"BACK TO BASICS: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT...?"

2008
The 29th Annual Lectureship
East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions

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2003
The 29th Annual Lectureship
East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions
Knoxville, Tennessee

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"BACK TO BASICS: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT..."

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DEDICATION

This year's lectureship book is dedicated to Art Gibbs, Jim Hutson, and Allen Mercer, elders of the Karns Church of Christ. These men provide excellent leadership for the Karns congregation and for the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Though relatively new to the eldership, each of them has demonstrated a true shepherd's heart. Their vision for the future of the congregation, as reflected in the statement that follows, is outstanding. They are a pleasure to work with and are clearly committed to the growth of both the congregation and ETSPM.

Art Gibbs has been married to his wife, Ann, for more than 50 years. They are the parents of three children, and they have seven grandchildren. Art became a Christian in 1960 and began preaching at area congregations just two years later. The Gibbs have been members at Karns for 21 years. Art retired from his work with Oak Ridge National Labratory in 1983. In 1969, along with two others, Art helped to organize the Teenage Christian Camp and served as its first Business Manager. In his spare time, Art enjoys woodworking.

Jim Hutson was baptized in 1949 by B.C. Goodpasture. He is married to the former Anna Lou Sewell, and they are the parents of three sons, all of whom are faithful members of the Lord's church and have fine Christian wives. They also have one grandson. Jim is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and holds both the BSIE and MSIE degrees. In addition to living in Tennessee, the Hutsons have lived in Georgia, Oklahoma, and Virginia, and have always been active in the church wherever they were. Jim has served as an adult Bible class teacher, a deacon, and an elder prior to coming to Karns in 2000.

Allen Mercer became a Christian as part of the campus outreach to the Florida State University. After graduating with a

degree in English, he moved to Miami, where he was re-introduced to his future wife, Corinne. Allen and Corrine have two daughters. The Mercers lived in Florida, New York, and North Carolina prior to moving to Tennessee and placing membership at Karns in 1998. They have both been very active in the church wherever they have lived as Bible class teachers and in outreach programs. Allen works for Covenant Health as a manager.

It is with great pleasure that we dedicate this lectureship book to these three fine men who mean so much to the cause of Jesus Christ and to the Karns congregation and ETSPM specifically.

- Tom Miller

KARNS VISION

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11-16 - NASV).

In Ephesians 4, Paul records God's divine plan for the church. If the church accepts and faithfully carries out this plan, the result will be a body of mature believers. Each member of the church must be dedicated to growing in the full measure of Christ-likeness and building up the other members of the body so that they, too, can attain the fullness of Christ.

This is the goal toward which the body of Christ should always be striving. Sometimes, however, we get sidetracked into emphasizing some part of the whole. Whether this emphasis centers around the worship services, the church building, fellowship, or even evangelism (and all of these focuses are good), they are only pieces of the whole and are only sustainable activities as they are motivated from that internal desire to become more like Christ. It is Christ-likeness for every member that is the goal for this congregation. This is God's measure of success; it doesn't stop at baptism or the attendance of the church services or various activities, but continues on until we experience maturity in Christ.

Now that we have identified the correct target, it is vital that we clearly identify what is required to reach that goal. Paul wrote, "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith." It would have been nice if he had said, "Until the strong attain," but he did not. He said, "all." We cannot be successful as a congregation until

the goal of each and every one of us is to be solid and mature in Christ. There is no room for pew-warmers in the Lord's church. However, God's desire is not that any of His children are eliminated from the roster, but rather that they mature and fulfill the responsibilities He has laid upon them.

The restoration of the church, as it is described in the New Testament, is a noble goal. As lofty as it is, we need to understand that the pattern we are following, the specs we are building to, is God's vision for the church. We have no choice but to follow it. Whether or not we will ever fully attain is not the main issue. In fact, as mere mortals, we will fall short of that vision. We will, however, get much closer to arriving, if we are all aiming at the correct goal. Paul was in no way a naïve idealist, but he did live his life with this idealistic purpose: "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power which mightily works within me" (Colossians 1:28-29).

Any plan we have for the church that does not practically address the requirement for all of us to attain maturity falls short of God's expectations and is, therefore, inadequate. Any such plan must be replaced with the one given in Scripture that will make us the church God wants us to be.

The ideal that Paul presents in this passage begins with those who are responsible for building up the body and equipping her for this work, namely: "the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers." Although the church does not have all of these offices today, she does have evangelists, pastors and teachers, and the fulfillment of this goal must fall on them. It is only when the spiritual leaders of a congregation whole-heartedly accept the responsibility of working together that the remainder of the body will attain maturity in Christ. Without this unity, we as a congregation have no hope of becoming the church that God intends for us to be.

