the women to know how to dress. Timothy was in Ephesus when Paul sent this letter to him. Ephesus was a very ungodly city. Acts 19 tells us that many in the city were worshipers of the goddess Diana. If we look again at 1 Timothy 2:9-10 we can understand that Paul was telling the godly Christian women not to look like, nor dress like the ungodly, idol-worshipping Ephesians. Those women were obviously not dressing in modest apparel. The costly garments, the ostentatious hairdos were not proper for Christian women who were to be known for their good works. The ungodly women were more concerned for themselves and being “seen” than for the needs of others. The emphasis here seems to be that Christian women were to think it was morally repugnant to even look like these pagan women. Let’s remember Jesus’s command in Matthew 6:33.

1 Peter 3:1-6 reads, **“Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel - rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah**

**obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.” (NKJV)**

Peter admonishes Christian women to adorn themselves (we must do this or we will be totally naked), and to be more concerned with the adornment of the inner woman and less concerned with the outer adornment. How does our time spent studying God’s word to improve the inner person compare to our time spent dressing, putting on make-up, and shopping for clothes for the outer person? How much closer would we come to fulfilling this command if the same amount of time was spent in Bible study?

Have we ever asked why the Holy Spirit would instruct Peter and Paul to deal with the dress of Christian women if there wasn’t a problem with it? It seems that humans have always had the same problems. God created us. He knows what makes us tick. He also knows He made men to be visually stimulated. When they are, their bodies begin a chemical reaction to prepare the body for sex. It isn’t that all men desire to have sex with all women, but just seeing a beautiful woman or a scantily clad woman can cause a man’s body to react whether he wants it to or not. Men must train their eyes to look away and their mind to ignore the signals received in order to maintain a pure mind. Godly women (of any age) will not dress in any way that would provoke those reactions in any man besides her husband. A godly woman will understand the power she has to “control” men by her body - and she *will not use it*. She will, instead, as Peter instructs, let the incorruptible beauty, the hidden person of the heart, be in control of her thoughts and actions.

It was necessary for the Bible writers to deal with the outward physical body to teach spiritual lessons. We exist in two worlds. We are spiritual and we are flesh. We must make both “behave” in a way that honors and glorifies the holiness of God. If we say we are believers or followers of God and then don’t show it by our actions or our dress, we are hypocrites, just like those Jesus condemns in Matthew 23.

Listen to what Paul records in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8,  
**“Finally, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from**

**us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brethren in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.”** This is a very enlightening passage. Women and men, both, need to know how to possess their vessel, their bodies, in honor. This isn't a laughing matter either. Notice this passage says that God is the avenger? Remember the holiness of God? He cannot let sin pass. It must be repented of, or He must punish. He doesn't delight in this, but it is a necessity because He is a Just God.

Ladies, when you connect this passage with 1 Tim. 2:9-10 and 1 Peter 3:1-6, you have a very powerful, urgent message to make sure that you dress in a fashion suitable for a holy woman serving a holy God!

For some people, this is where they would say, “the preacher's gone from preaching to meddling,” because that is probably where I'm headed for some folks. I will repeat what my husband so often says, “If I step on your toes I missed my mark; I am aiming for your heart.” We need to take the scriptures we've studied and see if there are lessons for us today.

The first lesson is that the church has gone the way of the world in too many cases. It doesn't take a genius to realize that Satan has convinced the majority that nakedness is fine. Since most people still wear clothes, it is obvious that I'm using the definition of “insufficient clothing.” Satan is the prince of this world and his followers are the overwhelming majority. The unfortunate part is that Christians are caught up in his lies and are attempting to straddle the fence on the issue of modesty. This issue is a problem with both men and women in the church.

Advertisers know that just a photo of a woman in an ad can increase the length of time somebody views that ad. In fact, it will increase by 14-30%! The female image has great drawing power and it seems to be used in every kind of commercial for any



product. Do we now understand why it is so difficult to keep a pure, holy, Christ-centered mind in this crazy world? Is it really surprising that sex crimes continue to rise? Do we really believe that merely “identifying” a sexual predator who may live in the neighborhood is enough to get us out of the mess we are in? What about that sex offender? He has to battle the same advertising we do. Aren’t we just continuing to ply him with the same temptations that caused the problem before? Just thinking!

I have been privileged to be a preacher’s wife for 25 years; I’ve observed many things, in many churches, in many states. This one thing I know. **The Lord’s church is not a safe haven from the world where modesty is concerned.** Now, I am not belittling the church itself, she is a perfect institution. But, since imperfect people make up the church, there will always be sin to deal with in the church.

We have come so far from Genesis 3 and God’s plan to cover man’s nakedness; it is shameful. I have seen body parts in worship that God covered and nobody seems to be appalled by it. The last I checked, busts, bellies and thighs fall between shoulders and knees, but you wouldn’t know it where most of us worship.

I truly believe there isn’t just one reason for the lack of teaching on this subject. Our society has undergone tremendous changes and most weren’t in the direction of modesty or for the spiritual benefit of mankind. However, somewhere about the time of my parent’s generation (I was born in 1957) things “loosened up” in the church. We no longer wanted to be separate, but we wanted to be like the “nations” around us. And things started to slip. We must get back to teaching about modesty and how it protects us from getting into sin and/or provoking sin in others.

A second lesson is concerning the true meaning of nakedness from God’s point of view. If you spend time in a word study of the words *naked* and *nakedness* in the scriptures you will find a very interesting thing. *Nakedness* is never referred to in a positive way in the scriptures. It can be a neutral thing (Gen. 2:25), but never positive. Once sin entered the world, that defined nakedness as shameful.

The Hebrew word most often used is ‘erwah’ (6172). Strong’s says it means “nakedness, indecent thing; word often used

of female nakedness - is symbolic of shame. To uncover ones nakedness is a frequent euphemism for cohabitation. It refers to the pudenda (male and female genitalia)." The Hebrew word "ma'or" (4589) means exposed genitals. It isn't used very often, but notice where it is used, in Habakkuk 2:15, "**Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, pressing him to your bottle, even to make him drunk, that you may look on his nakedness!**" Do you have any idea how many young men and women lose their virginity while drinking alcohol? God told us a long time ago that it would happen, that it happened even then. Do we show this verse to our young people?

We have established that God covered Adam and Eve in a garment that went from the shoulders to the knees. The thighs need to remain covered (Ex. 28: 42-43). By keeping that part covered, one protects and covers her nakedness. Ladies, think about the most popular shorts and skirts/dresses for women. The designers prefer to show as much leg as women will allow. The fact is, *God says that it is nakedness*. It is important that these parts be covered whether standing, sitting or bending. We must remember that God is the one who said this, not me. The Christian human body is the one He uses to dwell in. He wants His temple to be properly decorated not naked, insufficiently clothed.

What about other body parts, like the breasts? They are definitely used in a sexual way when you consider scriptures like Proverbs 5:19, "**let her breasts satisfy thee at all times,**"; Song of Solomon 1:13, "**he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.**"; or Song of Solomon 4:5; 7:3, 7, 8. If these are used as symbols of a sexual relationship, and they are, these must also be protected from unauthorized viewing. As I mentioned previously, God even uses the breasts as part of the descriptions when He is condemning the spiritual adultery that was committed against Him. (See Eze. 23:3, 8, 21; Ho. 2:2, 10, lewdness signifies the female genitals). God uses these terms to show how repulsive any nakedness is to Him. Who are we most concerned about pleasing with our attire - God or men?

When I look at my immodestly dressed sister(s), I come to two conclusions: (1) she is ignorant of God's teaching; or (2) she knows what the Bible says and is in rebellion to God. I prefer to

believe it is the first. I really don't want to think of so many sisters being in rebellion and losing their souls. This is an area that is very, very hard for a man to teach publically from a pulpit. It is much better taught, as I believe God intended, by godly, older women; mothers and grandmothers as Paul tells Titus in chapter 2. This is where the teaching in the home is so necessary; and teaching woman to woman. I hope this will be beneficial in helping you to teach somebody else.

A third lesson, immodesty is connected to sexual sins.

**“...Now the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. And God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with her*? For *‘the two’* he says, *‘shall become one flesh.’* But, he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. 6:13-20).**

Sexual immorality includes all the various forms of fornication. It includes necking and petting which isn't “innocent” fun (outside of marriage), but rather is foreplay for sexual intercourse. God did not make our bodies to be given away at random. He made them as a temple of the Holy Spirit. He planned them to be given to one man, for life.

Why was it necessary for God to put all of this in the scriptures? The answer is very simple. God created man and woman to be sexual creatures. He had to, or the human race wouldn't continue to exist. God designed men to be half of a complete pair. That pair was to do at least two things, establish a home and propagate the race. When He designed man, He designed him to be visually stimulated ~ sexually. When He designed woman, He specifically designed her to ‘stimulate

visually' the man. She was made for man, to be a help suitable for him (Gen. 2:18-25). The problem comes when a man is visually stimulated by women who aren't his wife. And for the young man who has no wife yet, but has all of the hormones firing, it is really a problem. Because God designed a woman's body to be stimulating to a man, it is extremely important that Christian women do not attempt to visually stimulate any man that is not her husband; nor should she allow her daughters to do so.

If a woman does her very best to be modest, non-stimulating, a true representative of a holy God and then a man lusts after her, she has no part in his guilt. If, however, a woman says, "You can't tell me what to wear," "If you didn't have your mind in a gutter, you wouldn't think that way about me," "It isn't my problem if a man can't control his thoughts;" then she has a problem, she has contributed to his sin (Mt. 18:6-7; Mk. 9:42; Lk. 17:1-2).

When Christian women dress like the women of the world, in lustful and immodest clothing, they are defrauding their brothers (1 Thess. 4:6). She is no longer offering him a safe haven, she is making it impossible for him to be totally comfortable with her ~ as a sister! When she dresses immodestly she is not showing love for her brothers in Christ. If you have a particular problem, say with lying; do you want or need to spend all of your time around liars? No, and a man who may have trouble with what his eyes see, doesn't need to be around Christian sisters who don't know how to possess their vessels with honor. If we truly love our brothers ~ no matter what age they are~ we will protect their purity as well as our own. This includes our sons and fathers in our homes!

Lesson number four was suggested to me by sister Evelyn Apple. A woman who is immodestly dressed cuts herself off from fellowship with the church in many ways. The women who are modestly dressed resent either her ignorance or her intentional sin (and here is where we need to teach our sisters). She also cuts off fellowship from men who are trying to keep their minds pure, they have to avoid too much contact with her! I have run "interference" for my husband many times when a "Christian" woman is "falling out of her blouse."

A fifth lesson to learn is that we need to be protectors of men. As mothers and wives it is our job to help our husbands and sons to learn how to deal with untaught and uncaring girls and women. For our husbands, we are to so satisfy his needs and desires that he won't want to look at another woman! For all of our brothers in Christ we need to go the second mile in our dress so that we will be beyond question in our modesty. We need all of our men to feel comfortable in our presence - not always on guard against the temptation of lust.

To sum it up, God covered us from the shoulders to at least the knees. Exposure of body parts between those two areas appears to be condemned by God throughout scriptures. So, if what we wear is too low in front or back, too short, too tight, too see-through, exposes areas God covered, then we need to reconsider our wardrobe in light of God's approval. And, nowhere is there any hint of lowering the standards of modesty for a uniform of any kind (think: swimming, track, wrestling, cheerleading, etc.)! Throughout the Bible certain principles never change regardless of the dispensation of time, nor the law. Modesty is one of those principles. Therefore, if women professing godliness follow God's guidelines then they can always know if their clothing will meet the approval of a holy God. It is my prayer that each one of us can make the proper application of this lesson to our lives and let the hidden person of the heart be on display, not only the body.

## ALL SUBMISSION

**“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection”** (1 Tim. 2:11). If that is all we knew about the subject of submission it might be a really tough pill to swallow. But, thanks to wonderful scholars who can get us into the meaning of these words in the original language, and the many other scriptures available, we can know much more about God's thoughts in this passage. Before we go to the other scriptures, notice what brother Jimmy Jividen wrote about this passage.

## **THE ATTRIBUTES OF CHRISTIAN WOMANHOOD**

**1 Timothy 2:9-15 contains four attributes of a Christian woman.**

- 1. Her greatest beauty is to be found in modesty. (9,10)**
- 2. Her greatest eloquence is to be found in quietness. (11,12)**
- 3. Her greatest power is to be found in submission. (13, 14)**
- 4. Her greatest glory is to be found in motherhood. (15)**

**Some in our contemporary culture see such attributes as demeaning to women. They don't get it. God gave these attributes to His finest and final creation.**

**Modesty is not a sign of ugliness. Just the opposite. A woman who possesses the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit radiates a beauty far above that of jewels and clothes. Her attractiveness is "inside out."**

**Quietness is not a sign of ignorance. Just the opposite. Holding your tongue, and being sure of what you speak, where you speak, when you speak and how you speak is the greatest wisdom.**

**Submission is not a sign of weakness. Just the opposite. It was by submission to the will of God that Jesus was exalted. He did not bear the cross out of fear and duty, but because He chose to. The greatest power is found in conquering your own ego by submission.**

**Motherhood is not a sign of inability. Just the opposite. It is the highest position of honor and the most noble calling of service. Far above the titles of "Queen", "Princess", "Your Honor", "Madam President" and "Doctor", is the voice of a child saying, "Mommy".**

**To change from such an ideal is degradation. Why would a butterfly ever want to be a caterpillar?**

**After reading these words I am always thankful that God created me to be a woman. When we ponder brother Jividen's thoughts we see what a challenge God has offered us in 1 Timothy 2. We are to present to the world a picture of holiness. A picture that shouts to the world - even in our quietness - that there is some**

One out there more important than me. One who deserves to be worshiped and obeyed with all of my finite being, the loving, almighty God who created me, protects me and desires the best for me and in return He asks that I surrender my will to His. He asks this because He wants to bless me far beyond what I can imagine! He is a good and beneficent God.

Submission means to take your will, opinions, desires and thoughts and allow somebody else's to take preeminence. Submission is a choice, an action that you must take personally. It cannot be forced, it must be given. It is voluntary surrender. As mentioned in the above selection, Jesus willingly submitted to death on the cross. He chose to be obedient to the plan for man's salvation.

When we decide to "submit" to baptism, that is exactly what we are doing: submitting our will to God's. The act of baptism is an operation of God that is only done on those who submit to it (Col. 2:12).

The same submission that puts us into Christ also requires us to submit to others. In Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 we are told to submit to our husbands. In Hebrews 13 we are instructed to submit to the elders. Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 require submission to the government. Ephesians 5:21 and 1 Peter 5:5 speak of us submitting to one another. And, I would suggest that younger women submitting to the teaching of older women is implied in Titus 2. Submission is a Bible subject. Regardless of the rantings of the feminists, or any other "ist", submission is a fact of life and a command of God.

Why would some people not want to submit? I believe the answer is found in two words: power and glory. Satan is alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All through history we can see the paths of destruction left by men who were determined to "have it all." Because God created woman with a brain every bit as good as a man's, we see many women who seek for power and glory also. And like the men, it is most often not for the good of mankind. When one seeks for power and glory simply for the sake of power and glory, it will always be for self power and self glory. The benefit will not be for mankind in general.

Peter discusses subjection also. **“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement”** (1 Peter 3:1-6 - KJV).

There are some words we need to key in on here: meek, quiet spirit, subjection. From my research on E-Sword, I found this quote from Barnes Notes: “The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit - Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning....which would tend to secure the affection of their husbands and win them to embrace the true religion....he recommends ...instead of seeking external ornaments, to seek those of the mind and of the heart, as more agreeable to their husbands; as better adapted to win their hearts to religion; as that which would be most permanently proved.”

Adam Clarke’s commentary of these same words from E-Sword reads, “That is, a mind that will not give provocation to others, nor receive irritation by the provocation of others. Meekness will prevent the first; quietness will guard against the last.”

God says, through Peter, that a meek and quiet spirit is of great price in His sight. That means it is of very great value. Contrast meekness with all of the other things we can learn and God thinks this one has great value. Do we work on meekness? If



it is highly valued by our Heavenly Father, don't you think we should? This meekness would make submission easier.

Meekness and humility are sometimes used interchangeably in the scriptures. Both Moses and Christ are called meek. The words together mean humble, humility, modest, gentleness, lowliness. One possessing these qualities would not be arrogant, boastful, drawing undue attention to herself by outward adornment or vulgar speech.

Peter refers to Sarah in this passage. Some of the glimpses into Sarah's life are positive and some are negative. Sister Cindy Colley, gives some words that could be used to describe Sarah. They are: beautiful, devoted, faithful, obedient, hospitable, deceitful, unfaithful, harsh, liar, and doubting (*Colley, p. 27*).<sup>14</sup> We all could list some positives and negatives for our own lives. They may not be the same ones as Sarah's, but I think most of us can identify with her very well. When we look at the negatives, we realize in her case that she didn't live in these sins. That is a crucial point. As John states in 1 John 1:6-10, **“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice 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. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”** By the statements made about Sarah in Hebrews 11 and 1 Peter 3, we know that she was counted among the faithful. That proves that she didn't live in the sins she committed, she strived to return to righteousness once she had sinned.

Most of Sarah's recorded sins are directly related to her submission to Abraham. She obeyed him twice when he asked her to say she was his sister. It caused trouble both times. Then, when she tried to help God keep His promise about an heir for Abraham, she caused much trouble again. (That trouble is still with us today). Sarah understood submission, she, apparently, didn't understand when she should obey it and when not to. God never obligates us to commit one sin in order to obey any other

command. The apostles showed the right attitude to have, **“We ought to obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29). Some women, even to this day, sin by obeying their husbands in forsaking the assembly and neglecting other Christian duties. Some, especially in foreign countries are tortured and persecuted for trying to live a Christian life. We need to offer prayers for all of these sisters, for their strength and courage in hard conditions and for their faithfulness.

From Titus 2:5 we know that there are things that we, as women, must do or we will blaspheme God. The item listed right before that statement is **“obedient to their own husbands”**. Did you realize submission is that important? If we don’t submit, we blaspheme God. That is a serious matter. Whatever it takes to bend our will to that of our husband’s, we need to do it for the sake of our soul. It isn’t a matter of who has the most brains or the best ideas and wants to be in charge, it has everything to do with obedience to God’s commands and he left man with that role.

For some women, just the thought of actually allowing her husband’s will to have priority over hers is anathema! Why? I think sister Sheila Butt answers this quite well in her book, *Seeking Spiritual Beauty*, on page 66. She is discussing the feminizing of American culture. We live in a society that says a man can’t do anything right any more. Notice how many commercials use men as the dummies who can’t function. It is the woman who has to “rescue” him. Do you remember the commercial with a woman singing, “I can bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and never, never let you forget you’re a man. I’m a woman?” All of this started way before then. It seems that it is, in part, a reaction to the mistreatment of women. But, as most human reactions do, it swings back too far and goes in the other direction on the pendulum which is just as wrong. Both men and women have been the objects of abuse by the opposite sex. The answer is in the Bible for all to see, a mutual love and respect for one another that doesn’t put either sex down. However, some men have abused their leadership positions and some women have reacted by refusing to submit. One of the things Jesus did in the first century, was to put woman back in the place she occupied at the beginning,

right at man's side as a helper suitable for him in a culture and society that was basically demeaning to women.

Unfortunately, in America's homes today, we have too many men who don't want to, don't know how to, or won't take, the Biblical leadership role. Even Christian men are going to be sadly disappointed on the day of Judgment if they haven't fulfilled their obligations to be the head over their households.

Women have been forced to take over in places where they aren't best suited. Our emotional makeup takes a beating when we have to stretch beyond our role to provide what the man has not. Women often burn the candle at both ends to make sure the family's needs are met while the husband seems to be oblivious to the root of the problem - his lack of headship.

On the flip side, there are Christian women who refuse to submit to the authority of their husbands who **are** taking the leadership role. These women are rebellious in their hearts. Often these same women refuse to recognize the authority of the elders in the church. They then become thorns-in-the-flesh to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. How can a woman submit to baptism, yet neglect to submit to her husband when it is all wrapped up in the same package - the Word of God?

In Ephesians 5, the Holy Spirit directs Paul to use the church as an example of how the home should function. A wife is to submit to her own husband in everything and a husband is to love his wife; as Christ loved the church. How much did He love the church? He died for her. But more than that, He cherished her, nourished her, and never left her to fend for herself without guidance. This shows us that a man cannot abuse, mistreat, ignore, or neglect his wife without suffering the consequences of a vengeful God. In how many ways must she submit? In everything!

Yes, submission is two-sided. Men must lead and women must submit. In a home ruled by God the submission to one another and both to God is the law of the family. Husbands who truly understand how special a wife is will not take her for granted. If a woman is thus loved she will find it very easy to submit her will to his. Conversely, if the husband doesn't love his wife as he should, she will find it more difficult to submit, however, that

doesn't negate the command to submit, it just makes the job harder.

Ladies, we need to understand how our Holy Father loves and protects us by asking for this submission. In the garden of Eden, Adam had to shoulder the blame for both of their sins. Adam failed in his headship, Eve failed in her submission. Notice, though, in 1 Timothy 2:14 that Adam was not deceived? Yet, when reference is made to the first sin it is accounted to Adam (1 Cor. 15:21-22). We will be accountable before God for our personal actions, for the things done in our body (2 Cor. 5:10); it seems maybe our husbands may also be held accountable for the times they didn't operate as our head, when they didn't protect us - from ourselves (Gen. 3:17)! I may be off base here in my logic, but it certainly seems like a possibility. So, if we love our husbands we should willingly submit to them to make it easier for them to lead as God has commanded them.

Hebrews 11, the hall of faith, is actually a listing of those who willingly submitted to God's commands. Because of their obedience they will receive the crown of life when this life is over. If we join them in their faithfulness, that same reward will be ours, too.

### “SHE WILL BE SAVED IF”

Women desiring Heaven as their eternal home know it is imperative that they remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10). Paul states to Timothy that even though woman fell through deception, **“Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control”** (1 Tim. 2:15).

IF is a big word. God's Word is filled with conditional statements. The conditions are not for His benefit, but for ours. We need to know what will please God, what will satisfy His holiness and in turn bring great blessings and rewards for us.

When God created this world, He put in place a functional hierarchy of authority. He created man to be the head of the home and the woman to be submissive to him. I believe some misunderstand the punishment given to Eve and think that submission was part of the punishment. 1 Tim. 2:12-13 show

otherwise. **“And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”** Submission to Adam was always Eve’s role. It was ignoring this command that caused things to go very wrong in the first place.

Brother Frank Chesser writes, “...there is a sense in which man reflects the image and glory of God and the woman does not. Man reflects God’s image as ruler, as one in authority. This the woman does not and cannot do. In the beginning God designed woman to fill a subordinate role to man, and any effort on her part to exert dominion over man is a usurpation of divinely bestowed authority, an act of rebellion” (*Chesser, chapter 17*).<sup>15</sup>

Genesis 3:17 records God giving Adam his punishment. Here He upbraids Adam for listening to his wife. Does that mean men don’t have to listen to us? No, it meant Adam listened and neglected to act on what he knew to be right, allowing Eve to take the headship in this situation. He abdicated his headship role and his spiritual leadership role.

So, for all of those who fuss and fume over chauvinistic men who are taking over the world... they need to reread Genesis 1-3 and understand that God set the world up this way in the first place (regardless of what Dan Brown may write in the *Da Vinci Code*).

So, sisters, what does this mean for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church? We have a role, a God-given, God-defined role. In order for us to reach our heavenly home, we need to understand our earthly role. Just because men and women are of equal value to God doesn’t mean we have the right to the same role as men. This is known as position authority. Man has a role assigned to him and woman has a role assigned to her. Within these realms both must function to be in obedience to God. If either neglects or tries to go outside of the boundaries it is an act of rebellion. We then set ourselves up to tell God what to do, and we can’t do that!

Men and women share “ontological equality”. That means our souls are equally valuable in God’s eyes. Jesus died for all men, women and children of accountable age throughout time past and whatever future there is. Whenever we are reading the

scriptures and the words “whosoever”, “any”, “all”, etc. are used that means they apply to us too.

There are, however, gender roles within the church. Brother Don McWhorter writes, **“First Timothy 2 deals with the broad principle of gender roles in any mixed gender situation.”** **“Paul had left Timothy here to set the church in order. He writes instructions on living the Christian life, how people should ‘behave themselves as members of the house or family of God.’ (1 Tim. 3:15)”** (*McWhorter, p. 117*).<sup>16</sup> As we examine our English Bibles we notice the word “men” in **1 Timothy 2:1, 4, 5, & 8**; and the word “man” in **verse 12**. In verses 1, 4 and 5 the Greek word is ‘*anthropos*’, meaning a human being, either man or woman. In verses 8 and 12 the Greek word is ‘*aner*’, meaning a man, a male. While it all looks the same in English, we have to give these words their original definition in order to understand what this passage is actually saying. In the previous verses you could substitute ‘mankind’ and not cause any damage to the meaning of the passage. But, in the latter verses the word specifically means ‘man’. This sheds a different light on the meaning.

Verse 8 reads, **“I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.”** Men, by this instruction, are to be responsible for the leading of prayers everywhere. This letter isn’t restricted to the church building. The church is the people, the meeting place isn’t being discussed here. In fact, the Sunday morning worship assembly is not being exclusively discussed here. This means anywhere the church is gathered in a mixed gender situation men are to lead the prayer. Women are not prohibited from praying, just prohibited from leading the prayer in the presence of men. Women are on the same spiritual plane as man, they have the same access to the Father and the same command to pray (**1 Thess. 5:17**), but Paul instructs Timothy here to remind the ladies of their function in the mixed assembly - quietness. However, lest we think God is picking on women, He also places a restriction on the men. Not just any man can lead prayer, only those who can **“lift up holy hands.”** If there is an assembly of just women, then women have the privilege of leading in public prayer. The

examples we have of this include Lydia in **Acts 16:11-15** and the women in **1 Corinthians 11**.

**1 Timothy 2:11-12** reads, “**Let the woman learn in silence with all submission, and I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.**”

This word “silence” in verse 11 is not necessarily total silence, but quietness. In other scriptures it is obvious that a woman must not be silent. She is commanded to sing (**Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16**); to make a verbal confession of belief in Christ (**Mt. 10:32-33, Rom. 10:10**); to teach (**Tit. 2:3-5**), to encourage, etc. Notice, too, that she is to be in silence with all submission. Here is one place we must practice that “voluntary surrender.” So, in order to be pleasing to God and in obedience to Him, a woman will submit in silence (quietness) in the mixed assembly of the church.

In **verse 12** we see what is a seeming contradiction of other passages when it says a woman isn’t permitted to teach. But, keep reading, she isn’t permitted to teach or have authority (spiritual authority) over a man, this doesn’t mean she can’t teach at all.

In numerous passages such as, **Ex. 15; Acts 16; Acts 18:24-26; 21:9; 2 Tim. 1 & 3; Tit. 2**, we find recorded instances where women taught with God’s approval. They taught other women and children; Miriam led the women in song; Lydia led the women in prayer; Priscilla helped her husband privately teach Apollos; Philip’s daughters prophesied - meaning they spoke under inspiration! Can women teach? YES! She is commanded to do so. Yet, because of **Gen. 1 & 2** and the creation principle of headship / submission, God doesn’t permit women to take a lead and teach over a man in spiritual matters publically.

Ladies, that settles it. Whenever the mixed gender church gathers for a devotional, a Bible class, prayers, singing, taking the Lord’s Supper, or preaching, the man is supposed to be in the leadership position of authority. When there are no men present she is not under restrictions (except I would think she too would have to “**lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting**”).

For women professing godliness these verses are not hard to understand. They are a comfort. God protects us once again from bearing the heat of battle in the public forum. He gives us

our own realm from which to teach and influence - the home. Do we appreciate what He has done for us?

Before we leave this passage, let's look at vs. 15 - **“Nevertheless she will be saved in child bearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”** This verse always had me stumped. To put it simply, “childbearing” is a synecdoche, a figure of speech where a part stands for the whole. So this use of childbearing doesn't mean only women who bear children will be saved, it means that through embracing the role that God has given us: submission to our husband, keepers (guardians, protectors, workers) of the home and in not seeking spiritual leadership positions (the transgression of Eve, vs. 14); we will be saved **if** we continue in faith, love, and holiness with self-control.

As we conclude let's focus on some important attitudes we need to understand.

1. God has blessed woman richly. Through woman came the blessed Seed that has redeemed us all, Jesus Christ. Are we grateful?

2. A man cannot become an elder or a deacon without a faithful wife and children. Are we the women we should be so they can lead as they should?

3. We have plenty of work to do in the realm God has assigned us. Do we disdain it as unimportant?

4. There is no special blessing in leading a prayer or leading singing, etc. but there could be the danger of sinful pride. If we aren't in this position over men we won't have to deal with that issue. How much God loves and protects us!

5. As a wife and mother, we have a job that will ultimately influence more lives than we can imagine. As we support our husbands and teach our children to be faithful and godly, we bless all whom they touch now and in the future (grandchildren!). Can we really justify leaving this realm of being help suitable to man?

Sister Irene Taylor wrote, “It is a privilege to be a Christian woman. I challenge each Christian woman to exemplify the beauty of being God's woman and to recognize and appreciate the scope of the influence potential which God gave to her” (Taylor, Irene, p. 336).<sup>17</sup>



God calls us for a specific purpose, we should be afraid not to answer God's call. Romans. 9:20 asks a rhetorical question, **“But in deed, oh man, (*anthropos* -cac), who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why have you made me like this?”** Are we fighting against God? How much we love is often shown by what we're willing to give up. Women, are we willing to show our love for God, and the church, by giving up our self-willed ideas on leadership in the church? Some will laugh at us and mock us: but we can join the ranks of the unnamed, but not unrewarded, women throughout the centuries who faithfully have withstood all manner of persecution for the promise of heaven as an eternal home.

*“Only eternity will tell of the lasting work of women in teaching, nurturing, visiting, standing for the truth and exposing error, admonishing, encouraging, correcting, serving, cleaning, cooking, and influencing others for the Cause of Jesus Christ. They have truly let their light shine before the world that their good works can be seen for the purpose of glorifying our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16)”* (Dugger, p. 578).<sup>18</sup> This, my dear sisters, is a description of a woman professing godliness.

May God bless your every faithful effort.

## End Notes

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## **Introduction to Colossians**

### **Randy Chapman**

The twelfth book of the New Testament is called The Epistle to the Colossians. There is insufficient time to give a proper introduction to the book and also cover the first fourteen verses. We will, however give some basic information that will help us have a better understanding of the letter.

#### *Background*

The letter is addressed “to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae”.<sup>1</sup> It is located in the Lycus River Valley of Asia Minor about 100 miles upstream from Ephesus. This area was home to the Hittites nation and was later known as Phrygia. After being conquered by Rome it was termed Asia Minor, but was generally referred to as Phrygia. Today it is a part of what we call Turkey. It was commercially successful due to three related businesses. The area where Colossae was located had rich volcanic deposits which meant rich meadows. These pastures were used to feed large herds of sheep. The waters of the area contained chalky deposits that made some of the soil barren. Those same deposits complimented the dyeing of materials, though. This made the area well-known for its finely made garments of dyed wool.<sup>2</sup> The area was generally wealthy, then, because of its great wool, dyed materials, and fine clothing.

There were a large number of Jews living in the area of Colossae. Hendriksen records that Antiochus the Great (223-187 B. C.) had two thousand Jews transported to Lydia and Phrygia. Records from the area indicate that more moved there because of the economic prosperity, the wines and the hot water baths. By 62 B. C. in the district of Laodicea, which included Colossae, it was estimated that there were at least 11,000 Jewish freemen besides women and children.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Founding of the Church*

How and when did the church in Colossae begin? There were some Phrygian Jews present on Pentecost in Acts 2:10 when

Peter stood up with the eleven and preached the saving gospel of Jesus. However, where in Phrygia they were from is unknown. There is no record of a congregation existing from this cause.

The first recorded preaching of the Gospel in the area of Phrygia was done by Paul and Silas while accompanied by Timothy. Yet nothing is mentioned of them preaching in Colossae in the first journey (Acts 13-14) and on the second trip (15:39-18:22), although they revisited churches they had been to on their first journey, the Holy Spirit forbade them from preaching in Asia and sent them to Europe, beginning at Macedonia. On Paul's third journey (18:23-21:26), it seems likely that Paul went through Colossae, but apparently did not stop to preach. This seems probable because in Colossians 2:1 Paul seems to indicate that the Colossian and Laodicea brethren had not seen his face. At least some of them had not. Luke does record that Paul preached out of the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus "for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). It may have been during this period that the church began, but there is no evidence in the text of Acts or of the writings of Paul that it was because he visited the town and began the work.

The best scenario for the planting of the church in Colossae centers around the work of Epaphras. Paul mentions him in verse 7 of our text, writing, "as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf".<sup>4</sup> One cannot help notice that Paul says they had learned the truth from Epaphras. He refers to him again in 4:12-13. There he writes: "Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis." Paul calls Epaphras his "fellow prisoner" in Philemon 23.

Mention must be made of Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus. Paul mentions them in Philemon 1:1-2 and notes that the church meets in their house. In Colossians 4:9 Onesimus is mentioned as being one of the Colossians. Yet, Onesimus was a servant of Philemon. It is thought that the Colossian letter and the

letter to Philemon were delivered at the same time. As to what role they may have played in the establishment of the church, we do not know. However, they must have played a consequential role in that congregation.