In his address to the Ephesian elders, Paul explained what he did to implement this plan: "I did not shrink back from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). We have traditionally emphasized our public teaching; however, except in

the case of Bible studies with non-Christians, we have neglected the idea of private, one-on-one teaching in each other's homes. This is the heart-to-heart communication we must engage in, if we are going to achieve the fullness of God's dream. It is that "speaking the truth in love" that will allow us "to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). In this way, we will "sanctify Christ as Lord, in our hearts, and be ready to make a response to everyone who asks us about our hope" (1 Peter 3:15).

It is this vision for the church that every program at Karns must have at its core and as its goal. Every activity and every program must be viewed in this context of becoming Christ-like. Without this context, we will be engaging in efforts—however good they may be individually—that will not be sustainable and cannot help us arrive at completeness. However, if we allow God to re-mold our hearts after the fashion of His Son's, we will be transformed into the men and women that will allow the body to fulfill its true destiny of becoming the spiritual Israel of God.

Art Gibbs, Jim Hudson and Allen Mercer, as the elders of the Karns church of Christ, have set this Scriptural vision before the congregation. Their goal is to lead the members of this church in becoming more like Jesus Christ. Every activity and every program will be in support of that goal.

PREFACE

"Back to Basics" has never been needed more than today. "Basics" means "of, pertaining to, or forming a base; fundamental: a basic principle; the basic ingredient" (Webster's Encyclopedia Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, 1989). The Bible will be the base on all that is written in this book and in all the lessons preached. That is why we ask the question, What Does the Bible Say About...

The East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions recognizes that many have departed from many basic principles set forth in the Bible. Many are also asking, in view of all the changes taking place in our world, what does the Bible really have to say about these matters, or does it have anything to say? We believe that it does.

Forty-three different individuals will participate in the lectures in some capacity. The lectureship begins on Sunday morning, March 2, with Basil Overton discussing "What the Bible Says About the Bible." Perry Cotham is now 91 years of age and has been preaching more than 70 years. He will discuss the subjects of Preaching. There will be special classes for the ladies taught by Sara Jones, Jody Miller, Irene Taylor, Mary Smith, Jane Brown, and Felita Smotherman.

There will be lectures on at least thirty-seven different subjects, such as Marriage, Salvation, Worship, Cloning, Suicide, Balance, Eternal Punishment, Cremation, Eternal Reward, and many more. Well-qualified men will challenge our thinking each day.

Special thanks go to Amparo Henderson who has spent many hours getting the lessons camera-ready. Nell Rich, our dedicated secretary, did her usually splendid job in handling so

many details. Charles Brown has done his challenging job in proofreading all of the manuscripts. Our thanks to Wallace Alexander and the Gospel Light Publishing Company for the excellent job in printing the book.

We sincerely pray that the lessons in this book will prove a blessing now, and for many years to come. Let us get back to the Bible, learn what God wants us to do, and then do it.

James Meadows
Director,
Twenty-ninth Annual ETSPM Lectures

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SECTION I

GENERAL LESSONS

THE BIBLE

BASIL OVERTON



Basil Overton is editor of The World Evangelist, a gospel journal he started in 1972. He has been Vice President at Heritage Christian University (formerly IBC) since 1972, the year he started teaching there. He started preaching in 1945. Basil has been married to the former Margie Medling since 1945. They have four children (one deceased), ten grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Brother Overton attended FHC 1946-1949 and graduated with the highest honor conferred by the school. He attended Abilene Christian College (now university) two semesters. He has a B.A. Degree from Eastern KY State University; an M.A. from the University of KY; and a Doctor of Humanities Degree from Morehead State University.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

It may surprise some to learn that no one, not even preachers of the early centuries A.D. had nice leather bound, compact Bibles like we have. The reason for this was that Bibles and other books were not made in those early centuries as they are now made.

This does not mean the Bible did not exist in the early centuries A.D. The 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, which we have, existed then, and were recognized as the word of God. But they did not exist in the form as

we know books, because making of books as we know them was not started until hundreds of years later.