At the time of the writing of Colossians (somewhere between A. D. 61-63), Paul was in prison in Rome. Epaphras had made the trip from Colossae to Rome. This was a trek of some 1000 to 1300 miles! He brought good news to Paul of the faith, love and hope of the church in his community. Paul writes to tell them of his thanks for them and his prayers on their behalf. Paul has also become aware of the dangers they faced. The Colossae community was religiously influenced by local paganism, the influence of the Greek culture known as Hellenism, and Judaism from its large Jewish population. A syncretistic view had developed from the blending of these ideologies. It has been termed “the Colossian heresy”. Thus, Paul instructed them concerning Christ’s preeminence and to warn them against falling prey to this false teaching. We will leave all of that and his other practical instructions in Christian living to other speakers. Our concern is his opening remarks and prayers.

### *Our Assignment*

We have been asked to cover the first fourteen verses of Colossians 1. This passage can be readily broken down into three sections: the introductory remarks, (vv. 1-2); Paul’s prayer of thanksgiving, (vv. 3-8); and, his prayer of intercession (vv. 9-14).

### *Paul’s Greeting, 1:1-2*

Following the custom of his time and area, Paul begins the letter by identifying himself and those to whom he was writing. From the beginning he lets them know that his message carries the weight of deity. He refers to himself as an apostle. In Ted Clarke’s lecture on this passage, he quotes Murray Harris in explaining how the New Testament uses the word apostle, which has the root meaning of “one sent forth.”

“Apostle” is used in three senses in the NT: in a general, non-technical sense, of a messenger or

emissary (Phil. 2:25, Epaphroditus; 2 Cor. 8:23); in a semi-technical sense, of a Christian with a particular commission (Acts 14:14, Barnabas; Rom 16:7, Andronicus and Junias); in a technical sense of the Twelve (Matt 10:2) and Paul (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:9).<sup>5</sup>

This office was “of Jesus Christ by the will of God”. Paul had not taken this work and title upon himself. Nor did it come from Moses, angels or any council of men. He had been called to it by Jesus (Acts 9:11-20; 26:14-18). Christ is the dominant subject of this letter, and Paul links himself to Christ and Christ’s authority from the beginning. As an apostle, what he writes comes by revelation from the Holy Spirit as directed by Christ with a message that came from God the Father (Jn. 16:13-15).

Paul mentions Timothy in his greeting. You will notice that he is not mentioned as one of the apostles, but refers to him separately after identifying himself as such. Although Paul often mentioned Timothy in the greetings of his epistles, it should be all the more expected on this occasion since Timothy was from Asia Minor (Acts 16:1). He also spent time with Paul during his three year stay at Ephesus and some of the Colossians may have traveled to Ephesus and met both of them. Since Timothy was with Paul at this time, he would want to be included in the greeting.

The recipients of the letter are “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colossae”. The word saint is from the Greek word *hagios* (ἅγιος). Its root meaning is holy. In 1:22 Paul reminded them that God had “reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy (*hagious*), and blameless, and above reproach in His sight”. The NIV translates the first verse “to the holy and faithful brothers”. A saint is another descriptive name for a Christian. God saved us from our sins so that “we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,” (Titus 2:12). Peter instructs us to be “obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1:14-17).

He also called them “faithful brethren”. The word faithful is from the same word that we get faith or believe. These were believing brethren, that is, their faith caused them to be true to the one in whom they had confidence. Did Paul write his letter only to those who were “faithful” and did he exclude those who had doubts or whose faith was shaken? No. His message is for all. John Wesley was probably right when he said “Saints refers to their union with God . . . brethren refers to their union with fellow-Christians.”<sup>6</sup>

Paul uses one of his favorite prepositional phrases found throughout his letters – “in Christ.” It is in Christ that all spiritual blessings are obtainable (Eph. 1:3). By their faith and obedience the people of the Colossian church had become Christians and made holy, i.e., saints. This union with Christ had placed them in union with one another. This is important for them to remember. It is “in Christ” (the Anointed) with His person, nature and roles that their misunderstandings will be resolved and it is the truth about Christ and His will that will refute the false teaching. This is why Paul launches into the marvelous proclamation of Christ after his introductory prayers in verse 15.

Paul customarily used the combination of the Greek greeting of grace (*chairein*, Acts 15:23) and the Hebrew greeting of peace (*shalom*). So, it appears here. One cannot help but notice that he always places grace before peace since there can be no real and lasting peace without the first appearance of grace. Also, grace and peace are not really Paul’s to give, they are a blessing come from God through Christ, as Paul indicates in his greeting. Paul may have more in mind than peace and grace coming from God. This letter may have been written by Paul, but its message is inspired and bears the authority of deity.

Having made his brief greeting, Paul proceeds to mention his prayers on their behalf. These are prayers of thanksgiving and of intercession.

#### *Paul’s Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Colossians, 1:3-8*

In this section Paul speaks of his appreciation for these holy and believing brethren. Paul will have to deal with problems. The

body of Christ in Colossae was no different in this regard than any other congregation of its time, of local churches throughout history, or every congregation that assembles and serves today. Before dealing with these problems, though, Paul wants his readers to know of his genuine appreciation, care and concern for them. This is characteristic of Paul's letters. It is no gimmick. Paul really did appreciate and care for them. This should not surprise anyone. From the time of Paul's conversion (Acts 9), his life was directed toward winning souls to God through Jesus and helping those souls be nourished and equipped to serve God on earth. He also helped these converts become fit for the eternal kingdom. Paul's prayers were not only for those who had already received Jesus and were living for Him, but for those Jews who had not and may have been a part of the resistance to the kingdom (Rom. 10:1ff).

Leaders of the church today need to learn from Paul in this regard. First, there will always be problems in the kingdom of God. This is due to the human element. Newborn Christians are just that – babes! They must be nourished and instructed. They will make mistakes. Today's leaders were not born mature, they developed to that stage. It is their responsibility to develop and mature the next generation of leaders (Eph. 4). How much of the New Testament would we have if the writers had not been dealing with the problems of the church and the need of its members to mature? Not much would follow Acts, would it? Second, all of God's children must be appreciated! Paul even gave thanks to God always for the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:4), which had more problems than any other church revealed in the Bible. We need to be grateful for all who have submitted to God through Jesus and are making the effort to live for Him and be like Him. Remember, God through Jesus has shown compassion, mercy and sympathy on us in spite of our human frailties, and we need to extend the same patience and love for our fellow Christians.

Paul is also grateful for a triad of virtues in the Colossian brethren. These are: their "faith in Christ Jesus", their "love for all the saints", and "the hope which is laid up" for them in heaven". Paul often mentions faith, hope, and love in his letters (Rom. 5:1-5; Gal. 5:5-6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; and perhaps the best remembered one



in 1 Cor. 13:13). They are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament (Heb. 10:22-24 and 1 Pet. 1:21-22). “This combination of faith, hope, and love ‘seems to be sort of a compendium of the Christians life current in the early apostolic church.’”<sup>7</sup>

Faith often serves as the key word to represent how we are saved and enter into our relationship with God through Christ (Rom. 3-4; 5:1). It also represents how that relationship is sustained (Rom. 1:17, 2 Cor. 5:7). Of course, it is not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26). Faith is the synecdoche, i.e., the one word that stands for the whole. Thus, the word “faith” can stand for all of the things that man does in response to God’s offer of salvation (hear, believe, repent, confess, baptized). It can also stand for what man does to maintain that relationship (walk in the light, be faithful unto death, etc.). What Paul acknowledges specifically is their faith in Christ. This is more than believing He existed or even that He was God’s Son – God in the flesh. It is a complete trust and confidence in Him and surrendering of one’s own will to follow His will. Paul is glad to hear not only of their initial belief, but of their persevering faith.

This faith is combined with their love of the brethren. There is no revelation as to how they had manifested their love of the brethren. Maybe it had manifested itself within the Colossian congregation, perhaps to neighboring communities, or perhaps they had taken part in sending money to Jerusalem. However it was shown, the love had made itself evident. Of the three virtues that constitute this triad, love is the greatest (1 Cor. 13:13). Paul instructed the Galatian churches “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love” (Gal. 5:6). Barnes gave this evaluation of what it would have meant to Paul to have gotten the news of their love. “Nothing could be more acceptable information respecting them to one who himself so ardently loved the church; and nothing could have furnished better evidence that they were influenced by the true spirit of religion; comp. 1 John iii. 14.”<sup>8</sup> In his commentary on this epistle, Hendriksen wrote: “The same Magnet, Christ Jesus, who attracts sinners to himself and changes them into saints simultaneously draws them into closer fellowship with each other. Thus, ideally speaking, every believer enshrines his fellow-

believers – wherever they may dwell and of whatever race they may be – into his heart (Jn. 13:34; Phil. 1:7, 8; 1 John 4:7-11).”<sup>9</sup>

The third virtue of the triad is hope. It would be easy to understand “hope” as the expectation of what a Christian believes will come to him for his faith and love. Hope is what we hold, not as mere desire, but of earnest expectation. Is Paul saying that they had faith, hope and love, or is he saying something else. You see, there is a nagging little phrase in this passage that gives one pause to think. Paul wrote “because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven” (emphasis mine, rcc). It would appear that Paul is saying that the Colossian brethren had faith and love because of this hope. The NIV translators went so far as to translate the passage this way: “the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven”. Coffman says, “It is clear enough that Paul did not here merely ‘seem to be saying,’ but that he emphatically affirmed that the Christian’s faith and love are derived from and founded upon the hope which they received through the preaching of the gospel.”<sup>10</sup> It is not so inconceivable to accept that when one hears of the reward God offers to anyone who will put his trust in Him and will live a life of loving service, that that one will respond in faith and love. Actually, Paul reiterates this concept in 1:21-23, 27.

By what means did they learn of these spiritual matters? Paul said, “which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (v. 5). This is in full accord with Romans 10:17, which reads: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” In 1 Corinthians 1:21 it is said in another way: “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” Over and over again in the Scriptures we are told that God delivered His message to the lost through His spoken or written Word. The seed of the Gospel is the Word of God (Lk. 8:11).

In spite of all that the Bible says on this subject, there are many who claim that the Holy Spirit works directly on the heart of the sinner to bring him salvation. Yet, there is not one verified example of someone who has been saved without exposure to the verbal or written presentation of the Gospel. If ever there were a

time when such a method of divine intervention could have happened, it would have been in the conversion of Paul as recorded in Acts 9; 22; 26. Christ appeared and identified Himself to Saul on the road to Damascus. Saul asked Jesus, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (9:6b) . This would have been the ideal time for divinity to directly address the heart of a sinner. Is that what happened? No! Instead, Jesus told Saul, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (v. 6). It was Ananias who told Saul what God expected of him (Acts 22:12-16). The Bible teaches us that "the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12). God Himself through the prophet Isaiah centuries ago said, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). Let's add one more thing before moving to the next line of thought. Paul said that the manner in which the Colossians learned "the word of the truth of the gospel" (v.5) was the same way it was learned "in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit," (v. 6).

It was through Epaphras that the Colossians had learned the truth. Paul has only good things to say of him. In our text Paul said he is "our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf" (1:7). In 4:12 he wrote that Ephaphras "is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God". In Philemon 23 he called him "my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus". Since Colossians and Philemon are thought to be written at the same time by Paul while imprisoned in Rome, then this minister to the Colossian church was with Paul. He had traveled 1000 to 1300 miles (depending on the route he took) to see Paul. Perhaps his mission was to inform Paul of the condition of the church in Colossae and bring back a message from Paul (see v. 8). After traveling all of those miles, he ends up in some sense as being in prison with him! How many preachers would do that today? Let us thank God for men like Epaphras. We talk a lot about Paul, Peter and other well-known

servants of God. It also took the lesser known, but dedicated ministers of God like Epaphras to build the kingdom.

Notice that what they learned from Ephaphras was the truth and not a truth. Christianity was not intended to be one of the world's religion, but God's one religion for all of the world. Jesus is Himself the very essence of that truth. The Lord said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). Our nation needs to learn this. A recent study has shown that most Americans do not believe that their religion is the only way to God. This was true whether they identified with Christianity, Judaism, Islam or the mystic religions. We have much to do!

*Paul's Prayer of Intercession for the Colossians, 1:9-14*

Now that Paul has shown the Colossians that he is thankful for them, he goes on in verses 9-11 to let them know some of the specifics for which he was petitioning God to grant them. A look at these specifics produces a list. Below is what he states he wants for them followed by why he is asking for them and then what it will produce for them.

- A. Asked for them to "be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"
- B. Why?
  - 1. "that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him,"
  - 2. "being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God"
  - 3. "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power"
- C. Further resulting in their having:
  - 1. "all patience"
  - 2. "longsuffering with joy"
  - 3. "giving thanks to the Father".

Paul was aware of their needs and prayed accordingly. As you look at this listing, you will notice that Paul wanted all of these things for the Colossians, but all of these spiritual desires that Paul had for them was based on their "being filled with the knowledge

of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Clarke has asserted that “Paul’s intercessory prayer for the church at Colossae was related to the immediate threat of the false teachers there, but what he prayed for them to receive would assist them in every need of the Christian walk.”<sup>11</sup>

Just as the gospel of salvation is dependant upon the preaching of God’s (written or spoken) Word, so does the gospel of continued growth, i.e., of growing in fellowship with God and one another. Surely you have noticed that those who are most active in the kingdom of God and leaders of the body of Christ are those who have nourished their souls by feasting upon God’s Word. The Hebrew writer makes that link in Hebrews 5:11-14. Peter would have his readers long for God’s word the way a baby desires milk so that they would grow (1 Pet 2:1-3). Paul instructed Timothy to “be diligent (study, KJV) to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Is Paul actually making a link between how we study and apply God’s Word to our lives with whether or not we receive God’s approval? Is it critical to our spiritual survival, maturity, and excellence? Someone had better tell the saints!

Because of the importance of spiritual knowledge and wisdom in the life of a Christian and a church, Paul’s petition before God is that they may be filled with it. To his prayers he would encourage them in 3:16 to add their efforts. He wrote them: “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.” To the Ephesians he said it this way: “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,” (Eph. 5:19). Do you want to be filled with the Spirit? Then let the word of Christ dwell richly in you.

The reason Paul wanted this for them was so they might walk worthy of the Lord. For some reason, many Christians get uncomfortable with the word “worthy” when used in connection with humans. The word “worthy” is found 50 times in the NKJV of the New Testament. The Greek word here is *axioos* (ἀξιῶς) and is the same word used in Revelation 4:11a of Jesus. It reads,

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power”. It is also used in Revelation 5:12. “Sing with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’” As unworthy as we may feel, we need to allow God make the decision as to whether or not we are walking worthy. Surely He would not have sent His Son to die the cruel and painful death of Calvary if He did not think our salvation was worth the effort. The Hebrew writer encouraged his readers to run the race with endurance by looking to Jesus, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2). It seems to this writer that he was saying Jesus endured the cross and its shame because He thought the end result would bring Him joyous satisfaction. Man cannot imagine being worth the life of Christ, but he must live according to His revelation so as to please God. Clarke wrote that “‘Worthy of the Lord’ means to so live as to reflect one’s faith in Jesus as Lord, obeying Him (Luke 6:46; 17:10).”<sup>12</sup> That is a simple, but effective definition. If only it were so simple to effect. Actually it is. Keeping the commandments of the Lord is not burdensome (1 Jn. 5:3), and His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Mt. 11:30).

Paul also indicated that he wanted them to be “fruitful in every good work”. He had already mentioned this in verse 6 with an added note that they had been doing this from the time they first knew the truth. Bearing fruit was the very purpose for which they had been saved (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14). It is our purpose, too.

In verse 11 Paul shows how a deepening knowledge and understanding of the Bible helps one in the long run. He knew that if they were “filled with knowledge” they would be “strengthened with might” and have patience and long suffering with joy. It takes might to live the Christian life. Our might is not enough. Thus, we need the might that is according to His glorious power so that we might endure. We are to run the race with endurance (Heb. 12:1). That writer also penned these words: “For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36 ). Many a Christian endures and shows patience, but Paul adds it is to be done with joy. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit that every Christian needs to cultivate in his life.

Without it one will murmur and complain. Such action puts one in the company of those who fell in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10-12).

All of this is to be done while giving thanks to the Father. Over and over Paul commends his readers to give thanks “in all things” (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:15-17; 1 Thess 5:18). Gratitude is a constant companion to those who endure. One has to bring his blessings to mind to be thankful. This takes the focus off the trial or heartache and places it onto the Father of lights who bestows every good and perfect gift (Jas. 1:17).

The object of being filled with knowledge and maturing in the Lord is so that we might inherit eternal life. That inheritance is available to all, yet it is not something that anyone can earn. It is the Father who has qualified us to partake (share) in that inheritance. How does God qualify people? He does this by restoring to that person the state of righteousness that was had before sin entered a person’s life. In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul reminded them that it is not the unrighteous who inherit eternal life, but those who have been washed, sanctified and justified ( 1 Cor 6:9-11). Consider what he wrote to Titus in 3:3-7. “For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” KJV

When God qualified the Colossians to share in the “inheritance of the saints of light”, He also delivered (rescued) them from the power of darkness (v. 13), which is the realm of Satan and sin. Paul reminded the church at Rome (chapter 6) that God had delivered them from the dominion (power) of death and sin so that they could no longer reign over them, i.e., their mortal bodies. As He rescued them, He also conveyed them into the kingdom of the Son of His love. The word “conveyed” (*methistano*) carries with it the concept of translation or exchange.

God basically caused them to switch places. Instead of being in the kingdom of darkness, they found themselves in the kingdom of Christ.

Verse 13 reveals that Paul believed the kingdom of Jesus was in existence in his own day. He had to believe it for he would not say that God had conveyed them into something that did not exist. John also claimed to be in the kingdom in his lifetime in Revelation 1:9. John the Baptist and Jesus had both taught that the kingdom was near at hand (Mt. 3:2; 4:17). The fact of the matter is that it was in existence. Those dispensational premillennialists who teach and preach that Jesus will have to return to the earth to set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem are wrong. The church is not a quick fix to God's plan because the Jews rejected Jesus. The church and the kingdom are the same and it exists today with Christ as its Head and King.

The Colossian brethren were partaking of the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom by their choosing, however, it was not by their power or action. Their redemption and forgiveness was by the power and action of God and was located in Christ (v. 14). So is ours. They were, as well as we are, "complete in Him".

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> All quotes from the Bible are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> William Hendriksen *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids; Baker Book House, 1964) p 14

<sup>3</sup> Hendriksen, p 14

<sup>4</sup> The word "also" is not a separate word in the Greek. The translators of the KJV apparently thought it should be there and the NKJV translators followed suit. The Greek word is *kathos* (καθώς) and carries the idea of "just as" (see the NASU).

<sup>5</sup> W. E. Vine as quoted by Ted J. Clarke, *Studies in Philipians and Colossians: The Nineteenth Annual Denton Lectures* ed. by Dub McClish (Valid Publication, Inc, November 12-16, 2000) p 186.

<sup>6</sup> John Wesley *Explanatory Notes Upon the NT*, as quoted by Burton Coffman *Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians,*



*Philippians, Colossians* (Abilene; Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1977) p 346.

<sup>7</sup> Clarke, p 189.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes: Notes on the New Testament, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1983) p 242.

<sup>9</sup> Hendriksen, p 47.

<sup>10</sup> Coffman, p 349.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, p 189.

<sup>12</sup> Clarke, p 195.

## GREAT PREACHERS OF THE PAST

### Thomas Campbell (1763 – 1854)

Writings on Thomas and Alexander Campbell often end up focusing more on Alexander with Thomas being in the background. This paper's focus is an attempt to examine more closely the life of Thomas Campbell and his contributions to the Restoration Movement. Thomas Campbell is a "bridge" figure from the Old World's religion to the New World's religion. One writer accurately portrays Thomas Campbell's time in perspective:

Historians, when they have mentioned him at all, have spoken of him along with Barton W. Stone and Walter Scott as one of the founders of the movement known today as "Disciples of Christ," and as the father of Alexander Campbell. But Thomas Campbell was more than that. He was a transitional figure, forming a link between the religious traditionalism of the Old World and the spirit and zeal of the New—a man who, like so many in America,—at that time, lived the first half of his life in Ireland and the last half on the American frontier.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Campbell was an exemplary educator for the time and was able to use this gift to complement the efforts he made to the restoring of New Testament Christianity in America.

#### *Events Before Coming to America (1763-1806)*

Thomas Campbell was born on February 1, 1763 in County Down, Ireland to Archibald Campbell and Alice McNally. From what is known, it appears Thomas was named after his grandfather. The ancestry of Thomas prior to Archibald conflicts with various accounts. Dates among various sources also conflict.<sup>2</sup> Archibald was a Roman Catholic but changed to the Church of England. Thomas' father appeared to like to state in jest that he "worshipped God by the Act of Parliament." Archibald and Alice had four sons: Thomas, James, Archibald and Enos. They also had four

daughters who were all named Mary but died in infancy. Thomas was sent to military regimental school near Newry in Northern Ireland. Upon graduation, Thomas began teaching in the country near the village of Sheepbridge and Newry. While working near Sheepbridge, Thomas Campbell's ability came to the attention of a Seceder named John Kinley who offered to finance advance education for Thomas Campbell. Part of the condition of the support was to include additional ministerial training. While Thomas' father was not favorable to the exposure to the Presbyterian Church, he reluctantly agreed since he did not have the financial means to provide these opportunities. It is believed that Thomas Campbell entered the prestigious University of Glasgow in Scotland in 1783 and completed his study within three years. The University of Glasgow was one of the more famous institutions of learning of the day and was also at this time the center of 18<sup>th</sup> century Scottish thought. Thomas then went on to study at the Whitburn Seceder Seminary which was the Anti-Burgher branch of the Secession Presbyterian Church where he studied for five additional years until 1791.

While attending the Whitburn Seminary, Thomas Campbell would alternate between school in Scotland and teaching in Northern Ireland. It is theorized that at one of his teaching assignments near the village of Ballymena, he would meet Jane Corneigle who lived in Lough Neagh near Shane's Castle and was of the French Huguenots.<sup>3</sup> They would marry in June 1787 and have ten children, three of which died in infancy or at birth. On September 12, 1788 their first child, Alexander, was born.

When Thomas completed his seminary training in 1791, he was examined by the Associate Presbytery of Ireland and graduated to the status of probationary preacher. He moved his family to Ballymena, near Sheepbridge, where he resumed teaching and began preaching for Seceder churches in the area. He then moved his family to Markethill in County Armagh where he preached and privately tutored. Alexander would attend elementary school in Markethill.

In 1798, Thomas Campbell accepted a full pastorate position in Ahorey, moving his family to the village of Hamilton's Bawn which was just three miles away from the building.

Alexander would board with a merchant named Mr. Gillis and continue his schooling in Markethill. Alexander would also attend an academy in Newry under the teaching of his uncles Archibald and Enos. When Alexander finished at the academy, Thomas was prepared to teach him directly; however, Alexander was not interested in studies but physical exercises. So, Thomas sent him out to the fields to help Alexander devote time to this interest until his mind would turn again to his studies.

In 1804 Thomas decided to move from Hamilton's Bawn to Richhill (or Richardson's Hill) and open an academy in their two-story whitewashed house. Alexander would be Thomas' assistant in the academy as well. Alexander was offered a permanent private tutoring position for the children of William Richardson of Richhill Manor, but he declined the opportunity. It is important to note that at this time the *Last Will & Testament of Springfield Presbytery* is signed by Barton W. Stone (and others) in Kentucky. Thomas Campbell would not be sailing to America until nearly three years later and Alexander almost five years later.

In October 1804 Thomas and other ministers met as the "Committee on Consultation" to discuss the reunification of the Burgher and Anti-Burgher groups in Ireland since there was no reason for separation by this time. The proposal, drafted by Thomas Campbell, was already viewed unfavorably by the synod in Scotland before the application could even be submitted.

In 1805, the group formed the Synod of Ulster in Ireland and submitted their application with Thomas going to Scotland to plead their case. Reports were that Thomas' arguments were superior, but the leaders in the General Synod outvoted supporters of the reunification proposal (The two groups would eventually reunite in 1820). The experience would also have a profound impact on Thomas in the events to come. It is important to realize just how divided Protestant Denominations had become by this time, and Thomas Campbell's involvement with the Presbyterian Church is a classic example. Thomas Campbell was an Old-Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian. To understand exactly what that means, one must understand the divisions of the Presbyterian Church of Thomas' day. In 1740 Moderates & Evangelicals divided over who had the authority to appoint preachers. Seceders

(Evangelicals) believed that individual churches had this authority, not the Union Parliament. They formed the Associate Presbytery. Then in 1747 Burgher & Anti-Burghers divided over whether the burgesses of towns were to take an oath to protect religion of the state. The Anti-Burghers opposed the requirement of an oath. Another source of division arose in 1795 when the New Lights & Old Lights divided over the power of civil magistrates in religion as in the Westminster Confession.

By 1806 Thomas Campbell was basically exhausted and his health had become precarious. The doctor advised Thomas he should set aside the burdens in Ireland and go to America. Taking the doctor's advice, Thomas Campbell left Richhill Academy and family in the hands of the sixteen-year old Alexander and sailed for America from Londonderry, Ireland on the ship Brutus on April 1, 1807. Thomas left the following words to Alexander before his departure on what was sometimes a perilous journey:

*Live to God; be devoted to him in heart, and in all your undertakings. Be a sincere Christian— i.e., imbibe the doctrines, obey the precepts, copy the example, and believe the promise of the gospel. And that you do so, read it, study it, pray over it, embrace it as your heritage, your portion... Live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, both “for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Above all things, attend to this, for without him you can do nothing, either to the glory of God or your own good.<sup>4</sup>*

***From Arrival in America to The Declaration & Address  
(1807 – 1809)***

Thomas Campbell's mind upon leaving the Old World included thoughts of a fresh start. A New World implied things of the Old World should be challenged and either be adopted, modified, or left behind. Perhaps he thought “Why would that not include religious sects?” When he arrived at America he found that the state of religion was at its lowest point since the

Revolutionary War, but he was determined to do his part to rally people to New Testament Christianity as he stated:

*Is it not then your incumbent duty to endeavor, by all scriptural means, to have those evils remedied? Who will say, that it is not?...The favorable opportunity which Divine Providence has put into your hands, in this happy country, for the accomplishment of so great a good, is in itself, a consideration of no small encouragement. A country happily exempted from the baneful influence of a civil establishment of any peculiar form of christianity—from under the direct influence of the anti-christian hierarchy—and, at the same time, from any formal connexion with the devoted nations,...Can the Lord expect, or require, any thing less, from a people so liberally furnished with all the means and mercies, than a thorough reformation, in all things civil and religious, according to his word?<sup>5</sup>*

On May 28, 1807 Thomas Campbell arrives in Philadelphia, PA. He is assigned Chartiers Presbytery in Washington County, PA by the North America Synod of the Seceder Presbyterian Church. On October 27, 1807 he is called before the Synod on charges of teaching against human creeds and confessions of faith in New Hope. On February 12, 1808 the Chartiers Presbytery decided to rebuke, censure, admonish and suspend Campbell after an inquest for a week into Campbell's teachings. Thomas withdrew from the Anti-Burger Seceder Presbyterian Church on September 13, but he continued to preach among the associates with whom he had been laboring.

On January 1, 1808, Thomas wrote to his family, encouraging them to make immediate preparations to join him in the New World. The Campbell family departed on October 1 on the ship *Hibernia* but was shipwrecked in Scotland. Rather than sailing out immediately, they decide to take the opportunity for Alexander to attend the University of Glasgow where he would come under influence of Greville Ewing. The experience

Alexander had during this time led him also to withdraw from the Seceder Church on his own without discussing it with his father. Ironically, both men had come to the same course of action independently. Imagine a son telling his father that he had quit the Presbyterian Church only to find out that his father had actually done the same thing! What a conversation that must have been! On August 3, 1809 the Campbell family sailed from Scotland on the ship *Latona* to America where they would arrive in New York on September 29, 1809.

While Thomas' family was attempting to join him in the New World, he met with followers of like mind at the house of Abraham Alters. From these meetings of likeminded men came the expression "*Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.*" They formed the Christian Association of Washington on August 17, 1809. They erected a building on a farm owned by Sinclair three miles from Mt. Pleasant at the crossroads of the road leading to Washington, PA and Canonsburg. Thomas Campbell would reside in the upper level of the home of Mr. Welch to draft the Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington. The declaration would be reviewed and approved for printing by the association on September 7, 1809.

On September 29, 1809 Thomas' family arrived safely in New York and reached Philadelphia on October 7. Thomas left to go meet them and came across them eleven days from their departure from Philadelphia. They traveled together back to Washington, PA and arrived on October 28 to the new house owned by the Achesons. Alexander had arrived in time for Thomas to share and review with him the proof sheets of the declaration. The declaration was printed by Brown and Sample at the Office of the Reporter in Washington, PA. On November 2, 1809 the Christian Association of Washington, at its semi-annual meeting, decided to send a copy of the Declaration and Address to every sect in Washington County.

*From Washington, Pennsylvania to Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania  
(1810 – 1812)*

On September 16, 1810 Alexander Campbell preached his first sermon for the Brush Run congregation. The Christian Association applied for membership with the Pittsburgh Synod of Mother Church of Scotland but was rejected.

On March 12, 1811 Alexander married Margaret Brown in the family parlor in Bethany. Thomas and Jane Campbell hosted a reception in their honor at their home in Washington, PA. Shortly thereafter, Thomas moved to Mt. Pleasant, PA.

On May 4, 1811 Christian Association of Washington organized into the Brush Run Church with Thomas Campbell as an elder and Alexander Campbell as the preacher. The first communion service at Brush Run was on May 5, 1811. The building was erected in June of 1811. By June 16, 1811 Brush Run instituted weekly communion. The Brush Run building, 18 x 36 feet in size, was completed and would be used until 1828. In 1842, the building was purchased by George McFadden and moved to West Middletown and used as a blacksmith shop. In 1869 McFadden was appointed Postmaster and used the building as a post office. In 1913 funds were donated by Frank Main to have it purchased and moved next to Campbell Mansion. Eventually it would be demolished due to the decay of the structure.

On July 4, 1811 Thomas Campbell immersed three members in Buffalo Creek which led to immersions and weekly communion being conducted on a regular basis for some time.

On January 1, 1812 Thomas Campbell, as senior minister of the First Church of the Christian Association of Washington, signed Alexander Campbell's certificate of ordination. On March 12, 1812 Alexander & Margaret's first child, Jane Caroline, is born. This prompted a deep study of baptism by Alexander Campbell. He concluded the Scriptures are silent about infant baptism so did not sprinkle Caroline. Silence is restrictive, not permissive, as some would try to persuade us today. Finally, on June 12, 1812 Thomas, Jane, Alexander, and Margaret were immersed for the remission of sins in Buffalo Creek, Washington



County, PA by Matthias Luse, a Baptist Preacher. The service that day was seven hours. The next day thirteen other members of Brush Run were baptized by Thomas Campbell.

*From Cambridge, Ohio to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1813 – 1815)*

*Around October 1813, Thomas and Jane Campbell moved to Cambridge, OH where they would operate a farm and seminary. He would live here for two years on Woolworth Corner in the Dixon House, a two-story log cabin structure. Here he would establish the first reputable school in Cambridge. In 1823 the house was sold to Jacob Shaffner who either destroyed it or renovated to a new building which he used for a store. The site would go through various hands, purposes and business until the land would be used to construct a three-story yellow brick building around 1894, now known as the Colley Building.<sup>6</sup>*

*While Thomas was away, Brush Run considered relocating to Zanesville, OH. Alexander was given the land in Bethany by Margaret's father so the move never occurred.*

*While in Cambridge he received a letter from Thomas Acheson advising him that David Acheson was seriously ill. Thomas went to stay with the Achesons for several weeks in Washington and had an opportunity to establish a school and congregation in Pittsburgh, PA.*

*From Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Newport, Kentucky (1815 – 1817)*

In October 1815 Thomas Campbell relocated to Pittsburgh, PA and established the Mercantile Academy or English Classical School. His son-in-law (Joseph Bryant) and daughter Dorothea both assisted with the school. Nathanael Richardson also assisted with the school and decided to enroll his son, Robert.

Thomas was able to gather enough Christians together to establish a small congregation in Pittsburgh. On August 31, 1816, the congregation applied for membership to the Redstone Baptist Association. Their application was rejected because the

Association required the congregation to accept the Philadelphia Confession or equivalent creed which they were not about to agree to. On September 1, 1816 Alexander delivered his highly regarded “Sermon on the Law” to some twenty-two preachers and over 1,000 in attendance at the Redstone Baptist Association. The sermon was extremely hostile to Baptist doctrine and was viewed as a rebuke to the association’s rejection of the congregation’s membership.

By the spring of 1817, Dorothea’s health was failing and other family members returned to Washington, PA. Thomas was left with a burden of running an academy largely on his own. The burden was too much for a man of his age and condition, so he decided to leave Pittsburgh for a more suitable field.

*From Newport, Kentucky to West Middleton, Pennsylvania  
(1817 – 1819)*

In the fall of 1817 Thomas moved the family to Newport, KY. During this period Thomas traveled and visited numerous Baptist churches in the area. He discovered the construction of a new academy in Burlington, Boone County, KY. He was offered the position of headmaster, and his eighteen-year old daughter, Jane, agreed to assist him. In March 1818, Alexander had opened Buffalo Seminary near Brush Run. A couple of months later, Alexander laid the foundation for an addition to Campbell Mansion to eventually house Buffalo Seminary. In July 1 the cornerstone was laid for an even greater space for the seminary in Bethany.

Thomas completed several trips to Indiana during the next couple of years while his family settled in at Burlington. All was well until a Sunday in the summer of 1819 when Thomas invited some blacks into the academy to teach them how to read the Bible and some hymns. He was notified that it was against state law to teach blacks unless one or two witnesses were in attendance. Repulsed by this encroachment, Thomas decided to leave immediately and made arrangements to move closer to Alexander Campbell to assist with Buffalo Seminary. To the dismay of the family, who didn’t want to move again, they moved to West

Middleton where Thomas assisted with Buffalo Seminary some seven miles away from Bethany.