"The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13). **Books** of this verse is a translation of the Greek word *biblia* which at the time of Paul meant what we call **scrolls**. The singular form *biblos* originally referred to the inner bark of the papyrus plant. Because a sort of paper material on which writing was done was made out of this inner bark, the sheet or scroll of writing material was called *biblos*. Then what was written was called *biblos* as in the case of a "bill of divorcement" (Mark 10:4) and a "writing of divorcement" (Matt. 5:31; 19:7) and "book of the generation" (Matt. 1:1). "Bill," "writing," and "book" in these passages all are translations of *biblos.* The first word of the Greek New Testament is *Biblos* from which came the word **Bible**.

THE MAKING OF BOOKS

Until the 200's or 300's A.D. "books" were just scrolls which were usually rolled up. Manuscripts were written on sheets of papyrus, or animal skins called vellum. Sometime in the second or third century sheets of manuscripts were placed between two thin wooden boards and called codices. The next step in book making was the sewing of the boards and sheets together with cords. These sheets of manuscripts were handwritten because the printing press was not invented until 1453 by John Gutenberg in Germany.

Allegedly the Bible was the first book printed on Gutenberg's moveable type press. After his invention books of all kinds were printed cheaply and in large quantities. The making of books has flourished since then. Machine bookbinding was begun in the early 1800's.

"UNCIALS AND CURSIVES"

Scholars say the oldest known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament were written entirely with capital letters called "Uncials," or "inch long," which is obviously an exaggeration of the size of the letters. At Earl's School in Weakley County, Tennessee, we were told to call capital letters in English, "boxcar letters." The uncial Greek letters were used in copying the New Testament from about the 3rd Century to the 10th Century.

Beginning in the 9th Century Greek New Testaments were written with smaller letters called "cursives." The cursives were used until Gutenberg invented a printing press in the 15th century. There are many more cursive ancient Greek New Testament manuscripts than those in uncials. Scholars say the uncial manuscripts do not have the words separated.

EARLY TRANSLATIONS

James Smith said:

> The validity of the Gospel revelation was, even before the end of the first century, submitted to the general

> consideration of mankind. Nearly the whole of the Scriptures was before that period translated into Latin, a language so well and so extensively known as to be understood even in the remotest parts of the Roman Empire. The reception of these sacred books at a period when from their recent dates the truth of every circumstance might be without difficulty ascertained, is one among the numerous proofs of the truth of the Gospel.[1]

I take Dr. Smith's statement to mean that most of the 27 books of the New Testament had been translated from Greek into Latin by the end of the first century A.D. The apostle John wrote the Book of Revelation near the end of the first century A.D. It may not have been translated that soon.

According to McClintock and Strong the Peshito Syriac translation of the Bible was an authorized version. They and other scholars say the New Testament part of it was translated in the second century. Some scholars say it was not completed in the second century but completed many years later.

The Old Syriac and the Old Latin translations of the New Testament were made about 150 A.D.

In his book, *Early Versions Of The New Testament*, Dr. Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary says five or six versions of the New Testament were made in the Syriac language during the first six centuries of the Christian era. He

thinks this is significant testimony concerning the vitality and scholarship of Syrian churchmen of those centuries.

Dr. Metzger also says that the distinguished scholar Eberhard Nestle says that no others of the early church did more than Syrians for the translating of the Bible into their language, and that there are in European libraries old Syriac Bible manuscripts from Lebanon, Egypt, Sinai, Mesopotamia, Armenia, India, and even China!

Dr. Eberhard Nestle produced an excellent Greek text of the New Testament. It was incorporated into a good Greek-English Interlinear New Testament by Dr. Alfred Marshall. I have a copy of it at home, and one in my office.

A scholar named Tatian was one of the students of the famous Justin Martyr in Rome. He returned to the East in 172 A.D. He wrote a *Harmony of the Gospels* that was circulated in Syria.

The great Christian scholar of the second century whose name was Origen gave a full list of all the 27 books of the New Testament. So did Eusebius, another great scholar, about 100 years later.

The fact that the New Testament scriptures were translated into several other languages so early in the Christian Era is obvious evidence those scriptures not only existed then but were recognized as being very important.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ITSELF

The Assyrian word **ganu** and the Hebrew word **ganeh** meant reed, or tube. Evidently these developed into Greek **kanna** and Latin **canna**. The English word "cane" came from this word. Also, the English word "canon" came from it. Measuring sticks, like our yardsticks, were made from reeds or canes. So a canon was a measuring stick or line, or rule.

The writings admitted into the Bible were admitted because they were measured by the rule that the ones who wrote them were guided by God Almighty in what they wrote. Therefore these writings were measured or canonized. They constituted the sacred canon. So the sacred canon just means the Holy Scriptures, or what we know as the 66 books of the Bible. These constitute the inspired word of God.