***From West Middleton, Pennsylvania to Bethany, Virginia (1819 – 1843)***

*Thomas and his daughter Jane, spend much time working in the seminary while Alexander was preparing for his first debate with John Walker, Seceder Presbyterian, that would begin in June 1820. During this period it is estimated there were six churches and 200 members worshipping as an effort of the Campbells' work. Also, Alexander went to Pittsburgh where he would meet Walter Scott for the first time.*

*The debate with Walker was printed and was read widely. Alexander then realized the value of debates and the press so he decided to close Buffalo Seminary at the end of 1822 and made plans to begin publishing the Christian Baptist. The first issue was printed on August 3, 1823. The impact on the Baptists was substantial, and the Baptist Church was furious about the publication. In fact, the Redstone Baptist Association planned to expel Alexander Campbell, but someone alerted Thomas and Alexander to the plan. To counter the move, Alexander transferred his membership from Brush Run to Wellsburg where several from the Brush Run had also moved their membership. Alexander then joined the Mahoning Association and Thomas drafted a letter from Brush Run dated August 31, 1823 stating Alexander, in good standing, had moved his membership to Wellsburg. Alexander and Thomas attended the Redstone meeting, and when they inquired why Alexander was not on the roll they were irritated when they learned he was no longer under their jurisdiction thus exempted from their intended punishment.*

Thomas would spend time traveling, preaching, and writing his view of baptism that would appear in the second issue of the *Christian Baptist*. He would serve as secretary to Alexander in his contest with a pedobaptist Presbyterian named McCalla from Augusta, KY in October 1823.

Thomas assisted in writing and printing of the *Christian Baptist* which would allow Alexander to travel to various meetings

over the next couple of years. Alexander would write “Experimental Religion” which was highly offensive to the Baptists. Thomas, who thought the article was too caustic, wrote a rebuke in the paper to Alexander which was signed “T. W.”

In September 1827 an association was formed that ignored the Philadelphia Confession. Tragically the following month, Alexander’s wife Margaret died of tuberculosis at the age of 37. Also during this period, the Brush Run congregation had diminished to the point that they merged with the congregation in Bethany. During the fall, Thomas took his son, Archibald, on a tour of the Western Reserve of Ohio. In the spring of 1828 Thomas went back out to the Western Reserve to check on the growing progress of Walter Scott. He found that Walter Scott was sound, effective, and was very successful in evangelizing using his five-finger method. Thomas traveled with a preacher of the Universalists named Aylett Raines. He also began traveling with Walter Scott until he finally returned in the summer of 1828. That fall, he and Archibald traveled to Somerset, PA to preach in various churches in the surrounding counties. He returned in the winter of 1828 to preach at Bethany and West Middleton.

In the spring of 1829 Thomas witnessed the debate between his son and the infidel Robert Owen in Cincinnati, OH. After the debate, Alexander decided to cease the *Christian Baptist* and begin the *Millennial Harbinger*. However, Alexander was elected as a delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention on September 22, 1829. Therefore, Thomas contributed writing and editing the next five issues of the *Christian Baptist* while Alexander was away. For much of 1829 and 1830 the movement to remove the reformers from the Baptists reached its climax. On January 4, 1830 the *Millennial Harbinger* made its debut.

During the spring and summer of 1830 Thomas visited Kentucky and southern Ohio. There was also a confrontation with the Beaver Baptist Association which had leveled attacks against the Campbells and the Mahoning Association in what was called the “Beaver Anathema”. There were several charges leveled against the reformers which are interesting to note:

1. That there is no promise of salvation without baptism.

2. That baptism should be administered on the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, without examination on any other point.
3. That there is no direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind before baptism.
4. That baptism procures the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.
5. That the Scriptures are the only evidence of interest in Christ.
6. That man's obedience places it in God's power to elect to salvation.
7. That no creed is necessary for the church but the Scriptures.
8. That all baptized persons have a right to administer the ordinance of baptism.

In June 1830 the Tate's Creek Association in Kentucky adopted the "Beaver Anathema" and added four additional charges:

9. That there is no special call to the ministry.
10. That the law given by Moses is abolished.
11. That experimental religion is enthusiasm.
12. That there is no mystery in the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

The controversy raged on between the Baptist and the reformers. Thomas Campbell attended meetings of the North District Association in Spencer Creek, KY and the Elkhorn Association, Bourbon County, KY. These meetings led to a separation of the Baptist and the reformers that reached its peak during the summer of 1830. While this was a discouragement, the spirit of freedom in the new country gave the reformers reason to be optimistic and push on rather than downtrodden by the hierarchies of the Old World.

In the winter of 1830, Thomas traveled to Mentor, OH to visit his younger daughter, Alicia, and her new husband, Matthew Clapp. He also confronted Sidney Rigdon and the Mormon movement that was troubling the area. Rigdon was a very unstable individual who actually attended one of Alexander's debates and traveled with the disciples before joining in with Joseph Smith and the Mormons. When Joseph Smith was murdered, Rigdon lost the

leadership of the Mormons to Brigham Young and left to join the Shakers. Thomas Campbell wrote a public letter in February 1831 and challenged Sidney Rigdon to debate Mormonism. Rigdon immediately burned the letter and ignored the challenge.<sup>8</sup> Thomas returned to West Middleton, PA in the spring of 1831. Also during this period, the church in Bethany erected a stone building for worship. The building was eventually torn down 20 years later and the stones were used in the foundation of the brick structure that stands there today.

During the summer of 1831 Thomas attended the annual meeting of the Ohio Disciples in New Lisbon with Alexander. In November 1831 Thomas traveled to eastern Virginia to assist the Disciples in the separation from the Baptists. Thomas also spent a considerable amount of time working with Alexander Campbell on the new translation of the New Testament that was to be printed. Thomas was extremely concerned about the translation projected. He even left early to consult with Alexander about points relating to the translation directly as he wrote to Alexander on December 24, 1831:

*I am happy to learn that you are proceeding in the arduous and all-important undertaking of a new and improved exhibition of the sacred text. I feel infinitely more concerned for your intended publication of the New Testament than for anything you have ever attempted to publish. I beg and beseech you to look to the Lord continually for the guidance and superintending aid of his Holy Spirit; also to guard most rigidly against all philosophical, theoretical, and theological leanings. Let the translation be purely classical upon the established principles of philological, idiomatical, and grammatic criticism. Further, that you will not only duly attend to the corrections that I have already put into your hand in the small manuscript that I left with you, as well as what yet remains to be*

*presented as soon as I have finished my review of your late edition, but also that you will grant me the indulgence of revising with you all the improvements you may have made out and corrected, before you put them down in the improved and corrected copy to be stereotyped, before it be delivered for that purpose to the engraver.*<sup>9</sup>

Thomas remained on the road due to a serious illness and fall from a horse until he was finally able to return home in September 1832. He was immediately asked to help the brethren at Wellsburg. During this period, on January 2, 1832, the unification of the Disciples and Christians occurred in Lexington, KY.

During the winter of 1832, Thomas made several contributions to the *Millennial Harbinger*. In October 1833 he left again with Alexander, B. H. Hall, and two granddaughters, Maria Louis and Eliza, to travel to Richmond, VA. He also spent six months in North Carolina. Thomas Campbell conducted a written discussion with Barton Stone in the *Millennial Harbinger* and *The Christian Messenger* on the subject of atonement.

By 1835 Thomas was back again running the *Millennial Harbinger* as Alexander was making an extended trip. Thomas and Jane had moved in with their third daughter, Jane McKeever and her husband. On April 28, 1835 the wife of Thomas Campbell, Jane Campbell, died. Thomas continued to work on the *Millennial Harbinger* until Robertson Richardson was added as co-editor which freed Thomas of this work.

In the summer of 1836 Thomas once again visited Mentor, OH and surrounding areas. During the fall of 1838 he returned to assist with the *Millennial Harbinger* to fill in due to the absences of both Alexander Campbell and Robertson Richardson. He continued this work until Alexander returned in April 1839. That September, Thomas went on another preaching tour in Pennsylvania. By the end of 1839 and the beginning of 1840 Thomas was involved in the controversy over the name of “Disciple” or “Christian”. Thomas, as did Walter Scott, sided more with Barton W. Stone on the preference for the name “Christian” over Alexander’s preference for the term “Disciple”.

He made several contributions to the *Millennial Harbinger* during this period and was once again called on to take over editorial duties.

On March 2, 1840 Bethany College was incorporated. Thomas served as an incorporator and also served on its Board of Trustees. The first meeting, at which Thomas was the chairman, was on May 11. On September 18 the Board of Trustees had its second meeting. Thomas was once again the chairman and Alexander was elected President of Bethany College. Thomas also made contributions to the *Millennial Harbinger* during this period as well. Bethany College opened for business on October 21, 1840.

### *From Bethany, Virginia To Eternity (1843 – 1854)*

In 1843, Thomas Campbell was an eighty year old widower. Thomas moved into the home of Alexander and Selina Campbell. He spent much time in study across the street from the Bethany Mansion in the study vacated by Alexander upon the completion of his octagonal study he referred to as “*Light from Above*”. Thomas also returned to Cambridge, OH for a visit of the area where he had labored nearly 30 years ago and had a pleasant visit with J. R. Frame, the evangelist at the time. He preached for various denominations such as the Baptists and Cumberland Presbyterians. As 1843 drew to a close, Thomas traveled with Alexander to witness his debate with N. L. Rice, a Presbyterian. He also continued to write articles for the *Millennial Harbinger*.

In January 1845 Thomas published his official view on slavery in the *Millennial Harbinger* stating:

Upon the whole, with respect to American slavery, wherever distinguished by any inhuman and antichristian adjuncts, by any unnatural, immoral, and irreligious usages, we may justly and reasonably conclude that as Christianity and truly moralized humanity prevail, it must and will go down; and that, in these respects, no Christian can either approve or practise it. It may also provoke God to destroy it more speedily by terrible judgments, as in the case of Egypt,



Babylon, Nineveh, and Jerusalem, wholly destroyed on account of their cruelty and oppression.<sup>10</sup>

During the summer of 1847 Thomas Campbell began losing his eyesight and hearing which limited his mobility. By 1848 his eyesight failed, but he was still seen to be quoting Scriptures and hymns which revealed his disposition during this trial. On June 1, 1851 at the age of 88 years old, Thomas Campbell delivered his farewell address to the Bethany Church of Christ. His chosen topic was “The Two Greatest Commandments.” The following year the building was torn down and replaced with the now Bethany Memorial Church of Christ brick structure.

During 1853, Thomas was visited and interviewed by an admirer, James Challen, who published the following in the Ladies Christian Annual:

...In the absence of his son Alexander, he daily leads family worship. His memory is, of course, very defective. He sits in his comfortable armchair before the fire throughout the day, occasionally rising to change his position or for exercise. He still shaves himself, and attends to his toilet with scrupulous exactness. He retires to his chamber alone, in accordance with his own wishes, and rises without any aid from the family, as he is extremely reluctant to give the least possible trouble to any about him. His wants are all fully anticipated, and every possible attention paid him by every member of the family, not only from a sense of duty, but from pure affection. Indeed, no one can be near him without loving him. He is so kind and gentle, so courteous and bland, and so grateful even for the smallest favors. He still carries about him his old watch, and daily has it set to correspond with the family timepiece. Time with him was always a sacred thing; he knew its value, and still prizes it.<sup>11</sup>

**In December 1853, Thomas told Alexander “I am going home and will pass over Jordan.” On January 4, 1854 Thomas Campbell died at Bethany one month prior to his 91<sup>st</sup> birthday. He was buried in the family cemetery, God’s Acre, in Bethany, VA (now West Virginia).**

In 1861, Alexander Campbell published his biography of his father entitled *Life of Elder Thomas Campbell*.

### ***Contributions of Thomas Campbell to the Restoration of NT Christianity***

While it is not possible to delineate all that Thomas Campbell contributed to the cause of Christ and the restoration of the primitive gospel, the following should be included with any such list created:

*The writing of the Declaration & Address.* This document, along with *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* by Barton W. Stone and the brethren at Cane Ridge serves as a bridge from the divided world of denominationalism to the church of the New Testament. While these documents are not creeds, they should be viewed as structures to be admired and studied from the banks of New Testament shoreline. An excerpt from proposition 5 of the document Alexander Campbell pledged his life to promote included words that leave no doubt that the Campbells viewed the silence of the Scriptures as *restrictive* rather than permissive:

*That with respect to the commands and ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Scriptures are silent as to the express time or manner of performance, if any such there be, no human authority has power to interfere, in order to supply the supposed deficiency by making laws for the Church; nor can anything more be required of Christians in such cases, but only that they so observe these commands and ordinances as will evidently answer the declared and obvious end of their institution. Much less has any human authority*

*power to impose new commands or ordinances upon the Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ has not enjoined. Nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament.*

Training & Counseling of Alexander Campbell. While all among churches of Christ, including Alexander Campbell himself, find reference to Christians as “Campbellites” as abhorrent and evil, none should doubt the contributions that Alexander Campbell made to restore New Testament Christianity. Alexander Campbell’s effectiveness is revealed in the slur of “Campbellite” being used in the first place for those unbiased enough to examine the Scriptures themselves. Thomas Campbell trained, counseled, and at times even restrained Alexander during much of his career. A more effective father & son combination would be difficult to find.

Training of Robert Richardson. If Thomas Campbell had not moved to Pittsburgh in 1815 to open the Mercantile Academy, then he might not have had an influence on Robert Richardson. Richardson went on to become editor of the *Millennial Harbinger* and write a monumental biography on the life of Alexander Campbell. Regardless of the controversy Richardson stirred, writing the biography alone makes Thomas Campbell’s work that led to Robert Richardson becoming a Christian worthy of note.

Encouragement to Walter Scott. Perhaps Thomas Campbell’s work in Pittsburgh may have set in series a chain of events that led to Walter Scott being added to the church. Whether or not that is so, the trip that Thomas made to investigate Walter Scott’s effectiveness led to an increased effort to proclaim the Gospel on the Western Reserve.

Evangelizing on Western Reserve and Beyond. There are gaps in series of events in Thomas’ life as are clearly shown in this manuscript as well. Thomas Campbell was often traveling across states preaching for whatever audience would have him preach. He built up churches and their evangelists. He was often away from his wife and children for months at a time.

Bethany College. Thomas Campbell was first and foremost an evangelist, but he was also an educator. He served as Chairman of the Board for the founding of Bethany. His leadership undoubtedly led to the rise of both instructors (Robert Milligan, Robert Richardson, Hall Calhoun, W. K. Pendelton) and students (J. W. McGarvey, Moses Lard, James Harding) who would go on to degrees of prominence in the Restoration Movement. To this date Bethany College is still the oldest degree granting institution in West Virginia although it is governed by the Disciples of Christ and has departed greatly from the principles of its founders. It has been reported that Bethany College had the same degree awarding authorization as the University of Virginia and still is governed by the Virginia charter today.

Editor & Publisher. While many often associate the *Christian Baptist* and the *Millennial Harbinger* with Alexander Campbell, it is important not to forget that Thomas filled in for Alexander on several occasions as editor and contributed research and articles to the papers as well.<sup>12</sup>

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lester G. McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book, St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1954, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> When one starts researching various historical figures, including Thomas Campbell, it is surprising the disagreement in dates and details of key events. In an effort to provide the most accurate dates known, this writer is relying on the research of Rosemary Jeanne Cobb, "Following the Footsteps of Thomas Campbell," Bethany, WV: Bethany College, September 6, 1996. Ms. Cobb is the archivist of the Campbell records at Bethany College and has far better access to primary source documents than many do. I am appreciative of her willingness to share this material.

<sup>3</sup> French Huguenots were strict Calvinistic Presbyterians and followers of John Calvin. In 1512 over thirty thousand Protestants were slain in one day. A general edict which encouraged the extermination of the Huguenots was issued on January 29th, 1536 in France. On March 1, 1562 some 1200 Huguenots were slain at Vassy, France. Any person or group who dissented against Roman Catholicism was deemed a "heretic" and subject to persecution including torture and execution. Many fled to Ireland, Switzerland, England, Germany, and Holland. The Corneigle family fled from France in 1681.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted by Lester G. McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book, St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1954, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.112.

<sup>6</sup> Appreciation is extended to brother Bruce Daugherty for providing a copy of William G. Wolfe's "Sideline Stories of Guernsey County, Ohio" Cambridge, OH: Guernsey County Ohio Genealogical Society, 1990, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted by Lester G. McAllister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book, St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1954, pp. 209-211.

<sup>8</sup> To see transcription of letter, see <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell>.

<sup>9</sup> As quoted in Alexander Campbell, Memoirs of Elder Thomas Campbell,

<http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/acampbell/metc/METC03HTM>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/tcampbell/mh/ETCVOS.HTM>.

<sup>11</sup> As quoted by Lester McCallister, Thomas Campbell: Man of the Book, St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1954, pp. 260-261.

<sup>12</sup> For a list of Thomas Campbell's contributions to the *Christian Baptist*, *Millennial Harbinger*, and other publications, see <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/people/tcampbell.html>.

## CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

Sam Bartrug

For since the creation of the world  
His invisible attributes are clearly  
seen, being understood by the things  
that are made, even His eternal  
power and Godhead, so that they are  
without excuse. (Romans 1:20)<sup>1</sup>

The concept of Christian Evidences is as old as Scripture itself. Although the Bible more assumes the existence of God than it seeks to defend the fact of that existence, it does contain some apologetic material.<sup>2</sup> Among the passages of Scripture that defend God's existence and related issues such as inspiration are Psalm 19:1-4; Hebrews 3:4; Acts 17:22-29; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21.

To believers a defense of such foundational beliefs as God's existence, Jesus' divinity, and Scripture's inspiration may seem unnecessary, but to much of the world these issues are not quite as settled as they are to us. There are many forces in our world that fight against belief. A variety of philosophies in history, science, ethics, politics and even religion often have intentionally or unintentionally the affect of undermining faith. For this reason we must be prepared to defend our faith, and be able to set forth a reasonable defense of the truths that we hold dear in regard to the Christian religion.

According to the Zanesville Times Recorder a recent survey suggests that 92 percent of Americans believe in God.<sup>3</sup> While we are pleased that this may be the case, we are saddened at that 8% who do not believe; and cannot help but be skeptical regarding the validity of some of the other 92% since the article goes on to reveal that many are willing to accept other world religions (and the "gods" that come with them) as viable alternatives to the God and faith of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Much of the world we live in, and too much of our own society, is hindered from Biblical faith by such philosophies as *pantheism* (a belief that equates God with the forces and laws of nature), *atheism* (a belief that there is no deity, the rejection of God's existence), or *agnosticism* (the belief that one can not be certain as to whether there is a God or not, God's existence is unknown or unknowable).

While it will not be possible to give sufficient attention to all that should be understood regarding Christian Evidences, this lesson will attempt to address three basic truths of the Christian religion: 1) There is a God; 2) Jesus Christ is the Divine Son of God; and 3) The Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God.

### THERE IS A GOD

Belief in the existence of God is portrayed in Scripture as vital to salvation. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us of this with the following words, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." The case for God's existence can be set forth through a variety of "arguments" each strongly implying the overwhelming reasonableness for accepting God as real.

One argument for the existence of God is called the Ontological Argument. This argument is based upon the fact that the human mind has conceived of a perfect and absolute Being. Since we can conceive of God as absolute perfection it would be impossible for Him to be non-existent. The concept of an absolutely perfect God which exists in human thought demands that such a God actually exist.

A second argument for the existence of God is the Cosmological Argument. This argument suggests that the cosmos is an effect for which there must be an adequate cause. Logic itself suggests that every effect must have an adequate cause and that the effect can never be greater than the cause; therefore the natural world must have a supernatural cause.

Another argument for God's existence is labeled the General Argument. This argument deals with the universal belief

in God and the religious instinct of man. It cannot be denied that belief in God has been as universal and as ancient as man himself. The ideas about God may, at times, be quite crude but they do exist. If God does not exist then how can such a universal belief be accounted for?

There is also what is termed the Moral Argument. Simply put this argument suggests that man possesses a moral nature and recognizes the existence and appropriateness of certain moral standards that are impossible to explain apart from the moral Being who instilled such concepts within us. Why do we conceive of right and wrong? That is hard to logically answer apart from God.

The Esthetical Argument for God's existence asserts that the presence of beauty in our universe, and our appreciation for that beauty, strongly suggests the existence of a God such as is depicted in Genesis as pronouncing all that He created as being "good."

A final argument for God's existence is labeled the Teleological Argument. This argument grows out of the design, purpose and order of the universe. It is arguably the one appealed to in Scripture more than any other. This argument is often illustrated by the finding of a watch. It would be unreasonable for one to find a watch and conclude that it just happened to come together in a way that would allow it to keep time. The existence of a working watch demands a watch-maker. Other illustrations of this argument from design and order include the distance from the earth to the sun, the rotation of the earth on its axis, the percentage of oxygen in the atmosphere, the circulatory system of man, the intricate structure of the human eye, etc. Each of these, and a host of others like them, is too precise to be the result of time, chance or accident. There has to be an intelligent force behind this order and purpose.

It is important to note that none of these arguments alone, nor all of them together, prove the existence of God. They merely present evidence which leads to a logical conclusion that such a Being must exist. Acceptance of the existence of God will always be a matter of faith; these arguments simply provide a reasonable foundation for such faith.



## JESUS IS THE DIVINE SON OF GOD

Christianity is not just a philosophy, nor is it merely an ethical system; it is primarily a religion of redemption. It exists for the salvation of man. That salvation comes through a person. That person is Jesus of Nazareth. This was his purpose for coming (John 3:16; Matthew 1:21), this was his purpose for dying (Matthew 20:28; II Corinthians 5:21), and this was the purpose behind his establishment of the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 1:16-17). This paragraph hinges upon Jesus being the Divine Son of God. If he is then all it says is true. If he isn't then none of what it says can be true.

That Jesus was a real figure in human history is well documented. Writings extant from pagan, Jewish, and Biblical sources establish the fact that Jesus lived here on the earth.

Such pagan sources as Thallus, a Samaritan-born historian (who writes to try to debunk the supernatural nature of the events surrounding the crucifixion); Tacitus, the most famous Roman historian (who refers to Jesus by the name "Christus" and mentions his crucifixion by Pontius Pilate); Gaius Plinius Secundus, "Pliny the Younger", a Governor of Bithynia about A.D. 112 (who, within 85 years of Jesus death, wrote seeking direction in dealing with those who sang anthems to Christ as God); and Suetonius, a court official during the reign of Hadrian (who mentions Jews being expelled from Rome because of their belief in "Chrestus"); provide us with evidence that Jesus was a real person. These men did not mention him because they were believers; in fact, some of them were quite antagonistic toward him and his followers. The only reason they mentioned him is because he had been a part of the world in which they lived.

There is also evidence for the historicity of Jesus from Jewish sources of His era. The Talmud, a two-part book compiled between A.D. 70 and A.D. 200, make unfriendly references to Jesus and in so doing support his having lived. Josephus, a Jewish general and historian, writes about several Biblical figures including Jesus. He refers in his writings to the crucifixion, the resurrection, and to Jesus' appearance to his followers three days after his death.

The writings of the New Testament are the primary historical source for the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no reason these writings should be regarded as less authentic than the writings of Tacitus, Josephus, or any other ancient writer. The authors of the New Testament were contemporaries of Jesus and wrote, in many cases, as eyewitnesses of the events they record. They have stood the tests of both years and scrutiny. Why does establishing the historicity of Jesus matter? The answer, in part, lies in the fact that he not only lived, but that he lived a life noteworthy enough to have a prominent place in reliable historical records.

Since it is a historical fact that Jesus lived, his claims about Himself must now be dealt with. It has been said that Jesus of Nazareth was either Lord, liar, or lunatic. While that might be a little simplistic, it does address the fact that Jesus made claims about Himself that define him by their factuality or falseness. A cursory reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus presented himself as being from God (John 17:8), having been in existence before Abraham lived and died (John 8:58), and as being God's Son (Luke 2:49). Either Jesus was all of these things or he was at best, delusional or at worst, untruthful.

While several other lines of evidence speak loudly to the divinity of Jesus, the most potent one from a scriptural standpoint is His resurrection. The New Testament refers to the resurrection of Jesus over 100 times. That resurrection (the changing of the body of Jesus from a dead body to a living one) is the only reasonable and substantiated explanation for the empty tomb. Paul, in particular, stresses the centrality of the resurrection to the truthfulness of the gospel and the identity of Jesus. He tells us that the resurrection is one of the foundational truths of the gospel (First Corinthians 15:1-4), that our justification grows out of it (Romans 4:25), and that it powerfully declares Jesus to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4). Peter reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus is key to the cleansing of our conscience and the salvation of our souls at the point of baptism (First Peter 3:21). Although some, realizing how important the resurrection is to establishing Jesus' divinity, seek to explain it away by suggesting his body was stolen or that he wasn't really dead and later came to and simply left the

tomb; the only reasonable explanation for the emptiness of the tomb remains the resurrection. We can be comfortably certain the Jesus lived, died, and lives again; and with that certainty comes solid evidence that He was truthfully the divine Son of God.

## THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

The third great foundational truth in establishing the validity of Christianity is that the Bible is God's inspired word. That there is a God can be ascertained quite reasonably from His creative work. That Jesus was God's Son can be accepted based upon the historical fact of his resurrection from the dead (as well as his miracles, the nature of his birth, etc.). All that remains for Christianity to be a valid and meaningful way of life is to have some concrete revelation from God that helps us better understand both God and man. Christians believe this exists in the Bible. The Bible asserts that it is inspired by God and owes its origin to a divine rather than a human source (Second Timothy 3:15-17; Second Peter 1:20-21). It claims to provide us all the information we need to properly understand life and godliness (Second Peter 1:3) and life and immortality (Second Timothy 1:10). Christianity is thus faced with the stark reality that the Bible is either the revelation of God and, as such, our divine guide for life; or it is a work of man which has not authority whatsoever in our lives.

We need a divine revelation! Nature can tell us many things, but there are things nature cannot reveal adequately to us. Nature can feed us and clothe us, but it cannot tell us where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. Nature can make us aware of God's power and divinity (Romans 1:20), but it cannot tell us what He wants or doesn't want. It just doesn't make sense that God would create us and then leave us with no source of necessary information about Himself and ourselves.

Various arguments exist which support the inspiration of the Bible. The Bible possesses an inerrancy in regards to its contents. Although it is not really a science book, a history book, a geology manual, etc. all that it says about such matters has either already been, or someday will be, proven to be accurate. The survival of the Bible, despite concerted efforts at times from it

opponents, attests to it being different from other written works. The unity of the Bible's basic themes, particularly the salvation of man (a theme that runs from Genesis to Revelation), is hard to explain in human terms given that it was written by around 40 men of markedly different background over a long period of time. The fulfillment of prophecy is another strong argument for inspiration. No human could ever predict so accurately all the events Old Testament prophets foretold hundreds of years ahead of their actual occurrence. When these things are added to the Bible's own claims to divine origin, we have a clear and reasonable body of evidence supporting it as the Word of God.

All that Christianity calls for us to believe remains a matter of faith! It is faith based on ample and reasonable evidence, but it is still a matter of faith. For that reason there will always be those who consider it and reject it; but others, like us, who consider it and accept it for what it claims to be. The field of Christian evidences is important because it allows our faith to be strengthened, to be shared without embarrassment with others, and to be defended from those who would seek to undermine all it purports to be about.

#### ENDNOTES

1. All references, unless otherwise noted, are from the New King James Version of the Bible.
2. Apologetic means "to make a defense for, a discourse in favor of." This definition is taken from class notes presented by Edward P. Myers and contained in a book entitled CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS. This book is a class syllabus copyrighted in 1979 by the White's Ferry Road School of Preaching in West Monroe, La. I would like to let it be known that much of the order and content of this study is based upon the class I took in Christian Evidences to Brother Myers and the material he provided during its duration.
3. This information was taken from the June 23, 2008 edition of the Zanesville Times-Recorder. It was written by Cathy Lynn Grossman of USA Today.

# CHRIST IS SUPREME

## West Virginia Christian Lectures

### Roger A. Rush

I want to begin by expressing my appreciation to brother Kenney and the elders of the Central congregation for hosting this lectureship, and for the invitation to participate in it. It is my hope that the study of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae will bless all who hear the lectures or read the book.

Many years ago Admiral Byrd told this story concerning his first expedition to the South Pole. He said that he left his isolated hut for a brief trip of exploration, and then in a sudden blizzard he became hopelessly lost. In that barren whiteness there was nothing to give him a sense of direction. He knew if he struck out blindly to find his hut, and failed, the chances were he would freeze in the storm. He had a long pole which he always carried to feel for holes in the ice, so he stuck it in the snow and tied a scarf to it. He said, "That was my center. If I failed to find my hut, I could return to the center and try again." Three times he tried and failed, but each time he returned to his center, without which he would have been lost and would have died. In the fourth attempt, he stumbled upon his hut.

Every life, to be safe, must have a center. At the center of the Christian life is Jesus Christ. He is supreme. Nowhere is this concept more clearly conveyed than in Colossians. Our focus is on the Christ of Colossians, the center of the Christian life. Paul wrote:

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him*

*all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister (Colossians 1:13-23 ESV).*

This passage, as well as subsequent ones, clearly declares Christ to be supreme in every aspect of the Christian's life. He is the answer to man's every need. He is the solution to every problem. He is the hope of the entire world. His message is not intended for one man, or a few men, but for the masses. When we really understand His supremacy we will be properly motivated to let Him transform our lives, and we will be driven to take His message to the lost around our globe. Let's look at what the inspired apostle says about the supremacy of Christ.

Scholars seem to be in agreement that the letter to the Colossians was written, at least in part, to address the heretical teaching that Christ was not supreme. There were those who sought to depreciate the person of Jesus Christ, representing Him at best as one of many spirit beings who bridged the gap between God and men (Colossians 2:6-23). This letter, and in particular the verses under consideration at this time, proclaims the absolute and unqualified supremacy of our Redeemer.

**Christ is supreme because He is the SAVIOR**

*“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:13, 14).*

Concerning man, these verses reveal two things about us. First, the text declares our lost condition, and second it reveals that we are helpless on our own to do anything about it. We are lost because of sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23). There is nothing we can do to merit or achieve our deliverance (Ephesians 2:8, 9). That was made possible by Jesus and no one else. No man in heaven, on earth, or under the earth was worthy or capable of doing for man what Jesus did (Revelation 5:3-5).

The passage also tells us that Jesus has “delivered us from the power of darkness.” He is the great redeemer (Savior). He paid the price for our transgressions with His own precious blood (1 Peter 1:18, 19), and as a result we can know redemption and forgiveness. In some more recent translations, including the ESV quoted above, the words “through His blood” have been omitted on textual grounds. It doesn’t serve our purpose to debate the textual issue, given the fact that verse 19 in all the reputable translations acknowledges “the blood of His cross” as the means of peace - atonement, redemption, reconciliation and forgiveness. But, it is worth noting that Christians have been delivered from Satan’s clutches (the domain of darkness) and transferred into Christ’s kingdom. This presents a serious challenge to our denominational friends who argue for a future kingdom and say that the church was substituted until such a time when Christ will return to establish His kingdom and reign from Jerusalem. The kingdom existed when the letter was written, and the Christians at Colossae were in it.

Jesus is supreme as Savior because He did what no one else could do. Without Him there would be no hope and no salvation (Acts 4:12).

### **Christ is supreme because He is the great REVELATOR**

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (1:15).*

On one occasion Philip asked, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us” (John 14:8). Jesus responded, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:8, 9).

If we really want to know God we must know His Son. To know the Son we must know His Word. The best and most complete picture of who God is and what He is like comes through Jesus. It is in Jesus that the Father is most accurately pictured. Notice what the writer of Hebrews had to say regarding this matter.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (Hebrews 1:1-4 ESV).

Jesus is supreme because He is God’s final and finest spokesman. In word and deed, Jesus provided a portrait of the Father. He is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). He represents the invisible God in all that pertains to nature and creation. As the firstborn of all creation, He is “intrinsically superior to and sovereign over those who he claims” (G. D. Findlay, Pulpit Commentary).

John summarized it well when he wrote:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace



and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known (John 1:14-18 ESV).

### **Christ is supreme because He is the CREATOR**

*“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him”* (1:16).

Jesus was the creator of the universe. Whatever we find in heaven and or on earth, be it visible or invisible (on an atomic or subatomic level), He is the maker. Lightfoot says of all things “He is the Source of its life, the Centre of all its developments, the Mainspring of all its motions.”

John began his gospel with an acknowledgement of His eternity and His role as Creator of all things.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4 ESV).

The writer of Hebrews says of Him that “He created the world” (Hebrews 1:2), and “...that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3). Seeing Him as Creator should instill an even greater appreciation for Him as Savior. The Creator remains vitally interested in His creation. He did not simply create and walk away. He was, is, and always will be vitally interested in the welfare of that which He created.

### **Christ is supreme because He is the SUSTAINER**

*“And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together”* (1:17).

Christ's sovereignty of redemption rests upon the sovereignty of His creative power which He has possessed in perpetuity as one who "is before all things." One of the characteristics of deity is eternity. John declared the eternity of Christ in the prologue of his gospel (John 1:1, 2). Jesus confirmed His eternity when He said, "...before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

The eternal one did not create and then abandon His creation. He did not die at Calvary to save men and then abandon them. He is the power in our universe which holds all things together, and He is the force which animates the spiritual life of all true disciples.