THEY HAD CREDENTIALS

It was not difficult to determine whether or not a writer of the Bible wrote words which were given to him by God, or which were inspired of God. This is true of Old Testament as well as New Testament writings.

Peter said the Spirit of Christ was in the Old Testament prophets, which enabled them to write the things that they wrote (1 Peter 1:10-12). Peter also said that the Holy Ghost moved the Old Testament prophets to say what they said (2 Peter 1:21).

The Spirit of Christ being in the Old Testament prophets, and their being moved by the Holy Ghost

were demonstrated with visions; interpretations of dreams; escaping terrible situations like Daniel's not being hurt in a den of lions; miracles and wonders like the dividing of the Red Sea; water being turned to blood; a rod being turned into a serpent as in the case of Moses; and in various other ways.

There were signs, wonders and mighty deeds wrought by the power of God in and through New Testament writers (2 Cor. 12:12). Some tried to convince Christians in Ephesus that they were apostles. They were tried and proven to be liars (Rev. 3:1,2). These imposters were a bold contrast to those who were really guided by the Holy Spirit who had divine demonstrations and credentials to prove they were!

God does not will to perform miracles now. Miracles were confined to the times when God was revealing his will and having it written in His Holy Scriptures, the Bible. But, if God were now to perform miracles through men, and two men were to come into your community, both claiming that God was directing them in what they spoke and wrote, and one could perform miracles like changing water to blood, changing walking sticks into snakes, walking on water, raising people from the dead, and replacing missing arms, legs, or other body parts, and performing other such miracles, and the other man could not do such, which one would you accept as being inspired of, or directed by God in what he said? Of course your answer would be, "The one who could perform the miracles."

So, it was easy for people to know what books measured up, and should be admitted into the Sacred Canon, or the Holy Bible. Indeed, each case of inspiration in the Old Testament and in the New Testament was measured by valid credentials.

JESUS KNEW WHAT THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON WAS

Jesus Christ was well aware of the Canon of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, which he used, contained the 22 books which the Jews recognized as the divine books which were the same as the 39 books in our Old Testament.

There is no indication that Jesus differed with the Jews over what writings should be in the Old Testament. So, our blessed Savior is the greatest of all witnesses concerning the Sacred Canon of the Old Testament Scriptures.

My sons and I had the rare privilege of hearing the late Dr. Edward J. Young lecture at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, about 1965. We visited with him for a while. He was Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was recognized as one of the best scholars in the world on the Old Testament. His book, *An Introduction To The Old Testament*, is a classic. On page 38 he wrote concerning Christ and the other Jews about the Canonicity of any Old Testament book. He said what concerned Christ was not the Old Testament canon, which they accepted, but the oral traditions by which they made that canon void (Matthew 15:8).

There is no evidence that those Jews contended that their traditions were a part of that canon!

Obviously, our Lord did not refer to the New Testament scriptures when he referred to, or quoted from the Scriptures, because the New Testament was not written until after he ascended back to heaven. We know, therefore, that Jesus referred to, and quoted from, the very same Old Testament Scriptures, which we have. I do not mean that Jesus had the Old Testament Scriptures in the English language, for the English language did not come into existence until many hundreds of years after Jesus was on earth.

JESUS CHRIST USED THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Not only was Jesus well aware of the same Old Testament books which we have, he also relied on them heavily.

1. Jesus recognized the Old Testament Scriptures as the word of God (Mark 7:8-12).
2. The same text indicates that Jesus recognized the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative, and that those who lived under them were refusing to submit to God's authority if they did not follow them.
3. Jesus taught that what was written by Moses was what was spoken by God (Matt. 22:31, 32).

4. When our Lord was confronted by the arch-fiend of mankind, the devil himself, he quoted Old Testament Scriptures to overcome the temptations (Matt. 4).
5. The Savior used Old Testament Scriptures to expose the errors of the Sadducees (Matt. 22:29-32).
6. The Lord appealed to Old Testament Scriptures as examples of warning as in the case of Lot's wife (Luke 17:32).
7. The Savior referred a lawyer to the Old Testament Scriptures to find the answer to his question concerning eternal life (Luke 10:25, 26).
8. Jesus used Old Testament Scripture to prove his Messiahship (John 5:45-47). He said Moses wrote concerning him.
9. Isaiah in the Old Testament prophesied regarding the unbelief of the Jews who lived when Christ was on earth, and the Lord said he did (Matt. 13:14, 15).