Ours is an orderly universe. It functions as it was designed to function. God promised Noah, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). We have God's word on it, and we have God's Son to ensure that His promises are realized. This is one of those great unconditional promises in the Bible. Jesus, who possesses all authority in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18), will ensure the validity of the promise, and man really can do nothing to overthrow Him.

We can be just as confident that He will hold His spiritual kingdom together. There will always be a "faithful remnant." Christ promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5, 6 ESV).

## **Christ is supreme because He is the RULER**

*"And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (1:18).*

The purpose or role of the head is to give direction to (rule or govern) the body. This is Jesus' role relative to His body (the church), and to individual members of the body (Christians). Our success as disciples will be determined in proportion to our submission to our Head.

Paul went on to write later in the epistle:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:1-11 ESV).

Christians are those who have risen with Christ in baptism. They seek the things which are above. Their affections are on heavenly things. They die to self that He might live through them. If this is not true of us, then He does not have preeminence in our lives.

The analogy is simple. The church is a body, and the head of the body is Christ. It is hard to miss the simplicity of this analogy, but the world has. Denominationalism is fabricated upon the mistaken principle that we can have many bodies with only one head. Catholicism contends for one body with two heads, an

earthly head (the pope), and a heavenly head (Jesus). Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:1-6).

As head of His body, the church, He is to be preeminent. The **New American Standard Bible** reads: "...that He Himself might come to have first place in everything" (Colossians 1:18).

Conscientious Christians will acknowledge the supremacy of Christ in His church and in their lives. They will seek to please Him, not others, and not themselves (Galatians 1:10). This requires that we acknowledge that He has ONE CHURCH, and that He is the HEAD. The world argues for many churches and many ways to God, but Jesus emphatically stated: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

### **Christ is supreme because He is the RECONCILER**

*For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*

*And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister (1:19-23).*

Reconciliation is a beautiful word formed by the prefix “re” meaning “again,” and “conciliate,” meaning “to make friends.” Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (1 Corinthians 5:17-21 ESV).

The need for reconciliation is obvious. With advent of sin in the garden (Genesis 3), fellowship with God was severed (Isaiah 59:1, 2). With the advent of Christ at Calvary, fellowship was restored by “the blood of his cross” (1:20).

Who can be reconciled? All those “alienated and enemies...by wicked works” (1:21). No one is outside the reach of the redemptive power of Christ to reconcile man and his Maker. His blood can cleanse the vilest sinner. His sacrifice can atone for every lost soul. All men can be reconciled to God through Him.

The church is to proclaim reconciliation through Jesus. Paul preached the gospel to all he came in contact with (1:23). The church continues that ministry of reconciliation today. The world is lost and apart from God, but Jesus can save and reconcile God and His creation.

Jesus is supreme, and because He is supreme, we can say with Isaiah: “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isaiah 1:18 ESV).

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## Reaffirming Baptism

Rick Tincher

As a child, I heard many sermons on the subject of baptism. As a matter of fact, I am sure I never attended any service where nothing was mentioned about it. When we had a gospel meeting, the speaker would always present at least one lesson about baptism, and the gospel invitation was always given.

I also remember many people being baptized into Christ as a result of that kind of preaching. We were not ashamed of baptism, although at that time we were still being called “water dogs” and “works-oriented”. I guess we were content to stand with the apostle Paul who said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Romans 1:16.

I also remember having many discussions with my denominational friends on the subject. Often, they made the “faith-only” and “grace-only” arguments in an effort to pull baptism from God’s plan to save man. Do you remember the “thief on the cross” argument or the question “What if they die on the way to the baptistery?” These still come up every so often.

It is obvious to me that we must reaffirm baptism! Not only as we evangelize the world but also among our own brethren. I have dealt with some “among us” who will not say “One must be baptized in order to be saved”. I never thought I would see the day! But, sadly it is here. What has happened? How could it be that members of the Lord’s church could have drifted so far from the truth? Paul said in Galatians 1:6,7, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” I am also mindful of what the Hebrews writer penned, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food”, Hebrews 5:12.

The first thing we must consider is the “mode” of baptism. In an article from the *Spiritual Sword* (April 1976, vol. 7) titled

“Exactly Who Must Be Baptized?” Garland Elkins says, “The word ‘baptism’ is a verb, and a verb expresses one specific action – not many actions. That explains the fact that the Bible never speaks of a mode of baptism.” Also, “The Greek word BAPTIZO is defined as a dipping, submerging or immersion. Baptism is a burial and is so well defined by standard Greek-English Lexicons it needs but little comment.”

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 clearly shows immersion as “both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” Acts 8:38. Also, Paul told the Roman brethren that baptism reenacts the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, Romans 6:3-5.

I suppose the question most often asked in relation to baptism has to do with essentiality. The scriptures are clear! One must be guided in the wrong direction to not understand the importance of baptism in the plan of salvation! Consider the following:

1. Baptism is commanded: “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...” Acts 10:48.
2. Consider the names associated with baptism: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, Matthew 28:19.
3. Baptized believers are promised salvation by our Lord: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned”, Mark 16:16.
4. The apostles preached baptism at the very beginning of the church: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent. And let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’, Acts 2:38.
5. Jesus said one must be baptized to enter the kingdom of God: “Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’”, John 3:5.
6. Baptism makes one free from sin: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves to sin, yet you obeyed from the



heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered, and having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”, Romans 6:17, 18.

7. Baptism makes one a member of Christ’s body: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”, 1 Corinthians 12:13.
8. Those baptized into Christ have put Him on: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”, Galatians 3:27.
9. Saul was waiting for the word of the Lord as to what he must do to wash away his sins and was told by Ananias: “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”, Acts 22:16.
10. Peter said baptism saves: “The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us”, 1 Peter 3:21.

I do see a need in the church of Christ to reaffirm baptism for the sake of the souls of mankind. Let us faithfully preach and teach what the Bible says on this great subject! “Sanctify them by Your truth, Your word is truth”, John 17:17.

## Colossians 1:24-2:7 – Paul’s Ministry

Brent Gallagher

The founding of the church in Colossae is not explicitly mentioned in the book of Acts. It was probably begun sometime during Paul’s two year stay in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:10). Epaphras (Col. 1:7) and Archippus (Col. 4:17) had worked with the Colossians. There is disagreement over whether Paul had started the church at Colossae or whether he had actually ever been to Colossae. Colossians 2:1 has been understood by some to mean Paul had never been to Colossae while it has been interpreted by others to mean that there were *some* in Colossae who had never seen Paul’s face. For our purposes it is immaterial whether or not Paul had spent time in Colossae. We still learn much about Paul’s ministry – what motivated him, his work ethic, the substance and goals of his teaching, and his attitude toward those whom he taught from Colossians 1:24-2:7

<sup>24</sup>I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, <sup>25</sup>of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, <sup>26</sup>the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to his saints. <sup>27</sup>To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup>Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.<sup>1</sup>For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as

many as have not seen my face in the flesh,<sup>2</sup> that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,<sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.<sup>5</sup> For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.<sup>6</sup> As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,<sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup>

What can be learned about Paul's ministry from this section of Scripture? First, Paul emphasized that his ministry was "a stewardship from God" (Col. 1:25). The word which is translated "stewardship" is *oikonomian*. We are reminded that stewards in New Testament times were slaves who were given positions of responsibility within a household. Likewise, they "were not to look upon these household affairs as their own; they were merely stewards of the gifts entrusted to them and they must give an account of their stewardship."<sup>ii</sup> Paul, therefore, viewed himself as one given responsibility by God but who also, in turn, had to answer to God as to how he used that responsibility. It is interesting that he is able to state in 1:24 "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you." Paul viewed whatever suffering he was undergoing as a positive thing. The rather difficult phrase "fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" is found in 1:24. Even though this is a difficult passage, perhaps the best explanation is that the suffering which Christians experience is a part of God's plan for perfecting His saints.<sup>iii</sup> Regardless of the exact meaning of this phrase, there is no question Paul suffered much in his ministry (2

Cor. 11:22-33). In fulfilling the stewardship given to him by God, Paul worked very hard. In 1:29 he says, “to this *end* I also labor, striving.” “Labor,” *kopio*, is defined as “work hard, toil, strive, struggle.”<sup>iv</sup> “Striving,” *agonizomenos*, is defined in a similar way as “I labor, struggle.” It would be fair to say Paul did not go into preaching for the easy money and comfortable life he would enjoy. Yet, in whatever difficulties he faced and victories he enjoyed, he realized it was “according to His working which works in me mightily” (Col. 1:29).

Second, Paul refers to “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and generations, but now has been revealed to His saints” (Col. 1:26). He continues to explain in verse 27 that the “mystery” is that God would give the Gentiles “the hope of glory.” In a parallel passage in Ephesians 3:5-6 Paul states concerning this mystery “which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” Paul had a special ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17,18; Rom. 11:13) and part of that ministry was teaching that Gentiles had hope in Christ and could have a covenant relationship with God (Eph. 2:11-13).

Third, Paul uses three words in verse 28 in reference to his preaching/teaching ministry – “preach” (*kataggellomen*) “warning” (*nouthetounes*) and “teach” (*didaskontes*). Even though most of the words used in the New Testament to describe preaching/teaching can be used somewhat synonymously, at times, subtle differences can be found. *Kataggellomen*, “preach,” is sometimes translated as “proclaim” (1 Cor. 11:26). In certain contexts *kataggellomen* is used of Jesus “as the one in whom the prophetic promises have found fulfillment.”<sup>vi</sup> This is the way *kataggellomen* is used by Luke in Acts 17:3 in reference to Paul’s work in Thessalonica where he showed from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 17:1-3). Perhaps this is the meaning Paul intended for this word in verse 28 since, he has, in the previous verses, emphasized that the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ was a part of God’s plan which was a “hidden mystery” in previous ages.

The word “warn” is also used of Paul’s preaching/teaching ministry in verse 28. Among other things, Paul cautioned his readers against submitting to false doctrines. The exact nature of the false teaching which is described in Colossians is difficult to determine. It is also hard to determine whether it is one organized system of false teaching or a series of different false beliefs. There appears to be a mixture of Judaism, Greek philosophy, legalism, asceticism, and angelolatry (Col. 2:11-23). These doctrines were undermining the supremacy of Christ (Col. 1:9,10). Paul not only warns against the *content* of the false teaching but he also warns against the *methods* of the false teachers. In Colossians 2:4 Paul cautions the brethren not to be deceived by “persuasive words.” This is the only occurrence in the New Testament of the word translated “persuasive words” (*pithanologia*). This word is defined as “persuasive speech, art of persuasion...by plausible (but false) arguments.”<sup>vii</sup> Paul emphasized in his ministry that he did not use sophistry and manipulation to influence people but simply preached “Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

The third word Paul uses in verse 28 of his preaching/teaching ministry is “teach.” We are reminded that the goal of Paul’s teaching was to “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (verse 28). Paul also states in verse 28 “Him we preach,” referring to Christ. Not only does Paul want Christians to grow “in Christ Jesus,” but he also reminds them that the growth process involves a focusing upon Jesus. *Thirteen* times in Col. 1:24-2:7 Paul refers to Jesus either by name or personal pronoun. In Col. 2:6 he says, “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” Paul uses different images to describe this growth God wants for His children. The image of a plant, “rooted,” is found in Col. 2:7. “Rooted” is a perfect participle which suggests something which happened in the past but has ongoing results. Also, Paul uses the phrase “built up” in Col. 2:7. This is a metaphor comparing the Christian to a building. It is also a present participle which emphasizes the continual growth of the Christian. Paul’s goal for all disciples was spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 3:1-4). In developing disciples, Paul taught “the *whole* counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

Fourth, we learn of Paul’s love for those to whom he was writing. Many of these readers Paul had never seen yet it is stated “what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea” (Col. 2:1). Paul was concerned about the spread of heresy in the Lycus Valley (location of Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea) and its effect on Christians. Paul’s attitude was not one of mild concern but of “great conflict.” *Agona* is the word translated “conflict”, and one can see the resemblance to the English word “agony.” He goes on to mention in Col. 2:2 his desire that his readers would be encouraged and grow together in love (of each other) and in the knowledge of God and Christ.

What can be learned of Paul’s ministry from Colossians 1:24-2:7? First, he saw himself as a steward – being given responsibility but also being accountable for that responsibility. Second, Paul was fervent in his labors in ministering to others. Third, he realized the need for Christians to grow and develop. Focusing on Christ and His word is necessary for that growth to occur. Fourth, Paul had a deep love for *all* disciples – not just for the ones he personally knew. Modern day ministers can learn much from Paul’s model of ministry.

<sup>i</sup> The Holy Bible, New King James Version, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1982).

<sup>ii</sup> J. Goetzmann, “House,” New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1971) Vol. II, 255.

<sup>iii</sup> Jason Jackson, “Christ: The Mystery of God,” Exalting Christ in the Church: Freed Hardeman University 2002 Lectures, ed. David Lipe (Henderson, TN: Freed Hardeman University) 183-185.

<sup>iv</sup> Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, F. Wilbur Gingrich. A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (University of Chicago Press, 1979) 443.

<sup>v</sup> Bauer, 15.

<sup>vi</sup> U. Becker, D. Muller, “Proclamation, Preach, Kerygma,” NIDNTT, Vol. III, 44.

<sup>vii</sup> Bauer, 657.

## GREAT PREACHERS OF THE PAST

### Benjamin Franklin (1812 – 1878)

When people hear the name “Benjamin Franklin” the patriot from Philadelphia quickly comes to mind; however some are surprised to learn that there also was a great preacher by the same name. The Benjamin Franklin we are speaking of was the great, great, great nephew of the signer of the *Declaration of Independence*, but he was far more than that. For example, upon his death, David Lipscomb wrote “*The cause loses its most able and indefatigable defender since the days of Alexander Campbell, and his loss is simply irreparable. Earnestness, clearness, simplicity, with a strong reverence for and determination to know nothing in religion save what the Bible teaches was the striking characteristic of his discourses.*”<sup>1</sup>

### *His Early Life (1812 – 1840)*

Benjamin Franklin was born February 1, 1812 in Belmont County, OH to Joseph Franklin and Isabella Devold. (A few weeks later Alexander & Margaret Campbell’s first daughter, Jane Caroline, was born.)<sup>2</sup> When Franklin was a few months old, his family relocated to Salt Run in Nobel County, OH where they remained for the next 21 years and had another six sons and a daughter.

In 1832 Benjamin Franklin went to live in Henry County, IN where he worked in his uncle’s mill south of Middletown on Deer Creek. During the winter months, Benjamin Franklin worked on the National Road in Knightstown, IN. Benjamin purchased 80 acres of land to be cleared. Benjamin, just over six feet tall, was extremely strong. He built a cabin and courted his neighbor’s daughter, Mary Personett. In May 1833, Benjamin’s parents would also locate to Deer Creek. On December 15, 1833, Benjamin married Mary Personett and they had eleven children.<sup>3</sup>

Franklin’s parents were Protestant Methodists who read their Bibles diligently and insisted on immersion. When they relocated to Indiana they joined the Episcopal Methodist Church.

In 1834 Samuel Rogers moved from Kentucky and became the Franklins' neighbor. He preached in the schoolhouse until those opposed to "Campbellism" forced him from the schoolhouse, but the Franklins, who were also opposed to "Campbellism", loved and supported Rogers.

Benjamin's father had severe mood swings from joy to depression plus a very volatile temper. His mother was always pleasant and knowledgeable in the Scriptures to the point that Joseph would rely on her if he could not answer religious questions. Rogers' approach with Joseph Franklin was interesting. As they read through the New Testament together, they agreed to mark passages they disagreed on for *later* study. At the end of the studies, with no passages marked, Joseph believed he had actually convinced Samuel Rogers that he was correct...and obeyed the gospel. Rogers baptized Benjamin and his brother Daniel in February 1835 in the freezing water at the junction of Deer and Duck Creeks. The following week Franklin's wife and brother Josiah were also baptized. Because of Samuel Rogers' efforts, four of the Franklins would go on to become preachers. From this point forward, Franklin constantly studied the Scriptures with the encouragement of Samuel Rogers, Elijah Martindale, John Longley and John O'Kane. His desire to preach was so strong he would do hard labor all day and then walk six miles to preach. In 1835 he submitted his first article, on the plan of salvation, to the *Heretic Detector*. In 1840 he sold his business and dedicated his life to preaching.

### ***Early Preaching Efforts (1840 – 1850)***

Benjamin Franklin had little formal education, much less preacher training. He often found criticism as a way to improve his delivery. For example, John Longley was a preacher who often heard Franklin in his early efforts. He pointed out that Franklin repeated the phrase "My dear friends and brethering" approximately 150 times. Franklin would use criticisms to become one of the most effective orators of the era.

In 1841 Franklin conducted his first debate with Eaton Davis of the United Church of the Brethren. During this period Alexander Campbell began a series of articles in the *Millennial*



*Harbinger* on “The Nature of the Christian Organization” which ultimately led to the formation of the American Christian Missionary Society (ACMS).

In 1842 the Franklin family moved to New Lisbon, Henry County, IN where Benjamin did located work for two years. In 1843, he conducted his second debate with George W. McCane, a Universalist. He then moved to Bethel, IN. In the fall of 1844 the Franklins again relocated to Centerville, IN. Franklin continued to preach, either rotating among four congregations on a monthly basis or serving in protracted meetings. Often the family stayed in housing provided by the brotherhood, but the conditions and pay were very poor. Often members brought provisions as the opportunity presented, and Franklin did various jobs to stay afloat. The toll on his wife was probably higher, but the entire family made great sacrifices for the cause of Christ. On November 9, 1844 Barton W. Stone died in Hannibal, Missouri.

In January 1845 Franklin took over *The Reformer* from Daniel K. Winder of New Paris, OH with 300 - 400 subscribers. The year of 1845 was one of extreme suffering for Benjamin Franklin. In July, Franklin returned home with “congestive fever”. The doctor came over 20 miles to care for Franklin and took him to his home for a couple of weeks in order to treat him. On October 13, 1845, Franklin’s father passed away. Franklin’s brother, Joseph set out with his family to visit Benjamin but contracted congestive fever prior to arriving in Centerville, IN. Tragically, Joseph died three weeks later. Joseph was a member of the church for ten years and preached for five years. While Benjamin Franklin’s brother was dying from congestive fever, Franklin’s oldest son, also named Joseph, was suffering from congestive fever but recovered. So Benjamin barely survived, his father and brother died, and he nearly lost his son in 1845. Lesser men would have been broken!

In 1846 Franklin purchased his own printing materials rather than utilizing the county paper publisher. In November the demand for the paper was such that it increased in size to 64 pages. Franklin made publishing a family operation, which allowed him to charge a subscription rate so low at \$1/year that other papers

complained it was driving them out of business. He also changed the paper's name to *The Western Reformer*.

At the turn of 1847, the Franklins moved to Milton, Wayne County, IN. Franklin also conducted a four-day debate with Erasmus Manford, a Universalist. Both agreed to write out their discussions for printing, which was Franklin's first printed debate at 368 pages. During this period, Franklin kept crossing paths with a Methodist Episcopal preacher named Williamson Terrill who was antagonistic to "Campbellism". Finally in November 1847, the two debated in Fairview, Fayette County, IN. Franklin also debated another Universalist named Craven of Somerville, OH. In 1848, Franklin traveled to Ohio to debate Samuel Williams of the Anti-Means Baptist. In 1849 the ACMS was founded and Benjamin Franklin was involved in the launch of the society.

### ***His Life in Cincinnati, OH (1850 – 1864)***

In January 1850, Benjamin Franklin purchased the *The Gospel Proclamation* from Alexander Hall, merged it with his paper and called it *The Proclamation and Reformer* with Alexander Hall and William Pinkerton as co-editors and a combined subscription base of over 7,500. In 1850 he worked with Burnet who purchased George Campbell's interest in *The Christian Age*. He co-edited *Christian Age* with D. S. Burnet weekly while maintaining the monthly of *The Proclamation and Reformer*.

In order to manage the business, Franklin relocated the family close to Cincinnati in Hygeia, OH. At first, Franklin moved into a renovated schoolhouse owned by Burnet who was wealthy. There were tensions created by the gap in social standing. While Franklin hoped their financial condition would improve, matters only became worse. The Franklins relocated from Hygeia to Mt. Healthy where the majority of the children were baptized. Franklin divided his preaching time between the Clinton Street Church in Cincinnati, OH and the church in Covington, KY.

In 1851, the American Christian Publication Society was formed. In 1853 the decision was made by Burnet and Franklin to sell *The Christian Age* to the society. This pushed Franklin into the background so he broke all ties with the paper and society in

1854. Concerned over competition from Franklin, the society made him promise not to re-enter publishing for two years. Franklin was a traveling evangelist so even though he was not publishing during these times, his influence continued to grow. *The Christian Age* went into a direct decline that led to its eventual resale back to Franklin in 1858.

In 1852 the Ohio Christian Missionary Society was founded in Wooster with Burnett as President with Franklin's support. Franklin also served as Corresponding Secretary for the ACMS in 1856 & 1857. On January 4, 1854 Thomas Campbell died at Bethany. In the spring of 1855 the Franklin family was quarantined several weeks for small pox. On June 17, 1855, the Franklins lost another child, Walter Scott Franklin. In July 1855, Tolbert Fanning launched the *Gospel Advocate* with William Lipscomb as co-editor.

On January 1, 1856 four thousand copies of the first *American Christian Review* were printed with 3,000 going out to immediate subscriptions. It was the most influential paper as long as Franklin was at the helm. Later that year, Franklin published his tract "Sincerity Seeking The Way to Heaven" which sold more than any tract or book among the Disciples for several years. Due to these successes and children becoming self sufficient, the Franklins' financial picture improved although they were never wealthy.

In 1858, the *American Christian Review* acquired *The Christian Age* and began publishing weekly. Franklin's writings were noted by the Central Pennsylvania Christian Cooperation when in February 1859 it passed a resolution praising the *American Christian Review* and recommended it to all—which really irritated the liberals. At the launch of the *American Christian Review*, David Lipscomb submitted his first article to the *Gospel Advocate*. The *American Christian Review* was under Benjamin Franklin's ownership and control, but it became so large as to require Franklin to secure the services of George W. Rice, who was an overseer at the Covington congregation and confidant, to assist. Rice became half owner and published other works of Benjamin Franklin in years to come.

In 1860, the periodicals were dealing with the subject of instrumental music in worship. Franklin was always opposed to the use of mechanical instruments in worship, stating it would be all right “...for a congregation to have instrumental music if it had lost the spirit of Christ and desired to be a fashionable society.”<sup>4</sup> He also traveled to Missouri twice to debate W. M. Rush, a leading Methodist. The first debate was in January and then Rush called for a re-match a few months later. Young J. W. McGarvey, well educated in Greek, offered to debate Rush instead, but Rush insisted on Franklin. Franklin so soundly defeated him both times that even McGarvey, nervous about Franklin’s lack of education primarily in NT Greek, was pleased with Franklin’s performance.

The years 1861 to 1865 were very disruptive due to the Civil War, even forcing the *Gospel Advocate* to cease publication until 1866 when it returned with Tolbert Fanning and David Lipscomb as editors. In 1861 the ACMS adopted a resolution to support the Union, which severely damaged its influence and ability to sustain itself. On April 16, 1861 Benjamin Franklin wrote to J. W. McGarvey, “...I would rather, ten thousand times, be killed for refusing to fight than to fall in battle or to come home with the blood of my brethren on my hands...”<sup>5</sup>

Franklin continued to travel widely to preach in various places as far west as Kansas and as far north as Canada. Often he had more appointments than he could fill and sent his son to some locations in his stead. As the Civil War concluded, subscribers who had dropped due to Franklin’s position on the war returned and new subscriptions began coming in.

### ***His Life in Anderson, IN (1864 – 1878)***

In 1861 the church in Anderson, IN had grown to be able to build a meeting place. They secured Benjamin Franklin for a meeting, which doubled their size. This provided the opportunity to secure a full time evangelist, and in June the following year, Franklin’s son, Joseph, accepted the position. It is estimated that Benjamin Franklin was away from home at least 80 percent of the year. So, in 1864 Benjamin Franklin moved his family to a 90-acre farm outside of Anderson, which provided his wife an opportunity to be closer to family. The business operation of

*American Christian Review* remained in Cincinnati in the capable hands of George W. Rice.

On March 4, 1866, Alexander Campbell died. Later that year, Franklin began to attack the Missionary Society regularly using the same arguments of his opponent, David Oliphant, used in objection to the societies on him. On April 7, 1866 the *Christian Standard* was founded in Cleveland, OH with Isaac Errett as its editor, but would eventually relocate to Cincinnati, OH. The *Christian Standard* was an opponent to the *American Christian Review* on the subjects of the instrument and societies, and the writings were so heated and forceful it caused concern to readers of both.

In 1867, D. S. Burnett died in Baltimore, MD, but the Missionary Society continued to grow. In fact, during 1868 to 1883 missionary societies were established in Michigan, Nebraska, Iowa, West Virginia, Virginia, California, Maryland, Georgia, Oregon, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, North Carolina, Texas, Colorado and Kansas.<sup>6</sup> On October 19-21, 1869 the ACMS adopted the Louisville Plan. Benjamin Franklin at first agreed to support this arrangement for cooperative missionary work, but then realized it was just another form of missionary society. In spite of criticism, Franklin reversed his support and attacked the Louisville Plan. He returned to the views Campbell had written in the *Christian Baptist* and never supported societies again.

On February 28, 1868 Raccoon John Smith died in Mexico, MO. L. L. Pinkerton would begin to advocate “open membership” to those who were considered “pious immersed”. This would be the source of another controversy. In 1869 Franklin’s first book of twenty sermons, *Gospel Preacher*, was released in an effort to improve the financial stability of *American Christian Review*.

In 1875, Franklin and David Lipscomb met in person for the first time while Franklin was conducting a meeting in Franklin, TN. The Louisville Plan was abandoned but would be replaced by the Foreign Missionary Society. L. L. Pinkerton died in 1875, and Robert Richardson died on October 22, 1876.

At sixty-four, Benjamin Franklin was becoming physically weaker. He suffered from a constant cough and even lost much of his speaking ability. He was nearly persuaded to retire, but pushed

on. In October 1876 while conducting a protracted meeting in Richmond, KY, Franklin contracted pneumonia that convinced him that his protracted meeting work had come to an end. It is suspected that Franklin suffered from heart disease. He also exhibited symptoms of dyspepsia; which seriously impacted his health and may have triggered the final heart attack.

In 1877, Franklin's second book of sermons, *Gospel Preacher*, was released and was likewise a very successful publication. Those who were aware of Franklin's condition pleaded with him not to pursue this book, but Franklin's desire to preach "after he was dead" compelled him to complete the work. Because these two books of sermons are in continued demand, they are still in print as of this writing.

Benjamin Franklin preached his last sermon in Anderson two days before he died of a heart attack on October 22, 1878 at the home of his son-in law James Plummer. He had edited the *American Christian Review* until his death. His funeral was conducted by W. W. Witmer and M. T. Hough. He was buried in West Maplewood Cemetery in Anderson with a marble pulpit and open bible as his headstone. The years of time have eroded the headstone to where what remains legible is:

Benjamin Franklin  
Died  
Oct 22 1878  
Aged  
66 Y 8 M 21 D

History records that the Bible on top of his grave contains a passage which reflects the nature of the man—"He was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." 1 Corinthians 2:2. On March 8, 1880, his wife was laid to rest beside him.

Joseph Franklin wrote a biography about his father, *The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, which was released in 1879. Joseph Franklin also published a collection of his father's thoughts, *Book of Gems*, later that year.

## ***Benjamin Franklin as a Preacher***

Benjamin Franklin was primarily a traveling preacher going wherever he was called. Earl West provides a good portrait of Benjamin Franklin:

His knowledge of the Scriptures and his ability to quote copiously from all sections of the Bible were most impressive. The clarity and power of his delivery lured large audiences, increasing his self-confidence. He read the same Bible that the frontiersman studied, and he delivered its message so as to be easily understood. He was one of them; he was their preacher, and here he would always feel at home. Although in later years he would often lament his lack of college education, with a large family to care for, he could scarcely entertain the thought of entering Bethany College and studying under the best minds of the brotherhood. He investigated the popular religious errors in his community—Methodism, Calvinism and Universalism, the current fad that seemed to sweep many communities. His spiritual growth included development in humility, yet he never doubted that he was right on every viewpoint he entertained.<sup>7</sup>

Franklin spoke at Abingdon College on the topic of “Chief Elements of True and Proper Success in the Preacher of Jesus” and outlined seven major characteristics one must have: 1) fully committed and determined to preach, 2) integrity, 3) faith, 4) industrious, 5) spirit and earnestness, 6) prayer, and 7) humility.<sup>8</sup>

What Benjamin Franklin lacked in scholarship, he made up with the character of his life. Franklin would preach at any time, at any place and for any (or no) amount of money. Space will not permit, but preachers are encouraged to read the bar that Franklin set for himself in the February 1856 issue of the *American Christian Review* and reprinted in *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* beginning on page 274.

### ***Benjamin Franklin As Writer, Publisher & Editor***

Although Franklin had little formal education, his writings were very powerful in their simplicity and logic. Franklin’s writings

seem to be of the type to be understood rather than vaunting. His editing and publishing is outlined as:

1845 – 1847 Franklin begins editing *The Reformer*.

1847 – 1850 Franklin relocates to Milton, IN and in 1847 changes the name of *The Reformer* to the *Western Reformer*.

1850 – 1853 Franklin merges *Western Reformer* with Alexander Hall's paper, *Gospel Proclamation*, to form *The Proclamation and Reformer*.

1850 – 1852 Editor of the *Christian Age*; which was a merger with Walter Scott's *Protestant Unionist* arranged by David S. Burnet.

1856 – 1878 Editor of *American Christian Review*. Began as a monthly but due to its success, it became a weekly by 1858. As some nicknamed the *Gospel Advocate* "Old Reliable", the *American Christian Review* as often referred to as "Old Faithful". The paper would eventually pass to Daniel Sommer who would change its name to *Octographic Review* (1887 – 1913), then *Apostolic Review* (1914 – 1939), and then after Sommer's death in 1949 it went back to *American Christian Review* until it ceased publication in 1965.

Benjamin Franklin exhibited a clear understanding of the restoration plea, identity of the New Testament church, and the correct approach toward denominationalism when he launched the *American Christian Review*:

We know we are in the right. We cannot be wrong here. If it is wiser to obey God than man, if an infallible law is better than a fallible, if a perfect law is better than an imperfect one, if a divine law is better than a human, if the authority of God is better than the authority of man, if the Word of the living God is better than human creed, if the infallible teachings of inspiration are better than uninspired human creeds, if the teachings of the Holy Spirit of God are a safer guide to heaven than the teachings of the erring man, if God should govern in preferences to man, we are right and our opposers wrong, on this transcendent point,



and it is our duty to God and our fellow-creatures, that we maintain with manly zeal and fortitude that which is so manifestly and self-evidently the will of God.<sup>9</sup>

### *Benjamin Franklin As A Debater*

It is estimated that Franklin conducted at least 30 debates. A complete list has not been found, but the following has been gleaned from Encyclopedia of Religious Debates<sup>10</sup> and various other references:

- Eaton Davis (United Brethren); 1840
- George W. McCune (Universalist); 1843
- Philip May (Methodist Episcopal Church); 1845
- Craven (Universalist); Somerville, OH; future coming of Christ to judge the world, endless punishment. Craven's 2nd debate was on whether the second coming of Christ to judge the world was in the future; February 1847
- Erasmus Manford (Universalist); Milton, IN; future judgment, endless punishment; October 26-28, 1847
- Samuel Williams (Anti-Means Baptist Church); conditions for salvation; May 19-20, 1848
- James Matthews, (Presbyterian Church), Carlisle, KY; predestination and foreordination; May 1852
- Joel Hume (Baptist Church); Mt. Vernon, IN; depravity, baptism, apostasy; 1854
- John B. Luccock (Methodist Episcopal Church); Long Point, IL; 1855
- T. J. Fisher (Baptist Church); Ghent, KY; design of baptism, depravity, apostasy; June 5-8, 1857
- S. M. Merrill (Methodist Episcopal Church); faith, mode of baptism, infant baptism, design of baptism; April 5-11, 1858
- William Shadrach (Baptist Church); Pine Flats, PA; design of baptism, converting power in the written word or direct operation of Holy Spirit, sinner's prayer, open communion,

frequency of Lord Supper observance, possibility of falling away; August 25, 1859  
John B. Luccock (Methodist Episcopal Church); Lexington, IL; November 1859  
D. P. Bunn (Universalist); Decatur, IL; 1860  
Abel Thompkins, 1860  
William M. Rush (Methodist Church); Trenton, MO; infant baptism, mode of baptism, faith only, baptism for remission of sins, operation of Holy Spirit and the word in conversion; January 23-28, 1860  
William M. Rush (Methodist Church); Chillicothe, MO; infant baptism, mode of baptism, faith only, design of baptism, in conversion and sanctification the Spirit of God operates on persons only through the word; May 1860  
J. B. Solomon (Baptist Church); Fairmount, WV; design of baptism; July 23-25, 1872  
John A. Thompson (Primitive Baptist Church); Reynoldsburg, OH; free will, baptism, salvation; November 1873

### ***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy over Introducing Creeds***

While the restoration plea was widely popular there consistently needed to be teaching against the propensity to create a “concise statement of our beliefs” which would be a creed. Benjamin Franklin likewise taught of the dangers of creeds:

All admit the Bible is right. All admit that the law of God in the Bible is right. All admit that those who follow the Bible honestly and faithfully, in faith and practice, will be saved. All admit that wherever any creed differs from the Bible is wrong. Then it is infallibly safe to take the Bible and follow it. When men undertake to prove that a human creed is a good one, they argue that it is like the Bible. If a creed like the Bible is a good one, why will not the Bible itself do? If the Bible will not serve the purpose — is insufficient and a failure — a creed like it would be equally insufficient. When men make a creed to do what the Bible would not do, they should certainly make

it different from the Bible, or would serve no better purpose than the Bible itself.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy over Open or Closed Communion***

Benjamin Franklin was also in the controversy of who was eligible to partake of the Lord's Supper. Some felt any who desired to partake of it whether immersed or not should be permitted to observe the Supper. Others felt that the Lord's Supper should be regulated to the point that only local members should be permitted to observe. Franklin's view places the responsibility where it ought to be—on the partaker, not the server. Franklin wrote:

There are individuals among the sects who are not sectarians or who are more than sectarians—they are Christians or persons who have believed the Gospel, submitted to it, and in spite of the leaders been constituted Christians according to the Scriptures. That these individuals have a right to commune there can be no doubt. But this is not communion with the sects.