Peter wrote to Christians:

> We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Officials of the Catholic Church misuse this text when they use it to support the idea that people cannot interpret the scriptures, but that they must rely on an official of the Catholic Church to do this for them. This is ironic because such a view is an obvious misinterpretation of this very passage!

The context of the passage and also the original text make it obvious that "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" means that what any prophet in the old Testament wrote did not come from the prophet's own interpretation of what was presented to his mind, for what he said was what the Holy Ghost said through him.

WHAT THE HOLY GHOST SAID

Not only did Jesus Christ recognize the Old Testament books we have, and quote from them as God's word, also he and others in the New Testament affirmed that what the Old Testament says was said by the Holy Ghost.

1. "And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, how say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool" (Mark 12:35, 36). Clearly, Jesus declared that what David said in Psalm 110:1 was really said by the Holy Ghost. One cannot really accept and believe the New Testament as an inspired book without also believing the

Old Testament was produced by the Holy Ghost.

2. Peter said, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judah, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry" (Acts 1:16, 17). Peter affirmed that what David said in Psalm 41:9 was really said by the Holy Ghost.
3. According to Luke in Acts 28:25-24, Paul told some Jews something Esaias had written in chapter six of his Old Testament book and Paul said concerning it, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers [...]" The Holy Ghost directed what New Testament writers wrote about how that what the Old Testament said was said by the Holy Ghost!
4. The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews affirmed that what David and Jeremiah wrote in the Old Testament was actually said by the Holy Ghost (Heb. 3:7-11; 10:15-17).

WHAT OTHERS HAVE WRITTEN

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived when Jesus and his apostles lived. He wrote some concerning the Old Testament Scriptures. What he refers to as 22 books are exactly the same as the 39 books in our Old Testament. In the Jewish Canon of Scripture, First and Second Samuel were one book; so were First and Second Kings; as were First and Second Chronicles. What we call the

Twelve Minor Prophets constituted one book. Other books were also combined in the Jewish Sacred Canon of the Old Testament so that their 22 books are exactly the same as the 39 books in our Old Testament. It is said the Jews arranged the Old Testament into 22 books because of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Here is something Josephus wrote about the Old Testament Canon.

> Because every one is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God himself by inspiration; and others have written what hath happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also.
>
> For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from, and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind, till his death. This interval of time was little short of 3000 years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of

> Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for, during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any changes in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willing to die for them. For it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theaters, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws and the records that contain them [...][2].

Dr. William Henry Green of Princeton Theological Seminary was a great Bible Apologist.

He defended the Bible as being the word of God. Concerning the 39 books of the Old Testament, Dr. Green wrote:

> No formal declaration of their canonicity was needed to give them sanction. They were from the first not only eagerly read by the devout, but believed to be divinely obligatory....Each individual book of an acknowledged prophet of Jeh, or of anyone accredited as inspired by him to make known his will, was accepted as the Word of God immediately upon its appearance [...] Those books and those only were accepted as the Divine standards of their faith, and regulative of their conduct which were written for this definite purpose by those whom they believed to be inspired of God.[3]

Jeh in the quotation from Dr. Green is a form of the Hebrew word for God.

REASSURING AND MOTIVATING

One lecture on the Bible can contain only a minute amount of the enormous amount of evidences that this Book was written by men who were guided in what they wrote by Almighty God.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may

be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 4:16, 17).

The word **inspiration** in this text is a translation of Greek *theopneustos*, which means **God breathed**. The word inspiration came from two Latin words: *in* and *spiare*. *Spiare* means to breathe. So, the word **inspiration** literally means **to breathe in**, whereas *theopneustos* means **God breathed**. God did not **breathe in**, when giving his word, but he **breathed out**. The word **expiration** expresses this concept. When we use the word **inspiration** referring to the scriptures we need to mean that God breathed out his word. The word *pnesutos* in *theopneustos* means wind, breath, or spirit.

The scriptures were breathed out by God. In using the Greek word *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul was saying the scriptures he referred to were of divine origin. He doubtless referred to the Old Testament scriptures and any New Testament scriptures which were then available.

Paul said of his own writings that he was writing what the Holy Spirit said (1 Tim. 4:1).

The scriptures did not come into being by the minds of men that were not guided by God. The scriptures were breathed out by God. Of course this is a figure of speech designed to convey the idea that the scriptures in the Bible were written by those whom God guided.

Inspiration of the Bible means there was miraculous action of the Spirit of God upon the minds

of those who wrote the Bible that caused them to write only as God willed! It is easier to believe this than it is to believe uninspired men wrote the Bible. It requires a much greater strain on one's credulity to believe the Bible is the word of man than is required to believe it was written by the direction of the God of infinite wisdom. Peter was guided by this infinite wisdom when he wrote that the beloved brother, the apostle Paul also wrote by this same wisdom (2 Peter 3:15).