What is the use of parleying over the question of communion with unimmersed persons? Did the first Christians commune with unimmersed persons? It is admitted that they did not. Shall we then deliberately do what we admit they did not do?

When an unimmersed person communes without any inviting or excluding that is his own act, not ours, and we are not responsible for it. We do not see that any harm is done to him or us, and we need make no exclusive remarks to keep him away, and we certainly have no authority for inviting him to come.

If it is to be maintained that “except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God”; that “as many of us have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ, “ as we have it in the Scriptures, and that none were

in the Church or recognized as Christians in apostolic times who were not immersed, it is useless for us to be talking about *unimmersed Christians*, and thus weakening the hands of those who are labouring to induce all to enter the kingdom of God according to the Scriptures.

We have nothing to do with any *open* communion or *closed* communion. The communion is for the Lord's people, and nobody else. But if some imagine themselves to have become Christians according to the Scriptures, when they have not, and commune, as we have said before, that is their act and not ours. We commune with the Lord and his people, and certainly not in spirit with any ones who are not his people, whether immersed or unimmersed. We take no responsibility in the matter, for we never invite or exclude.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy over Instrumental Music***

Benjamin Franklin was clearly opposed to instrumental music in worship and wrote to that effect as early as January 1860. It is interesting to note that in 1868, Franklin estimated that there were 10,000 congregations of which only 50 used the instrument. As time would go on though, this minority would swell until much of the restoration churches would drift into digression over the instrument. Benjamin Franklin's view on the introducing instruments into worship as a point of division is clear and cogent:

We put on no ground of opinion or expedience. The acts of worship are all prescribed in the law of God. If it is an act of worship, or an element in worship, nothing may be added to it. If it is not an act of worship, or an element in worship, it is most wicked and sinful to impose it on the worshippers. It is useless to tell us, 'It is not to be made a test.' If you impose it on the conscience of brethren and, by a majority vote, force it into the worship, are they bound to stifle their consciences?

Have you a right to compel them to submit and worship with the instrument?...If you press the instrument into the worship, we care not whether you call it an element in the worship or an aid, and drive them away, because they cannot conscientiously worship with the instrument, YOU cause division—YOU are the AGGRESSOR—the INNOVATOR—you do this, too, for the accompaniment of corruption and apostasy, admitting at the same time that you have no conscience in the matter.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy over Missionary Society***

On October 23, 1849 the first meeting of the ACMS was held in Cincinnati. Alexander Campbell was absent due to health reasons, but was elected the society's first president. This appointment met Campbell's approval as he wrote in the was a strong admirer of "Millennial Harbinger" later in December. Benjamin Franklin, who Campbell's writings, was clearly in favor of the society at its inception.

Benjamin Franklin, as did others, slowly changed their position on societies. Probably the ACMS resolution to favor the Union in the Civil War did much to change people's feelings about societies. Plus there were disagreements on membership dues to contend with. Another factor that hindered the society was its lack of ability to fulfill its stated objective—sending out missionaries. Franklin's change of view on the society became apparent as early as 1866. He had maintained that societies were a part of the church, but if the society became distinct from the church the society had transgressed (which was Alexander Campbell's original teaching in the ("Christian Baptist"). The ACMS nearly collapsed in the year of Campbell's death in 1866, but it would limp on through the efforts of W. K. Pendelton who succeeded Campbell as President of Bethany and Editor of the "Millennial Harbinger".

An example of Franklin's criticism of the missionary societies:

It is not missionary work to which we are opposed, but empty plans, schemes and organizations, after sectarian models, which have proved failures; expensive, cumbrous and lamentable failures in doing missionary work.<sup>14</sup>

***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy over “Disciple” or “Christian”***

The debate between Stone and Campbell on the name “Christian” or “Disciple” happened around 1839 – 1840 when Franklin had just dedicated his life to preaching. He had little to do with the controversy then, but would have to address the subject later. The balance of Franklin is seen in his handling of the controversy over the name followers of Christ should wear:

Those who are aiming to be simply people of God, have nothing to do with naming themselves, or choosing what name they shall wear. They should speak of themselves as the Lord speaks to them. There is no necessity of lugging in such terms as ‘Christian Church’ or ‘Disciple Church’. This is as ridiculous as ‘Disciple Preacher.’ If we have simply the mind of the Lord, we can express ourselves in the words of the Lord. When we get some other ideas into our heads, not in the mind of the Lord, we cannot express our ideas in the language of Scriptures...<sup>15</sup>

***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy of Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit***

Robertson Richardson, who wrote Alexander Campbell’s biography, had written a series on philosophy and religion that created controversy. He wrote of an “inner light” or “spiritual illumination” for the Christian. Richardson wrote things like “There is a higher law of our nature, a spiritual perception which is to be quickened by the Holy Spirit, and without such quickening none can be spiritually minded or enjoy the things of the Spirit.”<sup>16</sup>

Benjamin Franklin responded in opposition:

We do not dislike this new phrase that has appeared among us because it aims at a deeper piety

in our devotion or a greater spirituality, for we do not believe there is anything of this sort in it; but we dislike it because it turns men's attention away from the Bible and from the obedience which the Lord requires. In the place of turning the attention of man to the teachings of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, it turns his attention to the so-called "divinity within" the "voice of conscience" or the "inner light" for divine instruction or divine direction. In the place of directing men's attention to what God requires him to do, it leads him to theorize on the work of the Spirit. These theorizers appear not to perceive that the Spirit is not induced to act upon man by theorizing about his work, or the manner of it.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Benjamin Franklin & Controversy Over Slavery & War***

One should not assume that a pacifist during the Civil War supported slavery. Several were opposed to slavery in the North and South; however, many opposed the Civil War even more.

There were three basic positions on slavery. First, the Abolitionist viewed slavery as a great evil and God would want the church to even use force to eradicate slavery. Second, Pro-Slavery held that slavery was an approved institution by God and the South should be defended.<sup>18</sup> Being Pro-Slavery did not necessarily mean they were in favor of the abusive treatment by masters (a practice clearly condemned in the Scriptures.) The third view, Emancipationalism (or Gradualism), believed slavery should be phased out by the government preparing the slaves for emancipation.

Benjamin Franklin was an Emancipationalist. He never owned a slave, but he also recognized the Bible did not condemn slavery. He, like many of the preachers of the time, considered the issue to be settled by the government and that slavery would fade away under the gospel without war. Here is an example of Franklin's sentiments about the Civil War:

We cannot always tell what we will or will not do, but we can sometimes tell what we will not

do. There is one thing, however things may turn or whatever may come, that we will not do and that is, we will not take up arms against, fight and kill the brethren we have labored 25 years to bring into the kingdom of God. Property may be destroyed, and safety may be endangered, or life lost, but we are under Christ and we will not kill or encourage anybody else to kill or fight the brethren.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the Civil War, there were those on both sides who viewed Franklin with suspicion. To Southerners he was a Northerner who should not be trusted. To Northerners, his pacifism made him a traitor or coward. Neutrality was difficult to maintain, but Franklin preached in both the North and South during the Civil War. In fact, while preaching in Virginia he was close enough to hear the Union fire canons on Richmond, VA. The “American Christian Review” was the only paper in the North to receive favorable press from David Lipscomb and the “Gospel Advocate.”

#### END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> David Lipscomb, “Benjamin Franklin,” *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 20, No. 48, December 5, 1878, p. 758.

<sup>2</sup> The birth of Jane Caroline Campbell prompted Alexander Campbell to an in depth study of the validity/necessity of infant baptism.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Franklin and J. A. Headington, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, St. Louis, MO: John Burns, 1879, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in John T. Smithson, III, Tracing Our Steps: A Chronology of the Restoration Movement in America, Henderson, TN: Hester Publications, Vol. 1, 1998, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> Louis Rushmore, Our Restoration Heritage, Cameron, WV: Louis Rushmore, 1996, p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Earl West, Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm, Germantown, TN: Religious Book Service, 1984, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “Our Positions as a Religious Community,” *American Christian Review*, January 1856, pp. 8-10, as quoted in



Earl West, Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm, Germantown, TN: Religious Book Service, 1984, p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ptc.dcs.edu/teacherpages/tthrasher/listings/f.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “The Course to Pursue to be Infallibly Safe”, as quoted in Z. T. Sweeney, New Testament Christianity, Columbus, IN: New Testament Christianity Book Fund, Vol. 3, 1930, pp. 228-229.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *American Christian Review*, as quoted by James DeForest Murch, Christians Only: A History of the Restoration Movement, Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing Company, 1962, pp. 160-161.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *American Christian Review*, June 1870, as quoted by Earl West, In Search of the Ancient Order: A History of the Restoration Movement 1849 - 1906, Indianapolis, IN: Religious Book Service, 1950, pp. 88-89.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “Our Position Defined,” *American Christian Review*, March 12, 1867, p. 84, as quoted by Bill J. Humble, The Missionary Society Controversy in the Restoration Movement (1823 – 1875), Henderson, TN: Hester Publications, pp. 231-232.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “What Name Shall We Wear?” *American Christian Review*, June 27, 1871, Vol. 14, p. 294, as quoted in Earl West, Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm, Germantown, TN: Religious Book Service, 1984, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Emmanuel Daugherty, writing about Benjamin Franklin in the 1986 Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship, suggests that everyone ought to read carefully the chapter dealing with this matter of Illumination of the Holy Spirit in Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin.

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Earl West, Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm, Germantown, TN: Religious Book Service, 1984, p. 164.

<sup>18</sup> For an example, see Barry C. Poyner’s Bound to Slavery: James Shannon and the Restoration Movement, Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible Publications, 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “What Course Shall We Pursue?”, *American Christian Review*, April 18, 1861, as quoted in Earl West, Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm, Germantown, TN: Religious Book Service, 1984, p. 170.

## **The Menace of Heresy (Colossians 2:8-23)**

### **By Emmitt Channell**

What is the “Menace of Heresy”? What was “The Colossian Heresy”? What does this have to do with me? Our study will involve: (1) A definition of the topic; (2) A survey of the Menace of Heresy in the Early Church; (3) An Outline of the Colossian Heresy; (4) The Menace of Heresy In Modern Times – A Study of a Particular Movement; (5) Practical applications

### **Menace**

1. Something that threatens to cause evil, harm, injury, etc; a threat: Air pollution is a menace to health
2. A person whose actions, attitudes, or ideas are considered dangerous or harmful: When he gets behind the wheel of a car, he’s a real menace.
3. An extremely annoying person.
4. To utter or direct a threat against; threaten.
5. To serve as a probable threat to; imperil <sup>1</sup>

We speak of someone who is a menace to society. He might be a menace in the sense of disregarding the rules of conduct among civilized people, such as not cutting his grass. That’s the kind of person we wouldn’t want to have on our block. But he might also be a menace in the sense of being dangerous, such as a mass murderer or a child predator.

When we speak of someone being a menace in the church we are talking about a serious matter. He might be the kind of person you don’t like to have in a Bible class; one who dominates the discussion or who is always getting off the subject. A menace like that can be a potential threat or danger if not controlled. He may drive people away by his obnoxious conduct. But if he is teaching false doctrine he is directly endangering, not only his own eternal destiny, but also that of others. This is where the second word in our title comes in.

## **Heresy**

Thayer's definition: 1) act of taking, capture: e.g. storming a city 2) choosing, choice 3) that which is chosen 4) a body of men following their own tenets (sect or party) 4a) of the Sadducees 4b) of the Pharisees 4c) of the Christians 5) dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims <sup>2</sup>

Strong's Definition: properly a choice, that is, (specifically) a party or (abstractly) disunion, sect. <sup>3</sup>

In the Bible, heresy means (1) a chosen course of thought or action; (2) dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims; or (3) doctrinal departures from revealed truth, or erroneous doctrinal views. Heresy is choosing to follow something other than revealed truth. Religious division is the result and souls are in danger.

Heresy or false teaching causes one's worship to be in vain. Jesus said: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9) So, when we talk about "The Menace of Heresy" we are talking about the threat or danger of choosing a path of doctrinal departure from revealed truth which puts souls in danger of being lost.

### **The Menace of Heresy in the Early Church**

Paul's comments to the Colossian church should be viewed in the context of what other inspired men foretold and what history records.

Peter warned of false teachers, "who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 2:1 ASV)

Paul wrote of those who "shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim 4:2). He further defined this departure saying "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." (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

John wrote these sobering words: “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.”  
(2 John 1:9-11)

A Gospel other than that delivered through the inspired men who wrote the New Testament is “not another” Gospel but a perversion of the Gospel. (Gal 1:6-9)

When Paul told Titus to reject a “heretick” (KJV) after “the first and second admonition”, he included a “divisive man” (NKJV) or “a factious man” (Titus 3:10, ASV). In Gal 5:20, where Paul lists the works of the flesh, the Greek word “hairesis” is usually translated “parties” (ASV) or “factions” (NIV). The KJV translates it “heresies”.

Whether in conduct or in teaching, heresy causes division. Heresy in the early church led to a complete falling away from the faith. (2 Thess 2:3-4)

Historically, one of the first departures from the faith was regarding the nature of Christ. The Bible asserts that Christ had full deity and perfect humanity in one Person.

According to the Bible, Jesus Christ possessed undiminished deity (Jn 1:1,14,18; Isa. 9:6; Jer. 23:6; Mic. 5:2; Mal. 3:1; Phil. 2:6, note; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:2, 3; Rev. 19:16).

At His incarnation (Jn 1:14), He did not become man; He became God-Man. He therefore possessed genuine humanity (Jn 8:40; Acts 2:22; Rom. 5:15; 1 Cor. 15:21).

He lived without sin (Jn 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22), although He experienced human wants and sufferings (Jn 4:6; 11:35; 12:27; Luke 22:44; Heb. 2:10, 18).

The Bible ascribes to Christ the offices of Prophet (Jn 6:14; 7:40; Luke 13:33), Priest (Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 5:5; 6:20), and King (Ps. 2:6; Mic. 5:2; Acts 2:30-36).

The Gospels present the God-Man living in a sinful world, dying for it, and rising again in resurrected life. Throughout history there have been many who had unbiblical views of the nature of Christ; similar views persist and proliferate even today.

**Docetism** denied the reality of Christ's humanity. **Ebionitism**, on the other hand, denied Christ's full deity.

Another heresy known as **Sabellianism** maintained that Jesus is God the Father, who Himself became the Son by incarnation, thus denying the distinction of Persons within the Godhead.

**Arianism** declared that the Son is neither eternal nor immutable, and therefore is subordinate in essence to the Father. This heresy was condemned by the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325).

**Apollinarianism** asserted Christ's full deity at the expense of denying His full humanity. In A.D. 381, the Council of Constantinople condemned and rejected that view by asserting that Christ is both God and Man. Instead of accepting that the two natures reside in one Person, the **Nestorian Heresy** suggested two separate natures and two separate persons. The Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) condemned Nestorianism and held that the two natures are indivisibly united.

**Eutychnianism** maintained that the union of the divine and the human resulted in one theanthropic (part God, part man) nature of Christ.

The Scriptures are our only means of knowing the truth about the nature of Christ or any other subject (Jn 8:32). We must rely on them and reject any theory or philosophy which is propagated by man.

## **The Colossian Heresy**

The Colossian Heresy was not as fully developed as those listed above. It seems to be more of a tendency or an involvement in certain practices by some members of the congregation. With the other writings in the New Testament and history in mind, we are not surprised to find that there was a doctrinal threat at Colossae. It is possible that this was the beginning of later full-blown heresy such as Gnosticism.

In Colossians 1:15-23, Paul wrote about the supremacy of Christ's person. He states that our relationship to Christ rests upon this condition: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye

have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;” (Colossians 1:23). The benefits of Christ are for those who continue to be faithful to the teachings of the Gospel. So, Paul had already hinted at what was going on at Colosse; they were moving away from the hope of the Gospel.

In Colossians 2:8-23, Paul makes his most direct attack against the "Colossian Heresy." Most of what we know about this heresy comes from what Paul wrote in these verses. In this passage, Paul makes several affirmations concerning Christ and His sufficiency and then gives warnings based on these truths.

This "Colossian Heresy" involved...

1. **False Philosophy**, which denied the all-sufficiency and pre-eminence of Jesus Christ (Col 2:8).
2. **Judaistic Ceremonialism**, which attached special significance to the rite of circumcision, food regulations, and observance of special days (Col 2:16-17).
3. **Angel Worship**, which detracted from the uniqueness of Christ (Col 2:18).
4. **Asceticism**, which called for harsh treatment of the body to control its lusts (Col 2:20-23).

The "Colossian Heresy" was a syncretism, that is, a mixture of Jewish and pagan elements. The threat was that these ideas would lead one away from the true nature of Christ and our relationship with Him. Could there be anything more dangerous?!

Rather than focus on the details of the particular heresy at Colossae, I have chosen to present an outline of the problem and then note some practical applications of what we learn from the text.<sup>4</sup>

## AN OUTLINE OF THE COLOSSIAN HERESY

**I. THE WARNING AGAINST FALSE PHILOSOPHY** which denied the all-sufficiency and pre-eminence of Jesus Christ (2:8-15): *Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit* (v. 8a, ASV).

A. Three characteristics of this philosophy which are reasons for rejecting it

1. It is after [according to] the tradition of men (v. 8b).
2. It is after [according to] the rudiments of the world (v. 8c).
3. It is not after [according to] Christ (v. 8d).

B. The justification of the warning (vv. 9-15). Paul's warning rests on the fact of Christ's unshared supremacy (v. 9) and His complete adequacy to meet human need (vv. 10-15). Because of who He is and what we find in Him, any system "not after Christ" must be wrong. The passage takes up the central phrase of 1:19 ("fullness") and draws out its consequences in relation to the Colossian Heresy.

1. The full deity of Christ: *For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead* (v. 9, ASV).
2. The real humanity of Christ: *the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily* (v. 9).
  - a. The fullness of Deity resided in the preincarnate Word (John 1:1), but not in bodily fashion.
    - b. At Bethlehem the Word was made flesh – He was God in the flesh (Jn 1:14)
3. The complete adequacy of Christ: *And in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power* (v. 10, ASV).
  - a. In Christ we have true circumcision (vv. 11, 12).
  - b. In Christ we have forgiveness (vv. 13, 14).
    - (1) Past condition: "And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh",
    - (2) Present condition: "you, I say, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses having forgiven us all
    - (3) The attendant circumstances of forgiveness in Christ: "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken

it out of the way, nailing it to the cross” (v. 14, ASV).

- c. In Christ we have victory, for He has conquered all the powers of evil: “having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (v. 15, ASV).

**II. THE WARNING AGAINST LEGALISM or Judaistic Ceremonialism**, which attached special significance to the rite of circumcision, food regulations, and observance of special days (2:16-17)

**III. THE WARNING AGAINST WORSHIP OF ANGELS** detracting from the uniqueness of Christ (2:18, 19).

**IV. THE WARNING AGAINST ASCETICISM (2:20-23)** detailing why Christians to reject it as a way of life.

- A. The Christian's death to the world (vv. 20-22a).
- B. Ascetic restrictions are of human origin (v. 22b).
- C. Ascetic restrictions are ineffective (v. 23).

### **The Menace of Heresy in Our World Today**

For almost every truth taught in the New Testament there is a corresponding error. We live in a pluralistic, postmodern world. Today, our world would have us view everything as relative, including our theology. Just as in Colosse, there are many strands of heresy that compete for the minds and souls of believers. The message being proclaimed in the secular world, and sadly in many mainstream churches and denominations, is tolerance. All ideas have equal weight and truth, they say. However, much of the content of these beliefs are contrary to the gospel. From the Davinci Code, to the Gospel of Judas, to modern day false teachers, many in our world are enemies of the cross.

There are so many ideas and worldviews today in direct conflict with the truths of Christianity that we could hardly cover them all in an entire lectureship such as this. Let us focus on heresy concerning the nature of Christ and one teaching in particular.



We are aware that such groups as the Jehovah Witnesses and the Mormons have an erroneous view of the nature of Christ, teaching that He is a created being. That is a terrible error but it mainly affects those within these groups and those they evangelize. Their teachings do not permeate society.

However, the New Age Movement is another story. Since January 1, 2008, “Oprah & Friends” has been offering a year long course on the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*. A lesson a day throughout the year will completely cover the 365 lessons from the *Course in Miracles* “Workbook.” By the end of the year, “Oprah & Friends” listeners will have completed all of the lessons laid out in the *Course in Miracles Workbook*. We are told that millions are enrolled in the course.

*A Course in Miracles* is a three volume, 1,188 page, 500,000 word book which Helen Schucman, an associate professor of medical psychology at Columbia University in New York claimed was channeled to her by Jesus Christ. Others have written books promoting and enlarging on the original book. This heresy is not a new church but rather an attempt to redefine Christ and the Bible across all religious borders. Oprah is a very influential person with a huge following. When people complete this course they will have a completely new mindset regarding spiritual things.

To reach people who have come under the influence of this heresy, we must understand what they have been taught and have a strategy which will allow us to teach them the truth. Warren Smith, a former New Ager, has written a book entitled *The Light That Was Dark*. It details his experiences with New Age teachings. He is also the author of a book entitled *Reinventing Jesus Christ: the New Gospel*. I would not endorse everything in the book but it is worth downloading on Smith’s Website:

<http://www.reinventingjesuschrist.com/>

Smith quotes extensively from the book by Helen Schucman and the workbook which is based on the book. It is this workbook which Oprah is promoting. This workbook is very deceptive, dangerous and unscriptural. It uses Biblical terms which are redefined deceiving people into thinking that they will be more spiritual by reading and practicing the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*.

Workbook for students, a teacher's manual and supplements. The following are some of the things found in *A Course in Miracles*.

*A Course in Miracles* and *a the Creation*: Throughout the Course the world is explained as simply an illusion created by the ego of man. The Bible teaches otherwise (Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16).

*A Course in Miracles* and *Revelation* and "All Paths Lead to God": *A Course in Miracles* teaches that revelations are completely subjective and one person's revelations do not have to be consistent with another person's revelations or the revelations in the Bible.

In a survey released on June 23, 2008, 35,000 Americans were asked if they believe many religions lead to eternal life. Seventy percent of those with a religious affiliation answered "yes". The Pluralism of our society is ripe for the New Age teaching! The Bible does not agree with this opinion.(Jn 8:32; Lk 13:24; Jn 10:8-9).

***A Course in Miracles and the Bible: A Course in Miracles makes the claim that the Bible has errors and takes the liberty of presenting needed corrections in the scriptures where it suits them.***

"The statement 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life' needs only one slight correction to be meaningful in this context; 'He gave IT TO His only begotten Son.'"<sup>5</sup>

In order to support their beliefs that Christ was not offered as a living sacrifice to cover our sins (sins they don't believe exist), they change this verse to mean that God gave Jesus the world instead of God offering His Son to the world as a sacrifice. Since the Course defines the "Son" as each of us, the consequence of this revision is that instead of the world being given Jesus Christ, the world is given to us. They twist this verse further by believing that the "Him" in the verse means ourselves since we are the sons of God. Instead of, as the Bible teaches, believing that belief in Christ saves us, the Course teaches that belief in oneself saves us.

The book also states:

“The Apostles often misunderstood the crucifixion and out of their own fear they spoke of the ‘wrath of God’ as His retaliatory weapon. These are some of the examples of upside-down thinking in the New Testament. If the Apostles had not felt guilty, they never could have quoted me as saying ‘I come not to bring peace but a sword’. This is clearly the opposite of everything I taught.”<sup>6</sup>

Note: The “I” here is supposedly Jesus as he dictates to Schucman. If this is the case, Jesus is denying the very scriptures which He inspired (Jn 14:26; 16:13).

***A Course In Miracles And God: A Course in Miracles teaches monism (or the belief that all is one), pantheism (the belief that God is in everything), and panentheism (the belief that all are a part of God). Many statements are made about God being everything we see, about our being a part of God and about their being no separation between God and His creation.***

Romans chapter 1 makes it clear that God is distinct from His creation. He is the Creator and divine in nature while the creation is not.

<sup>20</sup>For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: <sup>21</sup>Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup>And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. <sup>24</sup>Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: (Romans 1:20-24).

It is wrong to think that sin has not created a separation between God and mankind. Isaiah 59:1-2 says “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save. Nor his ear too dull to hear. But

your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

*A Course in Miracles and the Nature and Deity of Christ:*

**It is bad enough that *A Course in Miracles* teaches such damnable things about God, creation, and the Bible. However, it is concerning Christ where some of the worst mistakes are made. *A Course in Miracles* teaches that Jesus and those who accept Him are equal “Sons of God”. This reduces Christ to something less than Paul declares Him to be in the Book of Colossians. The Bible teaches that Jesus is both God and man. Because Jesus is also God, He is not equal to us as we are not deity.**

*A Course in Miracles* teaches that Jesus should not be understood as a sacrificial lamb for our sins. It has Jesus saying:

“I have been correctly referred to as ‘the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,’ but those who represent the lamb as blood-stained do not understand the meaning of the symbol. Correctly understood, it is a very simple symbol that speaks of my innocence. Innocence is incapable of sacrificing anything, because the innocent mind has everything and strives only to protect its wholeness.”<sup>7</sup>

The Course denies I Peter 2:24 which reads, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been set free.”

The Course denies even the need for Christ’s sacrifice because they teach that people are already sinless and perfect beings. You have to wonder what planet these people have been living on. Examples of just such sin can be seen all around us. The Bible is very clear that we are reconciled to God through the death of his Son (Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

*A Course in Miracles and Sin: A Course in Miracles* teaches that sin does not exist, and each person is perfectly guiltless and innocent. In other words no one is sinful in any way. The Bible teaches just the opposite: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The Bible also addresses those who, like followers of *A Course in Miracles*, deny the reality of sin: “If we say that we have no sin,

**we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8).  
Nowhere in the Bible are we told that sin is merely an illusion.  
We will all be held accountable to God (Romans 3:19).**

*A Course in Miracles and Atonement: A Course in Miracles* teaches that man’s original state is perfection. Salvation in the Course comes by undoing what they say is the false belief that we are separated from God and are sinful beings. Salvation comes when we simply arrive at a state of awareness that we are perfect.

“The purpose of the Atonement is to restore everything to you; or rather, to restore it to your awareness.”<sup>8</sup>

“I am in charge of the process of Atonement, which I undertook to begin. When you offer a miracle to any of my brothers, you do it to yourself and me. The reason you come before me is that I do not need miracles for my own Atonement, but I stand at the end in case you fail temporarily. My part in the Atonement is the canceling out of all errors that you could not otherwise correct. When you have been restored to the recognition of your original state, you naturally become part of the Atonement yourself.”<sup>9</sup>

In the New Testament, atonement, propitiation, and reconciliation are intertwined with the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. In Christ we now receive “atonement” (Romans 5:11). Through the blood of Jesus we obtain “propitiation” (Romans 3:25). It is Jesus who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2; 4:10). Atonement does not open our eyes to our own perfection, but instead covers our sins before God. Only through the acceptance of the sacrifice Christ made on the cross can we be saved.

It makes sense that the Course would completely ignore the sacrifice Christ made for our sins, since it teaches that God did not allow His Son to die on the cross for our salvation.

“If the crucifixion is seen from an upside-down point of view, it does appear as if God permitted and even encouraged one of His Sons to suffer because he was good. Yet the real Christian should pause and ask, ‘How could this be?’ Is it likely that God Himself would be capable of

the kind of thinking which His Own words have clearly stated is unworthy of His Son?"<sup>10</sup>

The New Testament clearly teaches that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sins of mankind. Peter wrote: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

The Old Testament also teaches that it was the will of God the Father to sacrifice Jesus Christ for us: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Jesus rebuked Peter for thinking that Jesus should not go to the cross: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.' But he turned, and said unto Peter, 'Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men'" (Matthew 16:21-23).

The Course contends that the reason for Christ's crucifixion was to induce people to love one another.

The message of the crucifixion is perfectly clear: 'Teach only love, for that is what you are.' If you interpret the crucifixion in any other way, you are using it as a weapon for assault rather than as the call for peace for which it was intended."<sup>11</sup>

The Bible addresses such thinking this way: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

As one would expect, since there is no sin, the Course teaches that there is no Hell or eternal punishment. The Scriptures,

however, teach us that there will be eternal punishment for the wicked and the unrepentant (Matt 13:41-42; Rev 20:15).

On the subject of Christ's return, the Course teaches that the Second Coming and final judgment are not meant to punish sinners, but to heal the mind, rectify mistakes, and dispel the illusions we have believed in.

Judgment is a basic attribute of God: "The Lord is a God of judgment" (Isaiah 30:18)

The Second Coming of Christ will be as literal and physical as His first coming was. "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). This is not simply the arrival of a spirit or a thought in our minds. When Christ returns, He will bring God's punishment on the wicked (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

These and many other scriptures show that the Course's teaching that there is no sin, no judgment, and no Hell are completely unbiblical and must be rejected.

#### **PRACTICAL LESSONS**

1. A seemingly less significant departure from the faith can have great consequences. Some think the problems at Colossae were the beginnings of later Gnosticism. Paul thought these problems were serious enough to use a good portion of his letter to combat them.
2. Some in the Colossian church were not respecting the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. They were attracted to some other things which they thought would make them "more spiritual". Christ provides us with all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3). We don't need anything else.
3. We can recognize many of the characteristics of "The Colossian Heresy" in movements from the first century forward. These elements are seen in many modern religious movements including the New Age Heresy. Our task of taking the Gospel to every creature is enormous. We must be aware of what is being taught in order to reach those who are being influenced by the false teaching.
4. There is a great need for Biblical teaching. The reason for any heresy is the lack of knowledge of and faith in the scriptures. Paul's answer for the "Colossian Heresy" was

the truth about Christ; He is sufficient. Let's remember Paul's words: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" (1 Cor 1:23) "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2).

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/menace>

<sup>2</sup> Thayer's definition. Taken from e-sword

<sup>3</sup> Strong's definition. Taken from e-sword

<sup>4</sup> This outline is by Curtis Vaughan, A Study Guide Commentary-Colossians

<sup>5</sup> *A Course In Miracles: Combined Volume* (Foundation For Inner Peace, 2007) Chapter 2: The Separation and Atonement, p.33

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Chapter 6: The Lessons of Love, p. 95

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Chapter 3: The Innocent Perception, p. 37

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Chapter 1: The Meaning of Miracles, p. 11

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Chapter 1: The Meaning of Miracles, p. 8-9

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, Chapter 3: The Innocent Perception, p. 36

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, Chapter 6: The Lessons of Love, p.94



# REAFFIRMING WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

West Virginia Christian Lectures

Roger A. Rush

I want to begin by once again expressing my appreciation to brother Kenney and the elders of the Central congregation for hosting this lectureship, and for the invitation to participate in it. It is my hope that the study of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae will bless all who hear the lectures or read the book.

Worship was an important part of first century Christianity. The Lord's Day (Sunday) was a special time of remembrance and celebration. Christians came together to partake of the Lord's Supper as a memorial to the broken body and shed blood of Christ the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 20:7). They worshipped a living Lord, not a dead Savior. Jesus had resurrected, and there was cause for celebration. In the words of Luke, historian of the early church: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Not everyone understood the importance of their weekly gatherings or the benefits to be derived from them. The writer of the Hebrews epistle urged his readers to be faithful in this matter. He admonished: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and 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 the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:22-25). F. F. Bruce, in his commentary on Hebrews, summarizes this passage with these words: "In view of all that has been accomplished for us by Christ, he says (the author of Hebrews, RAR), let us confidently approach God in worship, let us maintain our Christian confession and hope, let us help one another by meeting together regularly for mutual encouragement, because the

day which we await will soon be here” (**The Epistle to the Hebrews**, page 249).

I frequently talk to people who express a strong distaste for "going to church." They claim to be as religious as the next guy, but have little use for boring religious services. Personal experience, and more importantly Scripture, has taught me that worship is neither boring nor useless. I have never left a service without gaining something of benefit. We need the fellowship, encouragement, and instruction that the worship setting provides. It is a grave mistake to forsake the assembly of the saints. Consider the following illustration.

We can either be like marbles or grapes. Marbles are “single units that don’t affect each other except in collision. Grapes, on the other hand, mingle juices: each one is a ‘part of the fragrance’ of the church body. Early Christians didn’t bounce around like loose marbles, ricocheting in all directions. Picture them as a cluster of grapes, squeezed together by persecution, bleeding and mingling into one another” (Anne Ortlund, *Up With Worship*).

Several years ago my family and I spent a week in Cincinnati. Because we had a teenage daughter at the time, we spent a good bit of time shopping. One afternoon, while sitting in one of the mall concourses watching people stroll by, a somewhat older woman sat down near me. I noticed a church bulletin protruding from her purse. Soon we were engaged in conversation. I gave her a quick course in church history, and she gave me a good illustration of what happens when the authority of God’s Word is ignored.