What could be more motivating than believing the Bible came from God? What could be more reassuring than believing that our Creator has revealed Himself to us in His Book? What could be a better cause for us to live right and be faithful to God than being convinced and confident that the Bible is His Book?

I read that the United States Government pays enormous sums of money for listening devices and huge salaries to those who operate them trying to receive messages from outer space. I suppose the Government would give millions of dollars for just one word from outer space. This is indeed ironic, because we have a Book, every word of which came form outer space, because it came form God, and the Government will not let us use it in our public schools! This Book is ignored by masses of people, and even by many religious people. Many do not like it to be quoted to them!

If all people would let this Book from outer space have its way in inner space, the world would be revolutionized! I mean by inner space, the space

between the roofs of our mouths and the tops of our heads! So be it!

ENDNOTES

[1] James Smith, *History of The Christian Church,* page 58. My copy was published in 1835.

[2] The Works of Josephus, The S.S. Scranton Company, 1919, page 885.

[3] Dr. W.H. Green, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, page 554.

PREACHING

PERRY B. COTHAM



Perry Cotham was born of Christian parents in Murray, KY. He began preaching in 1929. He graduated from FHC and then Murray State College where he received his B. A. degree. Full-time local work with churches in OK and TX. Full-time world-wide evangelistic work since 1972, preaching in all states of American and in all the inhabited continents of the world, including over 70 nations. Authored sixteen tracts and three public debate books. He contributes many thousands of tracts and Bibles each year. He and his wife, Teresa (deceased), have three children.

Preaching is characteristic of Christianity. It is indispensable to the growth of the church. The work of the church is to preach the glorious gospel of the grace of God for man's salvation to the whole world. Paul wrote: "it pleased God by the foolishness of **preaching** to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). We usually think of preaching as publicly proclaiming God's word, teaching and exhorting people to obey the Lord.

Without a doubt, preaching is the greatest work that can be done by man! Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey came to the cities of Lystra and Derbe: "And there they **preached** the gospel" (Acts 14:7). Many today do not realize that preaching

the gospel to save souls is the supreme work of the church, and that it is the greatest work in the world. But the Bible teaches that it is.

INTRODUCTION: CHRIST'S CHARGE

The risen Lord gave one charge to His disciples. The work they were to do was to "**preach the gospel** to every creature" (Mark 16: 15); to "go [...] and **teach** all nations" (Matt. 28: 19); to preach "in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). These were His last words. This is still **the** great work of the church and should be our supreme concern. The gospel is for all men everywhere. "The field is the world" (Matt 13:38).

On the Day of Pentecost, the first day of the church, three thousand souls were baptized as a result of preaching (Acts 2). The Book of Acts tells again and again of multitudes of both men and women obeying the gospel and being baptized as a result of preaching. Day by day after Pentecost, the Lord added to the church all "those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47, NKJV, NASB). The early church obeyed the parting command of her Lord, and the church grew. We read, "Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4); "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul [...]. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:32-33); "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5: 14); "And in those days,

when the number of the disciples was multiplied [...]" (Acts 6: 1); "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7); "And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both [i.e., Paul and Barnabas] together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed" (Acts 14: 1); "And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily" (Acts 16:5); "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands [myriads, NKJV] of Jews there are which believe" (Acts 21:20).

The apostles and the early evangelists preached the gospel in all parts of the Roman Empire. The gospel was preached "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1:23). The good news went into every center of civilization. As a result, heathen temples disappeared and churches were established by the preaching of the Word. It is this type of preaching that is needed in the world today. Only when the church returns to the evangelism of the New Testament will we be able to build strong congregations and save the world from its sins. The Lord's church – or the Christian religion – owes its continued existence to the preaching of the gospel. She cannot afford to disregard the parting injunction of her Founder. At the beginning there was great gospel preaching and great results. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

Christ also said:

It is written in the prophets, And they

> shall be **all taught of God.** Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:45).

Paul wrote to the Romans:

> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they **preach,** except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that **preach** the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Rom 10:13-15).

DISCUSSION: SEVEN GREAT NEEDS

There are several things of which we have a great need today in the body of Christ. Let us note seven of them in this study regarding preaching.