She was very proud of the fact that her granddaughter, the previous Sunday in their morning worship, had interpreted the Lord’s Prayer in dance before the congregation. She said the elders were a little reluctant to permit it at first, but the youth minister, a MS. something or other, persuaded them to allow it. Afterwards, everyone was deeply moved, everyone maybe, but the

Lord. Such can only happen when we lose sight of who is in control of our worship.

Contrary to popular belief, all worship is not acceptable to God. Jesus indicted the scribes and Pharisees, accusing them of engaging in *vain worship*. They drew near to God with their lips and honored him with their mouths, but their hearts were corrupt. Their worship was vain because they taught as doctrine the commandments of men (Matthew 15:8, 9).

It has become increasingly popular to call for changes in traditional worship. In fact some churches now offer two services, one billed as traditional and the other as more contemporary. A traditional service is one in which the congregation does what has been recognized as worship for nearly two thousand years and includes the singing of hymns, prayer, preaching, the Lord's Supper, and giving. It is a misrepresentation to refer to these worship practices as traditional. A more accurate description would be to call them biblical.

Contemporary worship tends to include such things as solos, hand clapping, lifting up of the hands, light dimming, and/or multiple worship activities like singing while partaking of the Lord's Supper, etc.

Should worship be "traditional," or, should believers be doing things differently, and if so, why? Have people confused "emotionalism" with "spirituality?" Who should determine what is acceptable worship, and why is this so troubling an issue?

D. J. Hart in an article titled "Post Modern Evangelical Worship" in the *Calvin Theological Journal*, bemoans what he calls "contemporary worship as being dependent on the popular culture—from its musical mode of expression to the liturgical skits that ape TV sitcoms and even to the informal style of ministers who follow the antics of TV talk-show hosts."

Marva Dawn in her book *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* asks, "Will we give away the church and its gospel power by dumbing it down or by failing to reach out?" She then states: "When a congregation becomes an audience and its worship a vaudeville act, then the church finds itself at risk; the death of faith

and Christian character is a clear possibility” (as quoted by Jimmy Jividen, **GOSPEL ADVOCATE**, September 1999).

Over the years changes in worship have done more to destroy harmony, create strife, and undermine unity than any other single factor. John MacArthur writes, “Perhaps the most visible signs of pragmatism are seen in the convulsive changes that have revolutionized the church worship service in the past decade. Some of evangelicalism’s largest and most influential churches now boast Sunday services that are designed purposely to be more rollicking than reverent” (**Ashamed of the Gospel**, page xiii). The welfare of the local congregation is to a great extent dependent on our collective worship experience. Innovations in worship destroy the unity of the body! These changes come about when God’s Word is ignored. Again, MacArthur comments:

Spiritual and biblical truth is not determined by testing what “works” and what doesn’t. We know from Scripture, for example, that the gospel often does not produce a positive response (1 Cor. 1:22, 23; 2:14). On the other hand, satanic lies and deception can be quite effective (Matt. 24:23, 24; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4). Majority reaction is no test of validity (cf Matt. 7:13, 14), and prosperity is no measure of truthfulness (cf Job 12:6). Pragmatism as a guiding philosophy of ministry is inherently flawed. Pragmatism as a test of truth is nothing short of satanic.

Nevertheless, an overpowering surge of ardent pragmatism is sweeping through evangelicalism. Traditional methodology—most notably preaching—is being discarded or downplayed in favor of newer means, such as drama, dance, comedy, variety, side-show histrionics, pop-psychology, and other entertainments forms. The new methods supposedly are more “effective”—that is, they draw a bigger crowd. And since for many the chief criterion for gauging the success of a

church has become attendance figures, whatever pulls in the most people is accepted without critical analysis as *good*. That is pragmatism (**Ashamed of the Gospel**, page xiii).

The fact is no one denies that worship in the New Testament church involved the five elements already mentioned. Further, these elements are sufficient to allow the worshipper to accomplish what worship ought to accomplish. I suspect that many have confused the emotional with the spiritual. We would do well to remember what Jesus said on the subject: “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Let’s look at that passage in context.

The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:19-24 ESV).

The exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is one of the most insightful passages in the New Testament on the subject of worship. It is vital to our spiritual well-being that we understand what Jesus said in this text regarding worship.

## **WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM OUR TEXT?**

Geography is inconsequential (vs. 21)! Judaism argued that Jerusalem, and in particular the Temple, was the seat of worship. The Samaritans countered that Mount Gerizim, one time site of a Samaritan temple, was the proper place of worship.

Muslims today claim Mecca, as well as several other sites, as holy places. Five times a day all faithful Muslims are called to face Mecca and pray. The Hindus have their holy sites, too. But, in response to the Samaritan woman's question, Jesus argued that location was not important.

Here it would seem appropriate to remind ourselves not to become too attached to locations and structures (buildings). I have known of congregations who desperately needed to remodel or build, but refused to do so because of their attachment to a location or a structure. The church is holy, not the meeting place, nor the ground upon which it rests! Worship which is pleasing to God is not dependent on location or architecture.

There are three essential elements to acceptable worship (vs. 24). First, worship must be directed toward the right object (God, the Father). Our worship is not to an inanimate object, but directed toward the living God! The early church understood that there was only one God, that it was their responsibility to please Him, and that necessarily precluded acceptance of or participation in the worship of all idols (Acts 17:16-32).

It is worth noting that Edward Gibbon attributed the victory of Christianity over the pagan religions of the first century to "the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author" (**THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE**, Vol. II, page 2). He then offered five secondary causes for the rapid growth of the church: 1) The inflexible...and intolerant zeal of Christians; 2) The doctrine of a future life; 3) The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church; 4) The pure and austere morals of the Christians; and 5) The union and discipline of the Christian republic (**THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE**, Vol. II, page 3).

The church came to be in an age of religious harmony when even hostile nations embraced or respected each other's superstitions. It seems that folks were always happy to embrace another deity. The lone exception was the Jews. Their law was explicit: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). It was out of this inflexible commitment to the one true God that Christianity was born.

Early disciples were clear in their denunciation of idolatry. Polytheism was repugnant to both Jews and Christians. Paul was sickened by what he saw in Athens. It was a city wholly given to idolatry. On every corner there was an image or altar to some pagan deity. One inscription even read, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17:23). He warned them of the dangers of such ignorant worship and called them to faith in Christ (Acts 17:30, 31). There is not the slightest hint in Scripture that one belief was as valid as another, or one god as acceptable as another. In fact, just the opposite is asserted. “There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:6). Further, there was one Lord and Savior (Acts 4:12). Christians had no tolerance for opposing views, and their intolerance for false religions was a major factor in their evangelistic zeal.

We have now come full circle. The popular mantra today is tolerance. Only intolerance must not be tolerated! Why would we be so narrow-minded as to suggest that there is but one church, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God (Ephesians 4:4-6)? Because it is true! Two thousand years have passed and we are right back where we started with a world lost in religious ignorance, and men seeking to worship, who knows what, and in whatever manner they desire. But, Jesus says that God is to be worshipped, and He alone can dictate what constitutes acceptable worship to Him.

Second, worship must be in spirit which necessitates a proper attitude. The concept of worship “in spirit” is one that is difficult to define with a great degree of clarity. Most commentators and authors of word studies gloss over the meaning of the word in this context. However, it can be said with reasonable certainty that “worship in spirit” indicates worship that is **sincere and from the heart!**

Vincent, in his word studies, says that it involves the “manifestation of the moral consciousness in feelings, motions of the will, moods of elevation, excitement.” Thus, we are dealing with the attitude we bring to worship. It is therefore possible to engage in the activity of worship while failing to possess the proper spirit of worship which must be both sincere and heartfelt leading to enthusiastic expression!

Third, worship must be “in truth.” Worship must be that dictated by God in His Word; that which He has authorized in Scripture (Rom. 10:17). We must accept the trustworthiness of the Bible. We can have confidence in the Scriptures. Peter said of the prophets of the Old Testament: *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:19-21).

The apostle Paul wrote concerning Scripture (Old and New Testaments): *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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The Bible is no ordinary book. The handiwork of God can be seen upon every page. It is not meant to be read as the mere creation of mortal minds, but as the product of the mind of God. The Christians at Thessalonica were commended because they received the Word of God not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Further, the New Testament writers were eyewitnesses of the things of which they wrote. Peter said: *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty* (2 Peter 1:16). The apostle John was just as emphatic when he wrote: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life* (1 John 1:1). Guided by God’s Spirit, theirs was eyewitness testimony. God expresses His will through His Word. No worship can be acceptable if it is not authorized in His Word.

## **WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH: A SUMMARY**

To worship in spirit and in truth requires that we do what is right (authorized). Saul, the first king of the United Kingdom, lost



the throne because he did not respect the authority of God (1 Sam. 15:14, 22, 26). Jeroboam, first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, will forever be remembered for the changes in worship which he instituted (1 Kings 12:25-33). There are serious consequences to rejecting the truth (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5, 6; Gal. 1:6-10; Revelation 22:18, 19).

To worship in spirit and in truth requires that we do what is right (authorized), and that we do it in the right way. Every Bible student should be familiar with the story of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who offered unauthorized fire upon the altar (Lev. 10:1-3). For their failure to obey God, God slew them.

To worship in spirit and in truth requires that we do what is right (authorized), and that we do it for the right reasons. Our heart (emotions) and mind (intellect) must be engaged. That is what worship in spirit is all about. One can go through the motions of worship without really worshipping. Clearly the church at Corinth abused the Lord's Supper because of a misplaced emphasis. They saw the Lord's table as a place to fill the belly rather than nourish the soul (1 Cor. 11:27-29). It is possible to sing well, to have beautiful harmony, and yet fail to worship properly, if we focus so much on the mechanics of singing that we neglect the meaning of the song, or the purpose of our worship (Col. 3:16).

To worship in spirit and in truth we must do what is right (authorized), do it in the right way, do it for the right reasons, and direct it toward the right object—GOD. True worship is not a matter of what we think, feel, or believe, but what God has decreed in His word.

## **WHAT CONSTITUTES WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH**

The following are really not worship, but the means by which acceptable worship is expressed: 1) prayer to God through Jesus Christ - Acts 2:46; 2) observance of the Lord's Supper - Acts 20:7; 3) contributing to the work of Christ - 1 Cor. 16:2; 4) teaching (preaching) of sacred things - Acts 2:46; and 5) the singing of spiritual songs and hymns - Col. 3:16.

It can be argued, I think correctly, that these are not in themselves worship, but they are the divinely appointed channels

through which worship is expressed. Coffman uses the analogy of electricity and power lines to illustrate the point. Just as electricity is carried through the power lines, so our worship is channeled through the specific activities God has authorized to direct our worship to Him.

Worship in spirit and truth becomes impossible when unauthorized innovations are incorporated into our worship. Such things as solos, choirs, mechanical instruments, praise teams (designed to put women into leadership roles), and changes to the Lord's Supper (Thursday evening, Saturday evening observances, etc.) are without authority and destroy worship in spirit and truth.

All of these innovations, as well as others which I did not mention, seem to be designed to appeal to the flesh. They are embraced solely for their appeal to the *emotions*, and for their *entertainment value*!

When we are willing to compromise on worship we have opened the door to compromise on a whole host of other issues! In 1906 the Christian church and churches of Christ were listed separately for the first time. The division was primarily over the introduction of instrumental music into worship. For the first 1750 years of church history, music in the church was almost universally a cappella—literally in chapel style or without instrumental accompaniment. The instrument is found nowhere in the New Testament as part of the worship of the church. Since the introduction of the instrument, over the past 100 years the Christian church has gone from one of the most conservative to one of the most liberal churches in America.

We would do well to remember the words of Jesus: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Any other worship than that demanded here will destroy the unity of the body, and result in precious souls being lost for all eternity.

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## IF YOU ARE RISEN WITH CHRIST

### Colossians 3:1-17

Terry G. Jones

The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians is a grand portion of Holy Writ that is devoted to the exaltation of Jesus Christ. It is the most Christ-centered of all the New Testament epistles, and it enables us to see clearly what it truly means to be in Christ. Each of its four chapters contains a major theme. Chapter one emphasizes the *preeminence of Christ*; chapter two the *privileges in Christ*; chapter three *putting on Christ*; and, chapter four the *privileges in Christ*. The first two chapters explore the *supremacy* of Christ, and the last two chapters emphasize the *submission* we ought to give Christ.

The assignment for this study is taken from Colossians 3:1-17. This passage begins with Paul making the statement, “If then you were raised with Christ...” In chapter two the apostle had reminded the Colossians that they were not saved by the keeping of ordinances and following the commandments and doctrines of men (Col. 2:14-23). Rather, they had been saved because they had been, “buried with Him in baptism in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). Having been buried with Christ in baptism, they had also been raised with Him. This is an event that produces very visible results. Paul said to the Romans, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). It should be noted that when one submits to the will of Christ, he is buried with Him, raised with Him, and the result will be newness of life. Jesus is able to make dramatic changes in the life of every person who comes to Him. In Colossians three, let us observe three major changes that Christ will make in the lives of those who are raised with Him. *If you are risen with Christ, then . . .*

## **Christ Will Change Your Perspective (Col. 3:1-4)**

When a person becomes a Christian, they have a whole new perspective on life. Rather than being worldly-minded, one becomes spiritually-minded. The focus shifts from the earthly to the heavenly. Paul said those who have been raised with Christ “seek those things which are above” (3:1). When one understands the temporal nature of this world they ought to seek heaven. Here Paul tells us where Christ is – heaven, and what He is doing – “sitting at the right hand of God.” Christians serve a risen Redeemer who is in heaven sitting on David’s throne. That fact was foretold in Psalm 110:1 and testified by Peter (Acts 2:33ff).

Secondly, we are to “set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (3:2). Once again, one’s perspective begins to shift upward. Jesus taught, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Mt. 6:19-21).

Then, Paul gives three outstanding reasons for this heavenly focus (3:3-4). One, you died with Christ (3:3a). Again, he reminds them of their baptism in the likeness of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. To the Galatians, Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (2:20). We become dead to sin and separate ourselves from it. Two, you are hidden with Christ (3:3b). They had been clothed with Christ in baptism. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Three, you will appear in glory with Christ (3:4). The Lord’s Second Coming is referred to some three hundred times in the New Testament. Jesus said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn. 14:3). The Apostle John added, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as

He is” (1 Jn. 3:2). Only Christ can change your perspective from the earthly to the heavenly.

### **Christ Will Change Your Past (Col. 3:5-11)**

Since we died with Christ, were raised with Christ, are hidden with Christ, and have the prospect of appearing in glory with Christ, there are two things that must take place. First, there are some things that we must *put to death* (3:5-7). There are some things that are associated with the world from which the Christian must permanently separate himself. These have to do with the *works of the flesh* (3:5). They are: (a) “fornication” which includes all forms of sexual immorality; (b) “uncleanness” which is sexual impurity in thoughts, words, and actions; (c) “passion” which is inordinate affection and lust; (d) “evil desire” which is desiring those things that are forbidden; and (e) “covetousness” which is lusting for things possessed by others. Paul declares this to be “idolatry.” These things will bring about the *wrath of God* (3:6) because they represent disobedience to Him. Paul then reminds the Colossians of how they *walked in the past* (3:7). However, like the Corinthians, they had been “washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Second, there are some things that we must *put off* (3:8-11). Christ will change our past and provide a *renewed disposition* (3:8-9) when we put off: (a) “anger” or ill will against others who have done things we dislike; (b) “wrath” which is a more intensified form of anger or rage; (c) “malice” which is an intent to injure or harm as a result of uncontrolled anger and wrath; (d) “blasphemy” which is to speak or rail against either God or man; (e) “filthy language” which is shameful, foul, and obscene speech; and (f) “lying” which is speech designed to deceive. One who has put off the old man of sin will have a renewed disposition. In the second place, we have a *renewed knowledge* (3:10a). Paul said, “and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge...” This indicates continuous action, or a continual renewing in knowledge. Christians are in a constant state of improving and renewal. We must ever be learning and growing. “But also for this very reason,

giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” ( 2 Pet. 1:5-8). Thirdly, we have a *renewed creation* (3:10b-11). Having put off the old man and put on the new man, we are renewed in the image of Christ who created us. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). What a relief it is to the sin-sick soul that Christ will change your past.

### **Christ Will Change Your Present (Col. 3:12-17)**

Paul called the Colossians God’s elect. That is, they were His chosen. Christians are now God’s chosen people (1 Pet. 2:4, 9). As the elect, they are “holy.” They had been separated from the world for service to God. “Beloved” is a term of affection and refers to God’s love for them. Paul now turns their attention to two things.

Christian Apparel (3:12-15). Having put off the old man with all of the works of the flesh, those who are risen with Christ must be properly adorned with the Christian virtues that the apostle here lists. The Christian must put on: (a) “tender mercies” or having a heart of compassion; (b) “kindness” or sensitivity toward others; (c) “humbleness of mind” or having a humble opinion of one’s self; (d) “meekness” or gentleness; (e) “longsuffering” which enables us to be patient with others; (f) “bearing with one another” which requires one to sustain, endure, and be patient; (g) “forgiving one another” which demands following the example of Christ; and (h) “love” which Paul says is “the bond of perfection.” Without love, none of the other virtues can last; but with it, the others can easily be maintained. Additionally, we must let “the peace of God rule in our hearts.” Putting on the Christian apparel will allow God’s peace to reign in our hearts. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

Christian Authority (3:16-17). In verse fifteen, Paul stated that we “were called in one body.” To maintain unity in the body of Christ there must be a standard of authority to which all are amenable. So he says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . .” In order for the word to dwell in our heart we must “give attention to reading” (1 Tim. 4:13), and study “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). If the word is to dwell in us richly, then it must not only involve the mind through study, but also the heart through song. Furthermore, Paul made it abundantly clear that we must have scriptural authority for all that we teach and all that we practice (3:17).

If you are risen with Christ, then Christ will change your perspective, your past, and your present. May He help us to fix our mind on heaven, follow His word, and dwell with Him eternally.



## GREAT PREACHERS OF THE PAST

### J. D. Tant (1861 – 1941)

Often I read about people who accomplish great things despite periods of adversity; e.g., Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln had so many setbacks to overcome (too many to list here) that it is astonishing.<sup>1</sup> J. D. Tant is in this same class...he endured many hardships in order to preach. Basil Overton wrote “One of the best known and most beloved gospel preachers in all history was J. D. Tant.”<sup>2</sup> The trials he went through and his perseverance for the cause of Christ will sadden but inspire one to move forward during periods of uncertainty. The study of Tant’s life is not the remedy of “misery loves company” but “if Tant could survive *that* then I can survive as well.”

J. D. Tant reflected on his life’s journey in a sermon published in “Gospel X-Ray” entitled “I Have Fought A Good Fight”:

I am leaving this bit of history that others may know that life was no flowery bed for me but fraught with many hardships along the way.

In justification of this letter, I can refer the reader to Paul who called to memory his past life, declaring he had been in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by his own country men, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, imperils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, and in perils among false brethren, in weariness, in hunger, in thirst, in colds, and in nakedness (2 Cor. 11:20-30). If Paul could tell his experiences and troubles for the benefit of those who would live after him, I see no reason why my readers should not know something of my past life that it may encourage the poor boy or girl who seeks a higher plane in life, to know that all difficulties can be overcome by the one who will not give up the fight.<sup>3</sup>

He is an inspiration and any discouraged preacher would do well to read of the life of J. D. Tant. He was a frontiersman

preacher and worked in very rough unsettled areas. His brazenness is so humorous that one cannot help but laugh. For example, Tant had returned to hold a gospel meeting where he had been the year before. When visiting with a family he stayed with before he asked for a comb. The husband apologized saying their comb had been lost. Tant told him to go look in the family Bible as he had put it there last year. To their embarrassment, they found the comb.<sup>4</sup> He was so famous (or infamous depending on one's vantage point) for his audacity that in his biography there is a chapter accurately labeled "I Never Deny Anything They Tell On Me".<sup>5</sup>

***Cartersville, GA (1861 – 1876)*** Jefferson Davis Tant was born in Paulding County in Cartersville, GA on June 28, 1861. His father, William Tant, left to serve in the Confederate Army when J.D. Tant was just eight days old and remained until the end with Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House in 1865. J. D. Tant's mother, Mattie Loyd Tant, remained to manage their eleven farms. They were not slaveholders and paid for labor whether by blacks or whites. While slavery was not the issue for the Tants, they were not about to let the Union force their way upon them. Sherman was on his march between Atlanta to the ocean to meet Grant including a pass by the home of the Tants. Sherman's forces burned homes, destroyed crops, slaughtered cattle, wrecked businesses, etc. so these resources could not be used to support the Confederacy. When the Union came to the Tants' home, the home and all its belongings were burned while J. D. Tant's mother and the children (including 3-year old J. D. whose dog was shot in front of him by a Union soldier) were forced to watch.

The Tants had gone from affluence to extreme poverty. Literally all that was left was two oak trees where they lived for three months. His mother went to the army for wheat, and she would boil the ruins from the burned smokehouse for salt to eat. When J. D. was four years old, his father returned from the Civil War. His father went to an attorney, Babe Forsythe, to re-deed his farms since the records were destroyed in the fire. The lawyer re-deeded, but in his own name. The lawyer stole the eleven properties, skipped town, and left the Tants penniless. J. D. Tant's father made his own wagon and found two stray oxen. He moved

the family 400 miles south to Brooks County, GA for the next nine years where they struggled. J. D. would grow up, convert to Methodism at the age of 14, and then move with his parents to Texas for a new start.

**Forest Grove, TX (1876 – 1881)** J. D. Tant was near a school where he overcame great difficulties to learn. He did not have enough money to purchase textbooks so the teacher left a window unlocked and he could come and read them at night. He astonished many for what they thought was his uncanny ability to recite a lesson perfectly without any books or study. He excelled the other classmates and so impressed a lady that she loaned him twenty dollars to purchase textbooks.

At the age of 19, Tant became a circuit preacher in northern Texas for the Methodist Church. He would teach music, pick cotton, and break wild horses for additional money. He was immersed in the Methodist Church at the age of 21.

**Buda, TX (1881 - 1882)** Tant relocated to Buda, TX with his brother in order to teach singing schools. He also held protracted meetings for the Methodists and was a bronco buster for extra money. In early spring of 1881, Tant met two preachers named John McKinney and Ben Faulkner. They really irritated Tant, but their teaching troubled him when they challenged their audiences to find just one passage on sprinkling infants. Later in 1881, he attended a gospel meeting with W. H. D. Carrington preaching. Carrington's meeting lasted nearly four weeks. Tant attended several services. The preaching was plain and Tant was overcome with grief due to the error he had been propagating as a Methodist. Before Carrington's meeting closed, on August 14, 1881 Tant came forward and repented of his sins. Since he had already been immersed, it was decided that his baptism was valid and he was then identified with the Buda church of Christ. Two weeks later the elders signed a letter of recommendation for Tant to preach. By 1885 the brethren were debating the purpose of baptism—to obey God or for the remission of sins. Tant met J. F. Grubbs while attending a debate. Grubbs made the stand that all sectarian baptisms—immersion or not, were invalid. Tant argued with Grubbs, but Grubbs was able to turn Tant's own arguments against him. Grubbs confrontational attitude angered Tant, but

Tant could not deny the truth. Refusing to give Grubbs the satisfaction of convincing him, he rode 127 miles on a pony to have John Durst immerse him into Christ. Years later he would write of his appreciation of Grubbs even though Grubbs had angered him.

*San Marcos (1882 - 1887)* Tant realized he would not be able to support his struggling family or have a family of his own with wages from preaching alone. He rented a farm and had some success to where he could purchase a farm for his parents. In 1883 Tant had his parents and sister on his farm trying to make a living. He would farm all week and then travel to preach on Saturdays and Sundays. This would be the first year he would receive any money from preaching—a total of \$9.75 with \$5 being for a wedding ceremony! In the fall of 1883, Tant requested an internship with C. M. Wilmeth in order to learn how to be a more effective evangelist. Tant hired on hands to assist his parents with the farming and travelled with Wilmeth to learn the duties of a traveling evangelist. Finances did not work out as J. D. Tant was led to believe. After five years of preaching, Tant had earned a total of \$119.75.

During 1883, Tant worked in a school in Willis, TX for George W. Harvey that would lead to a future “opportunity”. Tant was employed to manage a school with children so unruly that the students had already run off two teachers. His response shows his determination:

...I told them I could teach the school, but they might have to employ two doctors to wait on their children, as I proposed to be manager of the school. At the close of the first month I had whipped thirty-two children and proved to them that I was equal to the occasion. During the two years I taught there, I seldom did any more whipping. I remember the last outbreak; I whipped five grown young ladies one day and a married contract to teach the school five years and build up a first class school. But I learned a woman. The trustees came to me and wanted me to sign a that if I did, quite a number of men intended sending their

wives to school, and for fear I might get into deep water I quit the school forever after the second term.<sup>6</sup>

***Fourteen Churches in Seven Counties.*** In 1885 Tant was giving serious deliberation as to whether or not he should be a preacher since he could not financially support himself. He was presented with an opportunity to teach school for \$60/month for ten months of the year, teach singing schools at night or off periods, and preach gospel meetings in the remaining two months. Tant calculated that this would provide him an opportunity to earn \$1,000 a year not including the gospel meeting work. It was an extremely tempting offer. He just could not turn down the offer; however, George W. Harvey needed to resign from serving the fourteen congregations that were supporting him. In an effort to find a replacement, he recalled the work Tant had done at the school and recommended him. The churches agreed to pay \$600 per year to Tant, but they only had \$269 dollars in the treasury. Through encouragement from Harvey, assurances from the churches, and his love of preaching, Tant decided to turn down the teaching opportunity and continue as a full time evangelist. He had to ride horseback, swim rivers, and walk in order to work 14 congregations. When it came time to pay Tant, the \$269 in the treasury was now \$235 which was paid to Tant. All the churches claimed they had done *their* share even though he was short-changed \$365.

***Bell County (1886).*** Tant was ready to quit and become a book agent; however, another preacher, John Lincoln, exhorted Tant and sent him to Bell County where the brethren there agreed to support him at \$600/year. Bell County had twenty-two congregations, six church buildings, 1000 members, and an estimated net worth of \$2 million. The Holland church agreed to send Tant out for a guaranteed \$50/month to preach among these churches, but Tant would have to deduct any pay from these congregations from this amount. While the experience was rewarding, it was not “rewarding” enough to pay the bills. At the end of the five year period, the brethren feared a drought, so they fired Tant on June 28, 1886 (his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday) without fulfilling the agreement. Tant’s retort should be remembered by any

congregation that mistreat servants of God—“I guess they will pay me at the judgment day.”

***Austin State Meeting (1886).*** In July 1886, the Austin State Meeting was held to discuss whether a missionary society should be established. Historically, these meetings were a group of congregations coming together to discuss issues; however, some desired to move from a church cooperation arrangement to a missionary society. Leading the society movement was Chalmers McPherson who had brought a large group to force the vote. W. H. D. Carrington, whose preaching converted Tant out of the Methodist Church, spoke in opposition and led others to leave the meeting to have a separate meeting. J. D. Tant was present to see young people disregard the counsel of the older and wiser brethren. The proceedings left quite an impression on him of how some, like the days of Samuel, desire to be like those around them rather than as God had designed them to be.

J. D. Tant attended the meeting with not only a meeting agenda but a personal agenda. He came to find a wife as it was his goal to be married no sooner than 28 years of age. He picked out three ladies and watched them during the meeting. He settled on one lady who recognized that Christians were “messengers”, not “delegates” (as those favoring the society called themselves). Tant appreciated the lady’s remark that messengers were a Biblical concept and nowhere in the Bible does it speak of “delegates”. That lady was Laura Warren. Tant told her his intentions, and they agreed to a four year courtship to see if marriage was in their and the Lord’s interest.

***Bee House, TX (1887).*** While the courtship was commencing, Tant spent his time preaching gospel meetings across the state, but rarely was able to get to Austin to visit his fiancé. One of the places he preached a meeting and was about to relocate to was Bee House. Tant’s preaching had converted several prominent Baptists so the Baptist Church demanded a debate. Tant offered to secure C. M. Wilmeth to debate; however, the Baptists demanded Tant since he had created the stir. Tant did not back down and agreed to what would be his first debate.

The Baptist selected their champion, W. H. Jarrell, to conduct the debate against the man they referred to as the “young

Campbellite Tant". Due to illness, Jarrell had to postpone the debate a month which delighted Tant. Eventually the debate would occur in Bee House in December; however, Jarrell was still unable to attend. The Baptists secured W. N. Leak. Leak had to have two large trunks of his books brought to the debate. Fortunately, Tant had J. F. Grubbs as his moderator—the same Grubbs who had frustrated but convinced Tant to be re-baptized. Leak used Greek to try and win his audience, but Grubbs stepped in and corrected Leak's spelling and pronunciation of Greek to Leak's detriment. Tant won the debate heavily and nine Baptists and five Methodists were converted as a result. From this point forward, Tant never backed down from the Baptists or debates. He would go on to conduct approximately 350 debates in his life.<sup>7</sup> In all of J. D. Tant's experiences, he stated that four times as many people will attend a debate than a gospel meeting. He also pointed out that he often started gospel meetings after a debate in a community and claimed that the conversions were 500 times greater than any other evangelistic method.

Bee House was pleased with Tant's performance and insisted he relocate to Bee House. Tant agreed to relocate if the brethren would pay off the \$1,000 mortgage note to his farm so his parents could remain. The brethren quickly agreed and even had one wealthy brother pledge to pay off the note himself. Prior to this arrangement, Tant had an offer to buy the farm for \$1,800 but he felt it was worth more. When the time came to pay the mortgage, the brethren reneged which forced Tant to sell the farm for \$1,200 so he could meet his mortgage obligation.

***Hamilton, TX (1887-1902)*** Rather than moving to Bee House, Tant went to Hamilton in the later part of 1887 where he would live for the next 15 years. Tant labored for six small congregations over three counties. He would baptize 700 people, establish 21 congregations and conduct fourteen debates over the next three years. His earnings during this three year period were \$504, \$454 and \$602. Tant would call Hamilton "home" and regretted leaving there because his father, mother, sister and others would eventually be buried in this small town.

J. D. Tant and Laura Warren, having met four times in the prior four years were married on March 26, 1890 at Georgetown,

TX. The fact that they saw each other so infrequently prior to marriage may seem unusual; however, the frequent absence of a traveling gospel preacher from his home was the rule rather than the exception. This courtship was a good test of whether or not their marriage would survive. Their home was made in Hamilton. In May 1891, J. D. and Laura had their first child, a son named Ira. Two years later, their second child, a girl named Davis, was born.

When J. D. was away in a meeting in December, Laura was tending the farm. A cow was sick and Laura did what she could to keep the animal warm. She then went to work on the house rather than rest and warm herself. Consequently, Laura contracted pneumonia which was often fatal. When the doctor arrived, he telegraphed Tant to return home. He immediately closed the gospel meeting in the Temple, TX area and rode a horse straight back. Four doctors attempted to treat Laura Tant, but her condition was deteriorating. She encouraged J. D. to marry again when sufficient time had elapsed so he would have companionship and the children a mother. These were the last words she spoke on January 4, 1894. She was buried in Hamilton, TX.

Tant employed George Applewhite and his wife to move in to run the farm and care for the children. The grief for the first year made it very difficult to be on the property. If not for his two children, he probably would have never returned to the property.

In January 1895, J. D. Tant and David Lipscomb met for the first time. The meeting resulted in Tant being a Field Editor for the Gospel Advocate, supporting its efforts in Texas. Tant would often submit articles for the "Gospel Advocate", the "Firm Foundation", and "Christian Leader".

After a year passed, J. D. Tant decided it was time to look for another wife and found a widow by the name of Earle Parker of interest. Parker was a romantic and perceived Tant's proposal as calculating. She vacillated on marrying him until she ended the courtship. He also considered Lyle Brooker who helped transcribe one of his books, *The True Way*; however, her constitution was too frail for the life of a pioneer preacher's wife. During a visit to Carr-Burdette College while visiting Earle Parker, Tant once again met Nannie Green Yater. He had met her earlier at her home in Grandview, TX while conducting a gospel meeting there in July



1894. Nannie was baptized at the age of 13 but was apparently concerned about her baptism during the discussion of the purpose of baptism (probably the same discussions that prompted Tant to be baptized again.) So, Nannie was re-baptized a few months prior to her marriage by C. R. Nichol. Nannie's mother had obeyed the gospel at the preaching of John T. Johnson to the chagrin of her family. She was a devoted Christian who supported the efforts of the "Firm Foundation". She married a Christian over the disapproval of her family. Ironically, Nannie would make a similar stand on her marriage to J. D. Tant.

In 1895, the church at Sherman called upon Tant to help settle a dispute over the instrument. Tant was eager to help this church avoid a court settlement and was successful. This presented an opportunity to be close to Carr-Burdette College, operated by the Carr family. The Carrs were supporters of Tant and relaxed dating guidelines so he could date one of their star students—Nannie Yater.

In August 1895 Tant met G. A. Strain in Grapeland, TX to debate the Universalist doctrine. Strain bragged that debates just led to the establishment of Universalist Churches in Texas. He claimed to have 15-20 people ready to establish a church there at the conclusion of the debate. However, by the time Tant was done with him in the debate only two made commitments to the Universalist but five obeyed the gospel. In October 1895, Tant finally met W. A. Jarrell in Thornton, TX for a debate. Tant was impressed with the conduct and presentation of Jarrell (unlike the negative impressions he had of another Baptist debater named Ballard). The debate was printed as a series in the county paper, "Thornton Topics".

During this period Tant, and other preachers in Texas, spent much of their efforts to stop the innovators of missionary societies and instruments from dividing churches. While Tennessee had some division over these issues, the damage in Texas was much more severe with an estimated 80 to 90 percent of congregations going into digression. While not all who supported the society supported the instrument, the break in fellowship followed these two main issues. Tant continued to hold meetings and have large debates with the Baptists and Methodists.

Sometimes meetings or debates would erupt into harsh words, accusation, threats, and even fist fights, but Tant simply would not back down no matter how great the threat. For example, in Cherokee, TX he was threatened by someone he had called out. The angry man threatened to whip Tant on site, but Tant never even gave it a second thought. After the storm passed, Tant sat down to write Nannie and then recalled that Cherokee was the place the regular preacher had been hit in the head for preaching and actually died.

Tant's courtship with Nannie was often challenging since her family was higher society than Tant. Once Nannie had fallen for Tant, it did not matter how the family felt. Tant nearly torpedoed his effort to marry Nannie while writing her mother, at Nannie's request, to formally request permission to marry her. He addressed the letter to "The Old Lady Tater, Grandview, Texas". The family was offended by the address. Tant's weak response was that he just could not recall her name because there were nine boys, four girls and the mother with the name "Yater". When Tant stopped to visit the family after the letter, the mother ordered him off the property! After much lively discussion between Nannie, her mother and the family, Fannie Buckner Yater wrote to Tant on November 18, 1896 to grant permission, settle the feud, and insist the wedding occur at her house. So, in spite of the family uproar, Nannie prevailed and they were married on December 30, 1896 at the home of her mother.

Nannie moved to J. D. Tant's home in Hamilton, TX to be greeted by his five-year old son Ira and three-year old daughter Davis. The Applewhites vacated the property and left it in poor condition. Nannie quickly attempted to learn the new role she had accepted. She would go on to win over the affections of the two children as her own. The differences between the life of her upbringing to the one of being wife and mother were significant. Her independent mind, trust in God, and sheer determination helped her through very serious ordeals.

On September 22, 1897 J. D. and Nannie had their first baby, a girl named Maida Norvell, which was born two months prematurely. Tant was away in a gospel meeting at the time and had to be summoned to return. Great care was exercised during

this uncertain period and Nannie's mother had come to assist. Both the mother and child grew stronger and the danger passed. Tant immediately left for Troupe, TX to keep a debate appointment he had with a Methodist, D. T. Brown, who did not show up. The Methodists eventually sent a man named Anderson to keep from the embarrassment of a forfeit some six days later. Tant was complimentary of Anderson, stating his defense of Methodism was as good as he had ever heard. Tant returned home for a few more days and then he was off preaching and debating across the state. At the end of the year the baby turned sick and Tant had to decide whether to stay home or keep the upcoming three month schedule. Nannie assured him that she would handle matters and insisted he keep his commitments to the churches.

At the beginning of 1898, the baby's health had grown worse. The doctors advised a change of climate, so J. D. took the family on a two month tour of Oklahoma. The events of the day included the Army's hunt for Geronimo who had escaped in Oklahoma during this period. The journey was one of Indians, quicksand and other dangers of the chuck wagon trail. Tant managed to preach for several congregations and conduct debates.

Tant also completed a preaching tour of Nashville. By the close of 1898 he resigned his position as Field Editor of the "Gospel Advocate", but continued to write for them as much as he always had. He also supported Christian schools and sent one of his children to Freed-Hardeman College. In later years he was concerned about churches insisting on having a preacher with a degree and colleges producing men who were leading the church into digression. But he was always a supporter of Christian education. On February 26, 1899 Nannie's second child, a daughter named Zoreta was born. Tant was to return home after a meeting in Brownwood which he had left for after Zoreta's birth, but was delayed due to the great success the preaching was reaping. While Ira brought the message back to Nannie, bad weather was approaching as was the night. While Ira and Nannie were putting the horse away it was apparent that a tornado was upon them. Nannie got the children to the cellar, already largely filled with water from prior rain. The tornado damaged a few outside buildings but left the farm intact.

Tant found himself in a dispute with the “Gospel Advocate” and its new practice of referring to full-time located evangelists as pastors. He argued correctly that if all was needed to be a pastor was to be a located preacher, then a man who divided his time to a church 25 percent of the time as 25 percent a pastor. After much discussion in the paper, the “Gospel Advocate” came around to Tant’s original objection. Tant was not opposed to a full-time located man doing the preaching, but he was adamantly opposed to that person being viewed as a “pastor” to please those of denominational background. Some felt the “Gospel Advocate” seemed to hold the issue against Tant in the reporting of the Tant-Oakley debate in Nashville which began June 11, 1900. David Lipscomb responded that debates were then so frequent that the Advocate could not keep up on the particulars of all the debates. Several were attempting to draw a fight between Tant and Lipscomb, but Tant would have none of it, stating that “Lipscomb did me no wrong.” Tant was not about to let a wedge be driven between the Firm Foundation supporters and the “Gospel Advocate”. In 1901 Tant and Harding conducted a written debate in the pages of the “Firm Foundation” and the “Gospel Advocate” on the subject of rebaptism and whether or not a clear understanding of the design of baptism was required. The debate was friendly. Both arrived at basically the same conclusion.

In late spring of 1901, Ira Tant, now ten years old, had contracted pericarditis. Doctors told J. D. and Nannie that Ira could live for weeks, months and even years with the condition. After three months, J. D. Tant had to leave to go to Midway, TX for a gospel meeting. He kissed the boy goodbye not knowing whether or not he would be alive upon his return. Tragically, Ira died three days later in Nannie’s arms. Nannie attempted to contact J. D. to have him return for the funeral. They were having difficulty reaching Tant so they packed Ira’s body in ice in an effort to delay the service. Sunday came and they were forced to have the burial. Tant finally received the message and rode 25 miles to the railroad station and called the family. Brother Sparkman had the sad duty of telling J. D. that they were burying Ira that very hour and he might as well return to Midway to conclude the gospel meeting since there was nothing more that

could be done. With grief and anguish beyond comprehension, J. D. Tant went back to Midway. Upon his return he soon decided it was time to leave Hamilton, TX. His father, mother, sister, first wife, and now son were buried in Hamilton. Perhaps the grief was too much to bear in the surroundings of Hamilton.

**Nursery, TX (1902)** South Texas was a growing field for evangelism and the rice industry. Tant decided it would be best to leave Hamilton, TX and relocate to a farm in Nursery, TX. To accomplish this, Tants had to assume a \$4,500 debt. His plan was to devote three years to farming with a limited preaching schedule; however, the farm was an absolute disaster. On July 5, 1902, Nannie gave birth to her first son, J. D. Jr., without the aid of a doctor since their financial situation could not afford one. Working this farm and the financial conditions they were facing nearly cost the lives of J. D, Nannie, and their newborn son at various times during the year.

**San Marcos, TX (1903 -1904)** After a disastrous crop in Nursery and the \$4,500 note coming due, they decided to trade their farm for a 24-acre farm in San Marcos. This refinanced another note for \$2,000. San Marcos was where J. D. Tant and his parents lived 22 years ago. This was where he first heard and obeyed the gospel and baptized his first convert...his sister. Tant was very direct and plain in his preaching which caused some to criticize him. Although this did not make Tant quit, he responded to the criticism with a piercing retort which was printed in the *Gospel Advocate* in April 1903:

A short time ago a brother was lecturing me on account of my plain preaching. He said he knew the people of a certain town better than I knew them, and he knew they would not come to hear me preach. I told him that I was plain, and that I preached the gospel straight; that during the last seventeen years more than 3,000 people had come into the church under my preaching, and that more than fifty of the boys who were among that number were now preaching the gospel. He had lived there for fifty years and had been a Christian for thirty years; so I called on him to tell how many he had led to Christ. I was not surprised to

learn that he had converted not a single soul during all those years.<sup>8</sup>

To assist with the finances, Nannie decided to teach, since her education was to be a teacher, at Southwest Teachers' State Normal. She also took eight ladies as boarders to bring in money. Tant continued preaching and debating during the year, but at the close of the school year it was decided to move again.

***Quanah, TX (1904 - 1906)*** Tant traded for a 710-acre farm with a six-room house in Quanah. One interesting point to keep in mind—moving one's family is a major ordeal even under the best of circumstances. The times the Tants relocated were adventures combined with peril. Often they would have to travel with covered wagon to a train station and then from the next station back onto covered wagon to their new location.

There was no church in Quanah so Tant worked to establish one. Opposition to Tant's preaching made securing a location for a meeting a challenge. Eventually the meeting occurred in the city courthouse and the schoolhouse was the regular meeting place.

Tant then traveled to various locations to preach including a prolonged trip into Arkansas where he contracted malaria. He refused to quit preaching and pushed on. By the end of 1905 when he returned home, his family was seriously concerned about his health. In the spring of 1906 Nannie arranged for a series of meetings in California to get J. D. some time out west to revitalize his health. Ironically, he was in San Francisco during the great earthquake and nearly ended up staying in a hotel that collapsed two hours after he had found no vacancy. Nannie anxiously waited for four days to hear whether or not he had survived. Tant preached throughout California and then returned for a series of meetings in Mississippi. From this time in Mississippi, Tant had made the decision to leave Texas for Tennessee.

***Macon, TN (1906 - 1912)*** Tant traded for 500 acres in Macon (30 miles east of Memphis, TN) and was able to wipe out their debts for the first time. Unfortunately, Tant decided to divide 400 acres of the property into eight 50-acre lots to help Christian families to begin a living. The ordeal was a disaster since several did not know how to farm and others ran up a large bill on the

Tant's credit. This undid the financial progress Tant had made and it would take at least ten years to undo the damage. On April 7, 1907 the Tants had another daughter named Mozelle. On December 30, 1908, a son was born whom they named Yater. There was an ordeal with J. D. Jr.'s leg that was very serious and required much attention and expense.

It should also be noted that Tant supported Tennessee Orphans Home and would write to congregations encouraging them to support and rebuking those who refused to help the less fortunate. This is important to keep in mind as later developments would lead to a faction that would claim it unscriptural for a church to send money from its treasury to an orphans' home.

In 1908 there was to be a debate between the Mormons and Joe S. Warlick at Bethany Church. Prior to the debate the Mormons wrote Warlick to cancel the debate even if he wanted to brag about their forfeit. Fortunately, Tant did not receive the cancellation, and when he arrived he found the Mormons bragging that the "Campbellite" was too afraid to show. After two hours of the Mormons gloating, the church asked Tant to step in and debate the "apostle" Wyatt. Tant agreed and delivered quite a crushing blow to the Mormons. Apparently they were not any more prepared to debate.

Freed-Hardeman College opened in 1908 and J. D. Tant was one of its avid backers, even sending his daughter to the school. Tant was not supportive of the college preacher concept, however. He was not opposed to a preacher going to college or people going to a Christian school. His concern was churches being in the college business and that the churches were beginning to reject good men who wanted to preach but could not afford to attend preaching college. He also lamented the fact that churches were ceasing to train men to preach and left the job to the colleges. Many criticized Tant as inconsistent since he had supported various schools in the past. The debate would continue on past Tant's lifetime.

In 1910, Tant had his famous debate with the Methodist named Pigue in the Old Methodist Church in Tennessee. Pigue went on and on about how the "Campbellite" preacher was too scared to show. Then, a figure in dirty overalls, looking like he

came off the farm, arose and stated his name—J. D. Tant. Tant went onto say that his father told him that when it was time for slaughtering a pig (or Pigue, in this case) one better come dressed for the job! After Tant's debates with Methodist Pigue and Mormon Wyatt, the *Gospel Advocate* had decided to ban Tant's writings based on allegations he used obscene language. David Lipscomb loved Tant and did not like the decision, but he went along with the new staff since his health was failing. In spite of this hurting Tant, he continued to love and support the paper. Ten years later, J. C. McQuiddy challenged the accusers to come forward and state their case. When none appeared to stand by the allegations, McQuiddy printed a full apology to Tant.

The family experienced another heavy loss. Davis, the daughter of Tant's first wife, had relocated to Memphis to work as a nurse. She fell in love with a book keeper of the hospital and married him. Four years later, Davis was found drowned in her bathtub. The neighbors reported that the husband was a drinker with a violent temper; however, the investigation did not produce enough evidence to charge the husband.

***Almagordo, NM (1912 – 1914)*** The Tant's son, J. D. Tant, Jr, had developed a serious leg condition that nearly cost both his leg and his life. Once the doctors had done all they could, they suggested the Tants consider the higher elevations of AZ or NM. So, the Tants traded for land in Anson, TX to get them closer to NM, but they never took possession of the land. The trader did not have title to the property and refused to return the Tants' existing title. They were forced to take legal action which was expensive and time-consuming on Tant's preaching schedule. Eventually they decided to purchase a 160-acre farm in Almagordo, NM in order to take care of their son without any further delay. They moved to NM in 1912 and arrived on Christmas Day.

Tant worked the farm for the first season. The farm required commercial irrigation which was expensive and placed a severe strain on Tant's schedule. Also, their daughter, Zoreta, required an emergency appendectomy. The Tants were financially destitute to the point that they reluctantly agreed to let Zoreta suspend school in order to take a job. So, the Tants decided to trade that property for one in Hope, NM.



**Hope, NM (1915)** The move to Hope, NM was expected to take three days but required seven. The Tants decided to move themselves with covered wagon. The move was such a disaster due to bad winter weather that the Tants did not even like to remember this period. Their belongings were damaged or ruined beyond repair. Nannie started the trip pregnant, but the hardships of the relocation caused her to lose her baby. She also contracted blood poisoning that would take a few weeks to recover.

It became quickly apparent that the venture to NM had put the Tants in worse financial standing. They sent Maida and Zoreta to live with Nannie's sister in Waco so they could attend school. When the year was over, J. D. Tant decided it was time to go back to Texas and was interested in moving closer to Nannie's family.

**Cleburne, TX (1916)** While moving to Cleburne was appealing, they were plagued by financial challenges in securing the property. They were robbed by an elder of the church hindering their ability to secure a property. Another dishonest person attempted to steal the deed to their property under the guise of securing a loan for the Tants, resulting in further litigation and expense. Incidentally, the elder who stole the money admitted his guilt, begged forgiveness, was removed from the eldership, promised to repay every cent, but died without ever returning the money!

**Menard, TX (1917)** The Tants were eventually able to secure property in Menard, TX. When they arrived they found the current tenants had not vacated the property so they had to live in the same house for three weeks. Eventually the tenants moved out to another property adjacent to the Tants and were a constant source of irritation. Nannie learned to raise poultry a few years and had many eggs stolen by the tenants' children.

There was no church in Menard so Tant worked to try and establish a congregation in the area. They would spend two years in Menard, but the Tants were in financial trouble. The note on the property had come due and they were barely able to trade property, scrape money together, and borrow from friends to relocate to Rogers, AR.

**Rogers, AR (1919 - 1921)** The Tants eventually were able to secure a 26-acre lot and house in Rogers, AR. The relocation was as rough as the other relocations, but they were all safe. The members at Rogers were kind to the Tants and one of the elders housed them until they were prepared to move into their new property. When summer came, Tant held a large tent meeting in the town park which generated a lot of excitement and commotion with the denominations. In fact, four denominations joined forces in an effort to block others from attending the meeting, but that did not stop people from hearing the truth and obeying the gospel.

**Quitman, AR (1921 – 1924)** In the first winter, the Tant's son, Austin, had developed a severe leg infection to the point that Nannie had to beg money from a brother of the church. She then had to take Austin via train to one of her brothers, a medical doctor. The surgery required the removal of a seven inch strip of bone. Another surgery was required to remove more bone to make sure it did not interfere with the new bone formation. It was a very concerning time, but Austin did recover.

There was no church in Quitman so Tant decided to remain home for at least a month to establish a congregation. This provided the opportunity for his son's treatment in Cleburne. Once the danger passed, he resumed his meeting and debate work. An interesting event occurred during a meeting in Liberty, AR. A preacher of the Free Will Baptist Church attended the meeting and was astonished to hear Tant proclaim there was one true church and that baptism was for the remission of sins. The man was totally unaware of the church of Christ's existence and had taught the same things. Once he found the truth, he forsook the Free Will Baptist Church and aligned himself with the churches of Christ.

**Greenville, MS (1925)** Tant decided it was time to trade and acquired property in Mercedes, TX; however, he turned around and traded that property for a cotton plantation in Greenville, MS. This move was a first for the Tants because they acquired a 1922 Ford automobile even though no one knew how to drive which led to some challenges during the move!

Tant continued his preaching, debating and writing. He did not hesitate to point out in the journals practices he thought were

wrong. For example, some began to call preachers of denominations by the title of “brother”. Tant wrote the following:

For instance, Billy Sunday [a popular denominational preacher] is not my brother in Adam, for I have come out of Adam. He is not my brother in Christ, for he has not come into Christ. There were religious churches when Christ was here. Sadducees and Pharisees were more in accord with the word of God than any of the sects of our time, yet Christ never did talk about his Sadducee brethren or his Pharisee brethren, like many of my brethren talk about their Methodist and Baptist brethren.<sup>9</sup>

Tant would not back down no matter who the critic--male or female, friend or stranger. At one congregation in Nashville, TN, a woman criticized Tant for removing his coat in the pulpit and preaching in short sleeves. He carefully looked over the woman’s attire and responded “Why sister, I could pull off my pants right now and still have on more than you are wearing!”<sup>10</sup>

In the summer of 1927, Tant attended the graduation exercises of Freed-Hardeman College with N. B. Hardeman as President. Although J. D. Tant had been expressing great concerns about “Bible Colleges” and its impact on the ministry, he found in Henderson, TN a school that was training men and women not only “how to live, but how to make a living” as he thought it should. He even found the training of ministers, an activity he had reservations about, to be a great blessing for the church.

**West Point, MS (1926)** The Tants purchased a farm in West Point, MS; however, when they arrived they found the farm in a terrible state of disrepair. In fact, Nannie was injured when she stepped out onto the porch and was tossed onto a brick walkway beneath knocking her unconscious. One must keep in mind that many of these properties Tant traded for were sight unseen. The Tants lived here from February to November of 1926. This would be the only location without a church where J. D. could not find the opportunity to hold a meeting in order to establish a congregation.

**Manchester, TN (1926 – 1927)** Due to J. P. Phillips, a realtor from Manchester, the Tants recovered from the trade in

West Point. They secured a large house, new dairy barn, and 200 acres of land. In a short time the Tants were moving again.

**Lucy, TN (1928)** The Tants did not spend much time in Lucy, TN either. Their daughter, Mozelle, had developed a severe sinus problem but was able to obtain a job with a doctor in nearby Memphis who was able to treat her.

**Memphis, TN (1929 -1930)** Although information is not provided as to why, the Tants decided to abandon the home in Lucy and take an apartment in Memphis. It could be that this provided an opportunity to be closer to Mozelle during the time of her health condition. She eventually married in the spring. J. D. Tant continued his regular preaching schedule, but was always on the lookout for a new location to move. The fall of 1929 he found a location in Arkansas.

**DeQueen, AR (1930 -1932)** The family moved to a 16-acre farm with a six room run down house in November of 1930. By the end of 1931, the Tants had the property repaired. By this time, the children were mostly out of the house and returning on the holidays to visit their parents. DeQueen turned out not to be a location that suited the Tants. There was no railroad to support Tant's necessary travel for preaching. There was no income to speak of from farming. Plus, there was no church in DeQueen. Tant was finally able to sell the property in New Mexico and once again be debt free.

**Los Fresnos, TX (1932 - 1935)** While in a gospel meeting in Lower Rio Grande Valley, J. D. Tant traded his property in Arkansas for a five-room house and 20-acre piece of property in Los Fresnos. Fortunately they found someone who was doing a backhaul from DeQueen to Los Fresnos who was using a large moving van which provided an easier relocation.

The land was difficult for the Tants to work, but Nannie was able to resume teaching at the school. When the school year was over, they moved to Brownsville, TX where J. D. Tant did his very first located work. Before they left Los Fresnos, a severe storm hit that was the worst one recorded to date for the coastline. Nannie went with a friend to the schoolhouse for better shelter, but J. D. insisted on staying at the house and promised to come if the weather deteriorated. The next morning, after Nannie worried all

night, J. D. showed up at the schoolhouse. The chimney had blown off the house and the porch blew away in the 110 m.p.h. winds. Tant grabbed the cat and slept in the automobile between two large trees!

**Brownsville, TX (1935 –1937)** Tant was now in his seventies and his health was starting to impact his ability to keep such an active schedule. He secured a smaller farm and worked with a smaller congregation in Brownsville, TX. However, J. D. was not one to slow down and was still in high demand for meetings. He continued with his preaching wherever he was called to go. He also continued to write for both the *Firm Foundation* and the *Gospel Advocate*. He even attended the Austin State Meeting now operated by the digressives. He observed that no one would even recognize the digressives now compared to when they split to form the society years ago.

Through a series of trades, the Tants ended up back in possession of their property in DeQueen after two years in Brownsville. They would end up trading both the property in DeQueen and the one in Brownsville for a location back in Los Fresnos.

**Los Fresnos, TX (1937 -1941)** The Tants obtained a 15-acre farm and house. Tant's health showed signs of failure and he had a slight stroke. The doctor ordered Tant to rest and avoid exercise. Nannie correctly surmised that the doctor might as well have told him to stop breathing.

By late spring of 1941 he knew his life was nearly over. In fact, the children had been summoned. While some were still in transit, the end came. Nannie records in her autobiography a conversation she had with J. D. about his life. She writes:

I believe J. D. Tant loved life more than any person I have ever known. Only a few days before the end he said to me, "I'd be willing to live a thousand years if it were the Lord's will." I asked him would he be willing to make that statement if he knew the thousand years would be just like the eighty he lived – filled with hardship, poverty, pain, betrayal by false brethren. He said, "Yes. I would take the

bitter with the sweet. I have had much to be thankful for.”<sup>11</sup>

On Sunday, June 1, 1941 after visiting with friends, J. D. Tant retired to a high back rocker in the front room. The friends did not realize that within 45 minutes, J. D. Tant would pass. At 4:30 PM, J. D. Tant took one last gaze into his wife’s eyes and slowly passed away.

Two funeral services were held. The first was at the Brownsville Church of Christ with H. D. Jeffcoat and James W. Adams officiating. Tant had requested a worship service with preaching and congregational singing as the funeral. The second funeral service was held at the Central Church of Christ, Cleburne, TX three days later. W. K. Rose and J. D. Tant had mutually agreed that whoever survived the other would do the funeral for the other. Scripture was read by G. H. P. Showalter, prayer by Cled E. Wallace, and Foy E. Wallace, Jr. said a few words prior to Rose’s address.

J. D. Tant was buried in Cleburne Memorial Cemetery beneath a stone which reads:

Jefferson Davis Tant  
1861 - 1941

"I have fought a good fight I have finished my course I have kept the faith." 2nd Tim. 4:7

It has been estimated that J. D. Tant immersed over 8,000 souls, second only to Marshall Keeble. Twenty years later, Nannie Yater Tant would be laid to rest beside him on September 23, 1961.

***One Last Story...One of My Favorites:*** One of my father’s and my favorite preacher, editor and writer over the years has been Basil Overton. This story appeared in Basil’s paper, “The World Evangelist”:

[J. D. Tant]...agreed to preach for some church which did not believe baptism was essential to being saved. This church asked brother Tant to preach in a series on the condition that he would not mention baptism. After he

agreed to this, the brethren thought he had made a serious mistake. They thought he was losing his mind.

Near the end of his first sermon in the series, brother Tant began to explain the plan of salvation. He began to quote Mark 16:15,16 which says that Jesus told his apostles to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” As brother Tant was quoting this, everyone knew what the passage said, thought he was going to violate his agreement. However, when he got to verse 16, he quoted it like this, “He that believeth and does that which I agreed not to mention in this series of meetings, shall be saved.”

In Acts 2:38, Peter told penitent believers to “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,” but Tant recited it like this, “Repent and do what I agreed not to mention in this series of meetings in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.”

The story says that after brother Tant had thus quoted a few of such passages, one of the church leaders arose and said to him, “Just go ahead and say baptism!”<sup>12</sup>

#### END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.snopes.com/glurge/lincoln.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Basil Overton, Editor, “Is Water Baptism Essential?” The World Evangelist, Florence, AL: World Evangelist, Inc., May 1975, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> J. D. Tant, The Gospel X-Ray, Austin, TX: Firm Foundation Publishing House, 1933, p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> Basil Overton, Editor, “Out of My Memory...A J. D. Tant Story,” The World Evangelist, Florence, AL: World Evangelist, Inc., July 1995, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> The stories told on and by the Tants are inspirational indeed. A few of them will be relayed in this manuscript; however, the writer has purposely left several out of the manuscript that the reader may obtain fuller accounts and enjoy for themselves. The two works recommended are J. D. Tant – Texas Preacher and Nannie Yater Tant – Reminiscences of a Pioneer Preacher’s Wife.

<sup>6</sup> Fanning Yater Tant, J. D. Tant – Texas Preacher, Erlanger, KY: Faith and Facts Press, 1958., p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 407-408.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>11</sup> Nannie Yater Tant, Reminiscences of a Pioneer Preacher's Wife, pp. 182-183.

<sup>12</sup> Basil Overton, Editor, "Out of My Memory...Another J. D. Tant Story," The World Evangelist, Florence, AL: World Evangelist, Inc., August 1995, p. 3.



# THE GOSPEL'S IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS

Colossians 3:18 – 4:1

Albert E. Farley

It is God's will for man, and it is man's desire to have a complete, full life. Yet, man fails, in so many instances, to find this life. He seeks the abundant life through the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life; but, in doing so, he fails to find it. We can be complete only in Jesus Christ. Colossians 2:10. The overall theme of our lectures this year is "Complete In Him," and this completeness comes only when we establish the right relationships that God wants us to have – with Him and with our fellowman.

The Bible is wholly concerned about relationships: of God with man, of man with God, and of man with his fellowman. Every book of the Bible, without exception, addresses these relationships and seeks to have a positive impact upon them.

Our text is Colossians 3:18 – 4:1. A remarkable parallel of this passage is in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, recorded in Ephesians 5:22-33 and 6:1-9. The relationships and duties that are discussed by Paul in our assigned text are of those between wives, husbands, children, fathers (parents), servants, and masters. The particular duties enjoined upon those whom the apostle Paul addresses in these sections of his letters are sometimes called *relative* duties in Biblical literature.<sup>1</sup> Relative duties are those that belong to persons of certain particular situations, or relations – relationships in which not all Christians are a part. However, it can be safely said that most of us will find ourselves in one or more of these relationships.

It will be our purpose in this lesson to discuss the gospel's impact on these relationships.

## The World Without the Gospel

Paul presents the world without Christ in several passages of scripture. In Romans 1, he wrote of the deep immoral abyss into which the Gentiles had fallen. They failed to glorify God as God, became unthankful, vain, and foolish. God gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their hearts, and they dishonored their own bodies between themselves. God gave them up unto vile, homosexual affections – men with men and women with women – working that which is unseemly from reprobate minds. “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (29-32).

The people of Colossae and Ephesus fell into these ungodly and unholy relationships. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul wrote, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 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:” He continued in verse 12: “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:”

Before the gospel came to Colossae, Paul said the people were in the “power of darkness” but that, in Christ, they had been delivered from this evil power and had been translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son, 1:13. In 1:21, he said, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight.”

When the truth of the gospel came unto them, and when they were buried with Christ in baptism (2:12), the Colossians

received redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of their sins (1:14). Then, in this letter, Paul wrote to challenge them to a higher walk. He said, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:” (2:6). They were to seek those things that are above; they were to set their affection on things above. They were to put to death their members that were upon the earth, and they were to put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. They were to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, and they were to refashion their relationships with one another.

This, briefly, is the context in which Paul admonishes them concerning their relative duties: the duties of their family and domestic relationships. These duties are *duties* – not *rights*; and they are reciprocal. That is, the duties of one have a corresponding duty of the other in the relationship. When these duties are done, the rights of each are guaranteed.<sup>2</sup>

### **Wives’ Duties to their Husbands (3:18)**

*“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”*

Paul’s admonition to the wife concerning her duty to her husband is summed up in one word: *submit*. As Jesus submitted to His Father and as the church is to submit to Christ, so is the wife to submit to her husband. The word *submit* means, “to subordinate; to obey.”<sup>3</sup> The New Testament provides the twofold reasons for this. They relate to the relationship of the first husband and wife. (1) Adam was formed first, then Eve, and (2) Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.<sup>4</sup> On that day, God said to Eve, “... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”<sup>5</sup> This relationship is stated in Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”<sup>6</sup>

Of course, the command for wives to submit to their own husbands is a submission based upon love – love for God and the Lord Jesus Christ and love for their husbands. Paul commanded

the aged women in the church to teach the younger women to love their husbands.<sup>7</sup>

Christian wives are to submit to their *own* husbands – one wife submitting to her one husband. When God created man and woman, He made one man for one woman. Lamech, a descendent of Cain, began the practice of polygamy.<sup>8</sup> Several Bible men had more than one wife.<sup>9</sup> The impact of the gospel upon marriage was to restore it back to its original state. Jesus said that, in the beginning, God made one male and one female and that these *two* would be *one* flesh.<sup>10</sup> Paul established this truth: “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”<sup>11</sup>

The submission of the wife to her own husband is “...fit in the Lord.” To be *fit* is to be *proper, appropriate, or right*. In Ephesians 5:22, Paul commanded Christian wives to submit themselves unto their own husbands “... as unto the Lord.” He continued, in verse 24, “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” This is submission to a remarkable degree. In 5:33, he said, “and the wife see that she *reverence* her husband.” This word means, “to frighten, to be alarmed; to be in awe of, to be (sore) afraid, to fear (exceedingly).”<sup>12</sup> This meaning must be understood in the full context. Matthew Henry has this comment: “Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produce a care to please, and of fear, which awakens a caution lest just offence be given. That the wife thus reverence her husband is the will of God and the law of the relation.”<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, the apostle Peter reinforces these words in 1 Peter 3:1-6. He said that Christian wives were to adorn themselves with the “hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price,” (3:4). He then refers us to the holy women in the old time that trusted in God. He refers specifically to Sarah who “... obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughter ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” (5, 6).

How can wives be commanded to “reverence” (fear) on the one hand and to “not be afraid” on the other? The answer is found

in considering the *who* and the *what* that is or is not to be feared. She is to have fear of her husband, but she is to have no fear in placing her confidence and trust in his headship or leadership. Sara followed her husband when even he did not know where he was going!<sup>14</sup>

This great degree of trust and submission is commanded by the Lord of Christian wives because of or in view of the duties He has enjoined upon husbands concerning their duties to their wives.

### **Husbands' Duties to their Wives (3:19)**

*"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."*

The headship of husbands over their wives under the influence of the gospel must be predicated upon their great love for them. This love must be of the highest order. Paul said to the church at Ephesus, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."<sup>15</sup>

The duty of every Christian husband is to *love* his wife. This love leaves no room for despotism or tyranny. It is from the word *agapao*, and means "to love (in a social or moral sense)."<sup>16</sup> Christ died for the church; he gave himself for it. So ought Christian husbands to love their wives.

Paul added, "... and be not *bitter* against them." This word means "*to embitter*"<sup>17</sup> or "*to be bitter*."<sup>18</sup> The ESV translates this as, "... and be not harsh with them."<sup>19</sup> He had already commanded this of all Christians, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, "Let *all bitterness*, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."<sup>20</sup> God knew, however, that, in too many instances, husbands may not show bitterness, wrath, and anger toward their brothers and sisters in the church but will go home and commit these very sins against their own wives! "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."<sup>21</sup>

This duty is reinforced, I think, by the words of Peter, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”<sup>22</sup> Christian wives certainly are not weaker in intellect or in spirituality. Their bodies are generally weaker in physical presence or in muscular constitution. The duty of husbands is to honor and respect this difference and to honor them as co-heirs (participants in common)<sup>23</sup> of the grace of life in Christ. To violate this duty is to cause one’s prayers not to be heard or answered.

### **Children’s’ Duties to their Parents (3:20)**

*“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”*

The obligation of children to obey their parents is complete “in all things.” In Ephesians 6:1, the wording is, “Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*: for this is right.” No other reasons are given. The natural order of God’s creation demands that children be under obedience to their parents. Paul continued by saying, “Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.” It is interesting to note how Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quoted one of the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus 20:12 and applied it to those living under the New Testament of Jesus Christ. He, however, reworded the promise from, “... that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee ...” to “... that thou mayest live long on the earth.”

This obedience can, I believe, be seen in several Old Testament examples. Similarly, examples of disobedience can also be found – sometimes in the very same family and under the direction of the very same parents! Abel, the youngest son of Adam and Eve, was faithful and obedient but was killed by his own brother, Cain.<sup>24</sup> The three sons of Noah were, from every indication, faithful and obedient sons, faithful in the midst of one of the most corrupt and wicked periods of history of the world.<sup>25</sup>

Abraham's son Isaac was a lad who was old enough to carry the wood upon one of the mountains of Moriah, but he submitted himself to his father and allowed himself to be tied and laid upon the wood of the altar. The altar was built for his own bodily sacrifice! Esau, the oldest son of Isaac and Rebekah, is called a profane person because he despised his birthright, and he did not honor his parents in his selection of wives.<sup>26</sup> The older sons of Jacob did not honor him but caused him much grief.<sup>27</sup> However, Joseph pleased his father and suffered much evil from the hands of his brothers.<sup>28</sup>

The duties of children toward their parents are clearly presented in the person of twelve-year-old Jesus. After his mother and father had sought him for three days, sorrowing, and finding him in the temple, the Bible says, "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."<sup>29</sup>

### **Fathers' (Parents') Duties to their Children (3:21)**

*"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."*

As noted in our study of the duties of Christian husbands, the position of the father in the home is as the head of the wife and, therefore, of the family. His position of authority and, possibly, his superior body strength might tempt him to become domineering and/or intimidating over his wife and children. He is commanded not to provoke his children. We note that the words *to anger* are italicized, indicating that they have been added by the translators to give completeness to the thought. However, the word *provoke* means, "*to stimulate (especially to anger).*"<sup>30</sup>

The parallel verse of Ephesians 6:4 reads, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." In this, we see the alternative goal or the positive purpose. Our actions as fathers must not be toward a negative end, but, rather, our corrections and disciplines must be administered in order to guide our children toward useful and fruitful lives as servants of the Lord.