I. STRONG PREACHING

The need is great today for strong gospel preaching, which is done in love (Eph. 4: 15). Modem civilization has brought the heathen world to our doors. All races are neighbors. Now there is a need to get back to the basic fundamental principles of the gospel and zealously proclaim the story of Jesus and His love. There are countless millions in heathen

darkness. It still remains **the whole duty of the whole church to preach the whole gospel to the whole world!**

II. SAME MESSAGE, SAME RESULTS

The need is great to understand that the same message produces the same results. There are multiplied hundreds of good, faithful, devoted, dedicated gospel preachers who are preaching the Word of the Lord and baptizing people as was done in the first century. For example, the Apostle Paul went to the wicked city of Corinth and there preached "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). The result was that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). What a grand demonstration of the fact of the power of the preached Word of God!

The same is true in this century when the same message is preached and people obey the same Lord, they are the church of Christ, the Lord's church in that city and in that nation, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different. The gospel of Christ is the same now as it was then. This is how through Christ one has the forgiveness of sin. It is a noble thing when one obeys the gospel and becomes a member of Christ's church.

Jesus, in His *Parable of the Soils*, called the "word" the "seed" of the kingdom (Luke 8:4-15; cf Matt.13:3-23; Mark 4:2-20). Seed always reproduces after its own kind (Gen. 1: 11-12). So the Word of God will, if faithfully preached and obeyed, produce Christians, members of Christ's church. In fact, this is

the only thing that the word can, or will, produce. The Seed of the kingdom produces the Lord's church today wherever and whenever good and honest hearts receive it and obey it. This word, which "abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1 :23-25), needs to be emphasized today in our preaching.

The Lord's church, produced by the pure Word of God, is not a denomination. It never has been and never will be. It is different from all other religious organizations. As a result of such teaching from the Bible, congregations of the Lord's people are being established in many nations of the world. However, when the pure Truth of the Lord is not sufficiently preached, believed, and obeyed, a different kind of church, or religion, exists. Hence, the system of denominationalism is wrong (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1: 10-13; Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 4:32). True, every man has a right to his own beliefs, but that does not make his beliefs right (Prov.14: 12; John 8:32).

III. TRAIN PREACHERS

The need is great to train men to become gospel preachers. The church continues to need to train young men to carry the truth of Christianity to the world in every succeeding generation. Paul, in his prison cell in Rome shortly before his death, wrote to young Timothy:

> And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, **the same** commit thou to faithful men, who shall be **able to teach** others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

We need to encourage a great many more fine young men to become faithful gospel preachers, as is being done here in the fine East Tennessee School of Preaching. There are many young men in the church who would, with proper training, make excellent gospel preachers. There are ways and means now of going and preaching and teaching the Word of God which were not available when I began preaching in 1929. We should use every one of these to preach God's Word that we can. I have enjoyed my years of preaching. I wish I had a thousand more years to go and preach the gospel!

We are living in the first decade of the twenty-first century, but the world is not evangelized. Two-thirds of the more than six billion souls now on earth have not heard that Christ died for their sins and what they must do to be forgiven of their sins. Many young men are now preparing themselves to go to heathen lands to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. However, we need many, many more (Matt. 9:36-38). The interest is high. Perhaps this work of preaching the gospel to the whole world could be done in one generation if we consecrated all that we have. Sadly, it is estimated that of all the money contributed for religious purposes, only about two or three percent goes into the mission field. However, thank God there are many congregations that are doing great mission work today and many more that are changing their plans toward doing this work! If we would be loyal to our Savior we must obey His last command by beginning to help carry the gospel to the whole world. Many members of the church need this teaching. Then they will do more for the Lord's work.

IV. STUDY

The need is great for preachers to study God's Word. This will help them to become better preachers. Paul also wrote to the evangelist Timothy:

> Study [Give diligence, ASV] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2: 15).

Every gospel preacher should seek to have a profound knowledge of the Bible. What Paul said to Timothy could also apply to each one of us as preachers. Many Bibles and commentaries are available to us today in our nation, yet there is a dearth of real Bible knowledge on the part of many people, including some who claim to be preachers of God's Word.

The situation described in Amos 8: 11 is equally true of our times: There is "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." It is possible that preachers in the churches of Christ today are probably less knowledgeable of the Scriptures than those preachers of one and two generations ago. We think of the great knowledge of men of the past such as Alexander Campbell, Moses E. Lard, J. W. McGarvey, David Lipscomb, and H. Leo. Boles, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Guy N. Woods, T. B. Larimore, N. B. Hardeman, A. G. Freed, B. C. Goodpasture, and many others. Some preachers are no longer giving sermons saturated with Scripture. Not only preachers,

also adult Bible-school teachers and teachers of young people desperately need to know the Bible.