It has been noted that in connection with the story of Moses, the word *parents* in Hebrews 11:23 is the same word that is

translated *fathers* in all other uses in the scriptures.<sup>31</sup> This may indicate that these duties and responsibilities apply to mothers as well as to fathers and that both parents have the duty not to provoke their children to anger.

### **Servants' Duties to their Masters (3:22-25)**

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.”

The word *servants* of our text applies immediately to one who is *in bondage: a slave*.<sup>32</sup> The word *slavery* does not appear in the King James Version; *slave* appears only twice. In Jeremiah 2:14, it is italicized; in Revelation 18:13 it refers to *bodies*. Paul directs more words and space to the relationship between servant and master/master and servant than to any of the others. This may be because of the great occurrence of it in the Greek and Roman worlds. During the time between the testaments, perhaps one third of the population of Athens was made up of slaves, and in Rome even poor people owned them.<sup>33</sup> Plutarch, a Greek biographer and essayist who lived A.D. 46? – c. 120, reported that in the year 167 B.C. 150,000 slaves were sold in a single market.<sup>34</sup> There were more slaves in the Roman Empire than there were citizens. Their enormous numbers are considered a major factor in the eventual downfall of the Roman empire.<sup>35</sup>

During the period of Roman slavery, “the slave had no protection whatever against the avarice, rage, or lust of his master.”<sup>36</sup> Slaves were considered less than human. They were often mutilated, tortured, and killed for any or no offence. They were often forced to become prostitutes and gladiators. Their “marriages” (temporary unions) were dissolved at the master’s will. There was no law concerning any obligation to care for the sick and hurt.

With this knowledge in mind, it does not surprise us that, when the gospel of Christ was preached, the message of love,



brotherhood, goodwill, and hope was happily received by many slaves. Many believed and were baptized into Christ. The congregations of the Lord's church in Colossae, Ephesus, and in many other places were, no doubt, composed of many slaves.

The institution of slavery, however, did not immediately cease, nor did all masters obey the gospel. The economic system of slavery continued, but, under the principles of the gospel, the relations between master and servant were greatly improved. The positive effect of the gospel of Christ upon the relationship between servant and master was immediate and powerful; where the gospel was preached and believed, the terrible abuses of slavery ceased.

Let us note, in more detail, the duties of the Christian servant to his master.

The Christian servant is under the command of Christ to obey his master *in all things*. The new birth does not automatically dissolve the condition of slavery. The masters are only *masters according to the flesh* and have no authority over the soul, yet the Christian servant is to be obedient. They are not to obey only when the master is watching them but at all times.

Servants are to obey *in singleness of heart*. This means *in sincerity of mind*.<sup>37</sup> This obedience is to be given from the heart and in fear and trembling of God. Again, their work is to be done *heartily*. That is, "*from the soul*."<sup>38</sup> Servants who have been born again are now in the Master's service, and they serve Christ even as they obey their masters of the flesh.

The principles of reward and punishment from the Lord are to guide the Christian workers. The promise of an eternal inheritance will be given to all servants who will be faithful to these duties, to the bond and the free. God is no respecter of persons.

Other New Testament scriptures apply to the servant and master relationship. Paul commanded the Corinthian slaves not to let their bondage matter to them; they were to abide in the condition of their calling. Christian slaves are made free in the Lord; Christian freemen are Christ's servants. 1 Corinthians 7:21-

23. If they have the opportunity to be free, they should, of course, use it.

The apostle Peter addressed the question of whether or not Christian slaves are required of God to submit to masters who treat them harshly. He said, “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” He, then, applied the principle that pertains to every Christian.

“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” -1 Peter 2:18

The word *froward* means, *crooked*.<sup>39</sup> It means *perverse*<sup>40</sup> and is used in contrast to *good and gentle*. It is translated *untoward* in Acts 2:40. When we, slaves or free, obey the commands to repent and to be baptized for the remission of sins, we are delivered from the power of darkness – a crooked and perverse generation – and are added to the church. That is, we are translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son.<sup>41</sup> It is, then, for conscience sake that we suffer wrongly for good as we follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Masters’ Duties to their Servants (4:1)**

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

The last relationship of our assignment is that of the master with his servants. The force of the gospel of Christ demands that masters give their servants that which is *just* and *equal*. The word *just* means *right* or *equitable*. *Equitable* means dealing fairly and equally with all concerned. This is surely one of the main principles of the gospel that has led, ultimately, to the complete demise of slavery wherever the gospel has been received. If masters will grant to their servants that which is just and equal, the basis of slavery is destroyed.

Earthly masters must always remember that they have a Master in heaven. As slaves or servants are to serve their masters

in the flesh as they would serve Christ, so masters are to likewise treat their servants.

When Paul wrote to Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus from his prison cell, his letter was evidently carried by Philemon's servant Onesimus. The context of Paul's letter reveals that Onesimus left his master, Philemon, and, somehow, encountered Paul who was in a Roman prison. Paul had taught Onesimus the gospel, and he had obeyed it from the heart. He had run away, but now, in Christ, he was voluntarily returning. Paul besought Philemon to receive Onesimus, not as a slave but as a beloved brother. How did he receive him? We cannot help but believe Paul's words were persuasive.

### Conclusion

We have sought to study what the Bible teaches concerning some of the most basic and important relationships of life: the relationships between wives and husbands, between parents and children, and between slaves/servants and masters. The slave-master economic system does not now exist in our nation. However, the principles taught by God's Word certainly apply to every employee/employer relationship in every economic system of every nation of the world. Truly, the gospel of Christ is of the greatest blessing to everyone in every relationship of life!

My closing prayer is that of Epaphras. May all of us stand perfect and complete in all the will of God!<sup>42</sup>

### END NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> "Having done with general directions, the apostle comes to particular duties, which are commonly called relative because they only belong to persons in certain situations; and are not incumbent on all. No *woman* has the duty of a *wife* to perform but she who is one, and no *man* has the duty of a husband to perform but he who is married." *The New Testament with A Commentary and Critical Notes*, Adam Clarke, Vol. II. p. 529; See also *The Holy Bible with Notes*, Joseph Benson, Vol. V., p. 1038; p. 52; and *The People's New Testament with Explanatory Notes*, B.W. Johnson, Vol. II, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> A good discussion of this is found in Curtis Vaughn's, *Colossians – A Study Guide Commentary*, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Strong, James, S.T.D., LL.D. *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. McLean: MacDonald Publishing Company. (5293).

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy 2:11-15. All Biblical quotations and references are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 3:16.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:3.

<sup>7</sup> Titus 2:4.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 4:19.

<sup>9</sup> Abraham (Genesis 16:3,4); Esau (Genesis 26:34, 35; 28:9); Jacob (Genesis 29:18-30:9); Gideon (Judges 8:30); Elkanah (1 Samuel 1:1, 2); David (1 Samuel 18:27; 25:42-44; 2 Samuel 3:3-5; 5:13-16; 11:27; 1 Kings 1:2-4; 1 Chronicles 3:1-8); Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-3).

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 19:1-9.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:2.

<sup>12</sup> Strong. (5399).

<sup>13</sup> Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary*. Vol. 6. Hendrickson Publishers, 1991. pp. 576, 577.

<sup>14</sup> Hebrews 11:8.

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 5:25-27.

<sup>16</sup> Strong. (25).

<sup>17</sup> Strong. (4087).

<sup>18</sup> *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985. (4087).

<sup>19</sup> English Standard Version.

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians 4:31, 32.

<sup>21</sup> James 3:10.

<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 3:7.

<sup>23</sup> Strong. (4789).

<sup>24</sup> Genesis 4:1-8; Hebrews 11:4.

<sup>25</sup> Genesis 6, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 26:34, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Genesis 34:25-30.

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 37:19-28.

<sup>29</sup> Luke 2:40-51.

<sup>30</sup> Strong. (2042).

<sup>31</sup> Vaughn, Charles. *Colossians – A Study Guide Commentary*, p. 107. See also Vine's entry *Parents*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Strong. (1401); *Vine's*.

<sup>33</sup> "Slavery." *The World Book Encyclopedia*. 1979 ed. Vol. 17, p. 414.

<sup>34</sup> "Slavery." *Grolier Encyclopedia of Knowledge*. 1991 ed. Vol. 17, p. 116.

<sup>35</sup> *Grolier*, p. 116.

<sup>36</sup> McClintock, John, and James Strong. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. Vol. IX, p. 797. This article, entitled “Slavery,” contains much of the information provided here.

<sup>37</sup> *Vine’s*. (572)

<sup>38</sup> *Vine’s*. (5590).

<sup>39</sup> Luke 3:5.

<sup>40</sup> *Vine’s*. (4646).

<sup>41</sup> Colossians 1:13.

<sup>42</sup> Colossians 4:12-13.

## REAFFIRMING THE RESTORATION

James E. Farley

I know a brother in Ohio who has restored two 1962 Chevrolet Impala Super Sport automobiles to their original condition. These cars are marvelous to behold, and look as if they have just come off the showroom floor at the dealership. He told me that he has at least \$50,000 in both vehicles, and many, many long hours of work--not to mention the many telephone calls, letters, etc. looking for original parts. He and his son took these cars completely apart, taking out every bolt, nut and screw, and then rebuilt them using all original parts! These cars are just as they were in 1962; they are totally restored to their original condition! Many of the original parts had to be purchased from individuals across the country. However, I was amazed to learn that there are also warehouses full of original parts of past automobiles left over from when the cars were originally constructed. This includes screws, nuts, bolts, upholstery, gear shifts, steering wheels, etc.

Just as dedicated and skilled people, like the one mentioned above, can restore an automobile from a former generation, so a faithful and dedicated group of people can restore the original church of Christ in our day and time. To be sure, it does indeed take commitment, dedication, time, and a great effort to do this, but it can and must be done!

Furthermore, in the above example if the cars are not constantly maintained and protected, they can and will revert back to their deteriorated state. Just so, if we are not vigilant about reaffirming in every generation the restoration plea, the church will gradually, but assuredly slip back into denominationalism. We certainly see this happening today as the so-called "change agents" are de-emphasizing the restoration of New Testament Christianity. Many of our congregations, sound and solid in past years, are now closer to denominationalism than to the church of the Bible.

Jesus Christ established His church in the First Century. (Matthew 16:16-18). The Word tells us that Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The way our God has chosen to seek and to save the lost is through the preaching of the gospel of Christ. He said to his disciples, "Let us go into the next towns, that I

may preach there also; for this purpose came I forth” (Mark 1:38). He came to seek and to save the lost. He came to do this through preaching. This is God’s plan for today as well. The gospel is the “power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16-17). We are commissioned by our Lord, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15; Compare Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48). God has placed the marvelous treasure of the gospel of Christ into our hands; “...we have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7). He has chosen preaching as the way to reach the lost (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:13-17; I Corinthians 1:18, 21; 2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5).

In the First Century, the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved by Him. He continues to do so today, for He is the author of our salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:37-47; Hebrews 5:8-9). Those who were truly saved in the First Century, and those who are truly saved today, are in the church of Christ (His church). He who saves us is the One who places us into His church, and those who are in the church are those who have been saved by Him. He is the head of the church, which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23). There is one body (church) that is His (Ephesians 2:16; 4:4). And, He is the Savior of the body (church). (Ephesians 5:23). Therefore, when we inquire as to whom He will save, we know from the Word of God that He will save “the body” (church). Those who are outside the church of Christ are not saved.

### DEPARTURE FORETOLD

The Word foretold that men would depart from the faith, and pervert the gospel (I Timothy 4:1-3; Galatians 1:6-10). Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that some, even some from among their very number would “arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:28-30). He called such men “grievous wolves” and warned that they would “enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (v. 29). Paul warned them, therefore, to “take heed,” and to “watch”. This was, of course, just an echo of what our Lord warned before this time. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). These admonitions “Beware” “take heed” “watch” are as vital today as they were in the First Century.

A principle we need to be aware of is this: God's people, in every age, have remained faithful to Him for only short periods of time. They very often departed from His righteousness, and went after the false ways of men. Each time faithful proclaimers of the Truth had to call them back to restoration. Think of the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah with this in mind. Their job, as was the job of the other prophets, was to call upon people to repent and to return to God.

This fact tells us that many (maybe even most) men are basically fickle creatures who have a propensity toward inconsistency and vacillation. The strong and faithful Christian today has a responsibility to help the weak and indecisive. Often this means restoring them back to their first love, even today (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20). It certainly means that we must contend with those who teach false doctrines, drawing away disciples into error. "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them" (Proverbs 28:4; Compare Romans 16:17-18; I John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Jude 3, 4).

The departure from "the faith" was, in fact, happening in some places even while the apostles were still living (Romans 16:17-18; I John 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 2:2; etc.). Gradually, over a period of time, because of men's inattention, and complacency, innovations crept into the preaching and teaching--into the work, organization and worship of the church.

### THE DEPARTURES COME

The first departures were, just as the apostle had warned, among the leadership of the church. Men began to be elevated above where they should have been. This error was gradual over a period of a few hundred years. Among the bishops (elders) there came the practice of having one elder to be chief in each congregation. He became the "arch-bishop." By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century the idea of the "Clergy / laity" began to take shape, and by 175 A.D. some writers were referring to "Bishops" as a different office from that of elder. The "Bishop" was over the other elders.

After a time these "bishops" began to meet and formed a "diocese," and they elected one from among their number to be the chief "arch-bishop" over an entire area where several congregations



were located. This error continued to evolve until, in 606 A.D., they finally elected their first “universal bishop” or “pope” and the Catholic Church was fully born. In fact in 533 A.D., Emperor Justinian declared that John II was “Lord of the Church”. There was a constant maneuvering for power and position. This resulted in times when there was more than one “pope.” In fact, the Catholic Church has an embarrassment when it comes to the line of succession. They really have no idea who succeeded whom, and they have different lines of “popes.” However, for the next one thousand years this harlot reigned supreme throughout Western Europe. There was a split among the Catholics in the 1000’s. The Eastern group did not care for the dictation of the Roman Church, and the “Eastern Orthodox Church” came to be with its headquarters at Constantinople. Two of the things they saw as error among the Roman Catholic Church were sprinkling for baptism, and the addition of mechanical instrumental music in worship. By 1100 in the Western (Latin) Church, Papal Decrees were universally regarded with equal weight as Scripture.

Among the Western Catholic Churches, Bible reading was prohibited in 1229 which helped to plunge Europe into “The Dark Ages.” The selling of indulgences began in 1190 and the practice was in “full swing” by 1250. It was about 1009 that holy water was instituted. In 1123 the decree came that the “Clergy” should be celibate. By 1200 the Catholics were practicing “clinical baptism,” which was sprinkling water on people who were on their death beds. It was in the early 1200’s that the practice of praying to and through Mary began (In 1967 she was totally deified by the Roman Catholic Church). On and on and on the Catholic Church plunged further and further into error and into a departure from the Word of God.

## THE REFORMATION IN EUROPE

Beginning in the 1300’s among some, the Reformation began to take root. There was an awakening to knowledge. John Wycliffe (1328 – 1384) was one who began to oppose the Roman Church. He was a “Clergyman”, but he saw just how far Rome had departed from the Truth. He opposed the Pope’s authority, and said that the Bible, not the Church, was the only authority in religion. He called the Pope

“Anti-Christ” which, of course, did not go over very well at all. Wycliffe called for the Church to “re-model” itself after the pattern in the New Testament. He boldly said that the only two offices in the church should be elders and deacons. Wycliffe translated the Bible into English using the Latin Vulgate. He was renounced by the Catholics, and thirty-one years after his death the Catholic Church removed his bones from their tomb, burned them, and scattered the ashes over the Avon River. This was to show that they were not going to tolerate those who opposed their iron-clad rule over Europe.

John Huss (1369 – 1415) took the ball from Wycliffe and ran with it. He adopted Wycliffe’s views of the Bible being our only authority--not the Church at Rome, not the Pope. He was very vocal and called publicly for reform. The Catholics burned him at the stake in 1415.

William Tyndale (1495 – 1546) made an excellent English translation from the Greek texts into English. People began to be able to read the Bible for themselves, not having to rely upon Catholic Clergy to read and interpret it for them.

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) was an Augustine Monk who opposed the abuses of the Church at Rome, stating that the Bible is the only authority, and not the Pope or the Catholic Church. In 1517 he posted his Ninety-five Thesis on the church house door at Wittenburg, Germany. He challenged the Roman Church particularly on the sale of “indulgences” at that time. In 1520 he wrote three pamphlets calling for the church to reform. Luther was excommunicated and had to flee for his life and go into hiding. He translated the Bible into the German language.

Ulrich Zwingli (1484 – 1531) led a reformation movement in Switzerland. He opposed Luther on some points, namely Luther’s readjustment of the Catholic error of Transubstantiation (the bread and fruit of the vine become the literal body and blood of Jesus when the priest says Mass). Luther adapted this false doctrine into one equally false, that of Consubstantiation (the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Jesus only after they are taken into the believer’s body after they are consumed.) Zwingli opposed both false views and said that the bread and fruit of the vine are only to represent the body and blood of Jesus.

John Calvin (1509 – 1564) was born in Noyon, France, but did most of his reform work in Geneva, Switzerland. Early in his

adult life Calvin was a humanist, but became familiar with the teachings of Martin Luther and began to formulate his own brand of reformation theology. In 1536 Calvin published his famous and influential *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin was invited to help consolidate the reformation in and around Geneva, Switzerland, but the people of Geneva soon rejected him and expelled him from the city. He was invited back in 1541 and soon became the most prominent and influential leader there, imposing his doctrines and moral codes upon the population. He even had some of his opposition and critics arrested and burned at the stake.

CALVINISM was actually a restoration or a restatement of many of the teachings of Augustine, bishop of Hyppo (354-430). A millennium before Calvin was born, Augustine was already teaching the false doctrine of hereditary depravity. Augustine's false position on man's "inherited sin" led him to the doctrines of irresistible grace, and the direct working of the Holy Spirit on the sinner's heart. After Augustine's time, there was very little heard about total hereditary depravity and irresistible grace until the time of Calvin, who merely borrowed from Augustine and then went further into error.

Calvinism is a system that is *woven into the fabric of almost every Protestant denomination in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*," Jerry C. Brewer said in his article "What Is Calvinism?" One of Calvin's students, John Knox, took the teachings to Scotland and there the denominations associated with Presbyterianism were greatly affected by them. Calvinism was basically the religion of the Puritans that came to America. Much of Calvinism found its way into the teachings of the Church of England (Anglicanism). The entire Holiness or "Pentecostal" movement can trace its lineage back to the fundamental teachings of Calvinism. This is due to the influence that John and Charles Wesley had on the holiness movement; both were influenced greatly by Calvin. Many modern Baptist Churches are hosts for Calvin's teaching.

Limited time and space prevents us from delving further into other reformation personalities and events. One would do well to study the Anabaptist movement. These were various (often differing) groups who each taught believer's baptism. They rejected infant baptism, and believed the church consisted only of those believers who were baptized. These were most always persecuted by Catholics,

as well as by the followers of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli (Protestants).

A study of the Reformation would also include a study of how the Anglican Church came to be. The marriages and divorces of Henry VIII, as he desperately desired a male heir to his throne, caused him to be at odds with Roman Catholic teaching. Basically, he simply kicked out all of the Catholic priests from England, confiscated their lands and properties, and formed his own church, with Henry as the head of that body.

### THE RESTORATION OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

The Reformation was an important development, and one that opened the way for a full restoration of New Testament Christianity. However, the Reformation in Europe served to develop more problems with the establishment of the many “Protestant” denominations. The Lutheran Church began in 1530; The Anglican Church or Church of England began in 1534; with its American offshoot, Episcopalianism, beginning in 1609; the Congregational Church began in 1608; the Methodists began in 1739, with the various “holiness” groups dividing from it in the 1800’s; The Church of the Brethren began in 1609; Presbyterianism began when John Calvin’s student, John Knox, took Calvinism to Scotland in 1536; the first Baptist Church on record was in 1611; etc., etc., etc. As time went on, these groups sub-divided, and continue to do so even to this day.

Many writers contend that there were indeed congregations throughout Europe during the Reformation period that were indeed churches of Christ. These opposed by Catholicism and Protestantism and were often lumped together by the general term “Anabaptists”. Hans Grimm is one such writer. In his *History and Traditions of Early Churches of Christ in Central Europe*, he gives convincing arguments for such.

It is a fact that seed produces after its kind (Genesis 1:11-12), and what one sows that is what he will reap (Galatians 6:7-8). The “seed” is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). If a person, in any age, plants only the “seed” of God, that which will be produced will be God’s plant (compare Matthew 15:13). It is therefore probable that there have been many indigenous restoration movements around the world during every age when men and women had access to the Word of

God. I have no doubt that congregations of the church of Christ have existed throughout the ages since the First Century. One does not have to produce an unbroken line of churches for this to be true. Wherever the Word of God (the “seed”) is planted in honest and good hearts, Christians will be produced.

For our purposes here today, I want us to concentrate on the “American Restoration Movement”. In the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, many men, at first working independently of one another and know nothing of the other’s work, began teaching and preaching that religious denominationalism (division) was contrary to God’s Word, and therefore sinful (compare John 17:20-21; I Corinthians 1:10-13; Ephesians 4:4-6). These were strong men, independent thinkers, using the Bible as their only guide in matters of faith and practice. There was James O’Kelly of Virginia, Abner Jones and Elias Smith of New England, Barton W. Stone of Kentucky, and Thomas and Alexander Campbell of Western Virginia (what is now West Virginia). These independent movements took the name “Christian” as their only proper name. Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone are certainly the two most prominently known figures of this time. Those who were of the Stone movement typically called themselves “Christians”, while those of the Campbell movement typically called themselves “disciples of Christ”. By the 1830’s, congregations throughout the nation began to see that they were pleading for the same things, organizing alike, worshipping God after the New Testament order etc. On New Year’s Day, 1832, representatives from these two movements met in Lexington, Kentucky. At this meeting, “Raccoon” John Smith said, “Let us, then my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need.”

From this time the movement gained great momentum and spread throughout the western frontier of our new nation. Thousands heard the Word preached through the efforts of men like Campbell, Stone, “Raccoon” John Smith, and Walter Scott, and were obedient to the ancient order becoming Christians only.

## THE CONCEPT OF RESTORATION IS CERTAINLY BIBLICAL

One only has to study the work of the prophets of old to know this is so. Their work was to call Israel back to God from whom they had drifted. In the New Testament, the principle of restoration can be seen in such passages as I Corinthians 1:10-13; Galatians 6:1-2; Revelation chapters 2 & 3.

There is an excellent example of the restoration principle found at Nehemiah 8. The setting is after the people had returned from their 70 years of captivity. Now, they were back in the land and desiring to do God's will. Nehemiah 8 was during the seventh month (Nehemiah 7:73, 82). The law was read and explained to the people so that they could know and understand it (Nehemiah 8:2, 7, 8). The people, having spent 70 long years in Babylonian captivity for their disregard for the law and for their disobedience, are now ready to hear and do (Nehemiah 8:3, 5, 6, 13)!

Certainly we need to have this same attitude today. We need to have a willingness to hear and to understand the law of God so that we can be well-pleasing to Him (Luke 8:8; John 7:17; 8:31-32; Ephesians 3:3-5; 5:17). We need preachers and teachers today who will take the time to handle the Word of God in a right way, and truly teach others God's will (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 4:2-4).

On the second day of the seventh month "they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month" (Nehemiah 8:14-15). Now, it had been a long time since the people had kept the "feast of tabernacles". In fact, they had not kept this feast "*since the days of Joshua the son of Nun*" (Nehemiah 8:17). It was this kind of an attitude of neglect that had caused them to depart from God, and consequently spend those 70 years in captivity!!!

What did they do? Remember, it was the seventh month when they found this forgotten commandment, and the commandment from God was that they dwell in "booths" or "tabernacles" for a week during the seventh month. Now, they could have said, "Well, that old way was probably good for our fathers and grandfathers, but we are more progressive today, and we really don't think the Lord will hold it against us if we just keep on going as we have been for all these years." They could have reasoned, "Now, I like the 'old-time ways,'

and if not keeping this feast was good enough for our parents, it is good enough for me!” They could have asked, “God is love; do you really think he will punish us for not keeping just this one little commandment? Why, I don’t think this is a ‘salvation issue anyway.’”

***BUT THEY DID NOT SAY ANY OF THESE THINGS!!!*** They *restored* a forgotten commandment of the Lord, and did it with “great gladness” (Nehemiah 8:16-18). Did they begin a new religion? NO! Did they write a new creed? NO! Because the people followed the godly Ezra and Nehemiah in restoring this forgotten way, should they be called “Ezra-ites” -or- “Nehemiah-ites”? NO! These were simply people who had the will to go back and walk in the old paths, the good way, and they were blessed by God as a result (compare Jeremiah 6:16).

**THIS IS PRECISELY OUR PLEA TODAY AMONG THE  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST:  
“COME BACK TO THE BIBLE! FOR THE BIBLE ONLY MAKES  
CHRISTIANS ONLY!!!”**

The divided state of denominationalism with all of its confusing creeds, catechisms, councils, confessions of faith, disciplines and dogmas, is contrary to the will of God and is therefore sinful (I John 3:4; John 17:20-21; I Corinthians 1:10-13; 2 John 9; Matthew 15:13)! When people go back to the Bible for all they do and say in religion, this does not make them “Campbell-ites,” “Stone-ites,” “Farley-ites,” or any other kind of “ite” !!!

The Bible only makes Christians ONLY!!! (Luke 8:11; Matthew 15:13). If Don Varney gives me a pound of old time, cut-short, corn field bean seeds that he and his family have saved for generations, can I just change the name of the bean seed to “Varney” simply because a man named “Varney” gave me the seed? NO! No matter who gave me the seeds, they are still bean seeds and that’s all they will produce. They won’t produce little Varneys when I plant them, will they? Well, when a man, a man named Campbell or Stone gives “the seed” which is the Word of God to another man, just because they gave the seed does not mean that the seed will produce “Campbell-ites” or “Stone-ites”. The seed will produce only what the information within the seed says! Therefore, THE BIBLE ONLY

MAKES CHRISTIANS ONLY, AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE  
AMONG THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST--CHRISTIANS ONLY!!!



## “And Now, In Conclusion” Col. 4:2-18

Douglas A. Petty

The body of this great epistle has been drawn to a conclusion. In this lectureship, it has been effectively shown that the book of Colossians clearly sets forth the essence of true Christianity, “*and ye are complete in Him*” (Col. 2:10). This epistle exalts Jesus Christ as: the agent of creation, the sustainer of that creation, the head of the church, and the one who has made known God’s will for the lives of men. The apostle Paul clearly expounds what faith in Christ really means to the life of a Christian, “*Christ in you the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:27). This epistle brings together in the space of four concise chapters what is perhaps the most complete and compelling single revelation of the person, place, and work of Jesus Christ in all the Bible!

We would do well to remember that the “*rulers of the darkness of this world*” (Eph. 6:12) have constantly challenged the completeness of Christ, and continues to do so even today. Therefore, the message of the epistle to the brethren at Colossae is both relevant and sorely needed by God’s children today.

My assigned task is to bring the study of this wonderful epistle to a conclusion by looking at the messages presented by Paul in *verses 2-18* of the final chapter.

In *verses 2-4* we find the apostle giving the brethren at Colossae exhortations concerning prayer. Paul begins by showing the need for **perseverance** in prayer. William Hendriksen, in his commentary on Colossians, makes an important observation concerning perseverance in prayer: “*Sometimes the answer does not come at once because we are not as yet ready to receive the blessing; sometimes, because the blessing is not yet ready for us. Besides, if whenever we prayed God immediately granted the petition, would we appreciate the blessing?*” We must remember that Paul wrote these words while in prison. A “**door**” is an opportunity to enter, a means of approach or access. Paul, as a prisoner, did not pray for a door of exit from the prison, but for a door for the entrance of the message of the gospel of Christ into

the hearts and minds of men. It is hypocrisy for us to pray for an open door if we are not fully prepared and willing to enter in through it when God provides it. Because of Paul's perseverance in prayer, we find in *Philippians 1:12-18* and *Acts 28:30-31* that doors of opportunity were opened to him. This should be a source of encouragement to God's children today as we seek opportunities to spread the saving message of the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world.

We also find that it was Paul's desire to speak concerning the "*mystery of Christ.*" While we could spend many hours looking at the various aspects of this "mystery", I believe Burton Coffman captured the thought of this immediate context when he wrote: "*One of the salient features of the mystery stressed so often by Paul was that of God's purpose of inclusion of the Gentiles in one body with the Jews as children of God; and specifically, it was for that very conviction that Israel hated Paul and created a mob scene which led directly to his imprisonment*". It was Paul's desire to preach the message of inclusion; that ALL men, Jew and Gentile alike, might find salvation in Christ Jesus and be brought into a right relationship with God through their obedience to the gospel.

In *verses 5-6* we find Paul's exhortation to the brethren at Colossae concerning "*them that are without*" (aliens, those outside the body of Christ, the church). Paul urges them to use wisdom in their choice of words as they reached out to the lost of their community. When a **good** message is proclaimed in a **bad** way it can do more harm than good.

The wisdom under consideration is the wisdom that comes from above (*James 1:5-6*). In these verses we find the depth of feeling and genuine concern that must be present within the hearts and minds of those who are seeking the lost. To this point Alexander Maclaren wrote: "*They sound to me like the expression of a man conscious of the security and comfort and blessedness of the home where he sat, and with his heart yearning for all the houseless wanderers that were abiding the pelting of the pitiless storm out in the darkness there. The spirit and attitude of Christianity to such is one of yearning pity and urgent entreaty to come in and share in the blessings*".

Paul's use of the phrase "*redeeming the time*" simply means that he wanted them to make the most of the time they had. The words from which the phrase is translated are, *exagoradzo* (to buy up for oneself; buying up the opportunity", and *karios* (a season, a time in which something is seasonable) according to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words.

I am sure that we have all heard, and possibly even uttered, the expression "*Time is money*", but with Paul time was an **opportunity** to conduct himself wisely towards those outside of Christ by teaching them about the salvation offered by God through His glorious Son!

In *verses 7-9*, Paul informs the brethren at Colossae that he is sending this epistle to them by **Tychicus** and **Onesimus**, men who were well known to the church. Besides their work of delivering this epistle, they were appointed to tell the Colossians all other personal news concerning Paul, and to comfort and exhort the brethren. Tychicus had been a faithful companion of Paul on the third missionary journey, and he had also carried an epistle from Paul to the church at Ephesus. He had proven himself a faithful minister and servant, and had shown great courage in openly showing himself as a friend of one being held prisoner by the Roman government.

Along with Tychicus, Paul sends Onesimus, a runaway slave who had made his way to Rome (*cf. Philemon 10-19*). In his letter to the church at Colossae he did not refer to Onesimus as a runaway slave, but rather as a faithful and beloved brother.

In closing out this epistle in *verses 10-17*, Paul sends greetings from some of the brethren who had assisted him in Rome and who would be known by those at Colossae. Consider this brief synopsis of those listed by Paul: **Aristarchus**, a Macedonian from Thessalonica who had been with Paul at Ephesus; **Mark** is John Mark who had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, and was also closely associated with Peter who called him "*my son*" (*1 Pet. 5:13*); **Justus**, of whom we know nothing about except that he was a Jewish convert; **Epaphras**, who had taught in Colossae (*Col. 1:7*) and was a faithful servant; **Luke**, a medical doctor who often travelled with Paul, and was the writer of the books of *Luke* and *Acts*; **Demas**, of whom we know little

and is mentioned here and in the books of *Philemon* and *2 Timothy* (where it is reported that he had left Paul and his Lord “*having loved this present world*”).

Paul now asks the church at Colossae to convey his greetings to the church at Laodicea, which was about 12 miles away and who was to receive this epistle also. The apostle then mentions **Nyphas** (who some scholars believe should be **Nympha**, the feminine form of the name) in whose house the church in Laodicea met. Finally, Paul mentions **Archippus** who was a member of the family of Philemon (*Philemon 1-2*). Some scholars believe that he may have been the son of Philemon. Two exhortations are given to Archippus: he was to look to his service and then fulfill it. Those who minister should not let any work pass by without fulfillment (*cf. 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Tim. 4:15*). Paul wanted him to be successful in his work at Colossae; successful not only in the eyes of men, but more importantly in the eyes of God.

Paul closes the epistle with a farewell greeting. Although Paul dictated this epistle to another person who did the actual transcribing, he authenticated the epistle by affixing his own signature. In this farewell greeting Paul requests the church at Colossae to remember his imprisonment for the cause of Christ. He now closes the letter by wishing that God’s grace would be upon them (his opening wish for them had been for grace – *Col. 1:2*). Grace is the greatest and most basic blessing of all. It is God’s favor in Christ and it transforms hearts and lives and leads one to greater service in the kingdom of our Lord. As a faithful servant of God, and as a beloved brother in Christ, Paul desires that God’s richest blessings be upon them.

#### END NOTES

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