If we should mention one of the greatest defects in preachers today in the Lord's church it would probably be their neglect of the Word of God. And of course, this applies even more with the preachers in the denominational world. There is a great desire on the part of many people to know what the Bible teaches, and they deserve to be told what it teaches.

V. ATTITUDES CHANGING

The need is great for the attitude of the church in America to change toward missions, and it seems to be changing. Once it was thought the essence of folly to think of taking the gospel to all parts of the earth. Now it is different. There are many hundreds who are laboring overseas in various places. Many parts of the world have now become open to the gospel. Two centuries ago this was not the case. Africa was the Dark Continent; now it is largely open to the gospel. The Soviet Union (formerly Russia) and the eastern European countries are now becoming open for the distribution of Bibles and gospel teaching. Thousands are longing for the Word of God. Indeed many fields "are white already to harvest" (John 4:35).

An example of one man who did great work in preaching the gospel is brother J. C. Bailey of Canada. He went to India in 1963 and began preaching and training young men to preach. As the work grew, he encouraged many preachers to come

to spend some time in preaching in that nation. Brother Bailey has gone on to his reward, but the Lord's church has been established in every state of India, the second largest nation in population on earth. Since Bailey's beginning, many thousands have been baptized, and thousands of congregations after the New Testament pattern of work and worship now exist.

Bibles are now going into nations that once sat in darkness. The people are now asking that the gospel be sent to them. They are also asking for Bibles that they can read in their own language. However, some churches spend far more money to build fine church buildings than they do to preach the gospel in places where Christ has never been named.

Today, all churches need to make preaching the gospel to the whole world their chief concern. We need to attempt great things for God. This is the crying need of the church today.

VI. PREACHING POWERFULLY

The need is great for us to remember that the grand old gospel which Peter preached at Pentecost and Paul at Mars' Hill is just as powerful as it ever was, and that whatever pulpit will sound out this "old, old story," with simplicity, courage and earnestness, will be a center of great spiritual power. We need to do this. If the pulpit in the Lord's church today does not ring in harmony with the great preachers of the past who were so scriptural, noble, loving, and powerful in their preaching, and caused the church to grow by leaps and bounds, surely there is little hope

for the pulpit of the future and for the growth of the church spiritually and numerically.

God told Jonah to go preach in Ninevah "the preaching that **I bid thee**" (Jonah 3 :2). He did, and the people repented (Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32). But the Word is not being preached in as many places as it should be. Preachers need to drive home the great truths of the Bible. They should always speak "as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4: 11). Thereby, they win people to Christ. A preacher should always faithfully preach God's Word. If one does not preach the gospel, the wrath of God will be upon him (Gal. 1:8-9). He is to preach "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). A preacher should faithfully live the Christian life and be a good example to others (1 Tim. 4: 12-16). Gospel preachers must strongly believe that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1: 16) and that people are saved only through obedience to the gospel. This will help the church from digressing into denominationalism.

The Lord's church today in America is facing a crisis comparable to that which was experienced in the last century when digression swept about eighty percent of the congregations into apostasy. Preachers must continue to encourage brethren to keep "the faith" (Jude 3) by sound gospel preaching. It seems that many churches of Christ are starving to death for good, basic fundamental textual studies of the Bible. They are hearing too many fifteen and twenty minute talks on Sunday lacking in real Bible teaching. The Word of God is our sole guide in religion and we need to preach it. If elders are wise, they will consider the lessons learned a century ago from the liberal paths

taken by those who failed to teach and follow the Bible in their work and worship. Not preaching the Bible on such subjects as the Lord's plan of salvation, Scriptural worship, and righteous living will lead to apostasy. History repeats itself (cf Judges 2:7, 10-11; Jer. 6: 16; Gal. 1: 6-9)! However, no church travels the whole distance into complete apostasy by a sudden leap. It goes step by step.

Some think that the sermon to preach today is entertainment-oriented, with jokes and other gimmicks, and whatever makes the unchurched feel good about themselves. This is not what God declares in His Word. The truth must be preached with an urgency to obey it. These preachers usually justify themselves in this method of so-called "preaching": They say, "But look at the church growth we are having." However, the end does not justify the means.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the first half of the twentieth century, churches of Christ grew in numbers by leaps and bounds by preaching faithfully the Word of God on all fundamental subjects. This type of preaching is desperately needed today! Churches of Christ are no longer the fastest-growing group in America. Why? Why are we not having the baptisms that we had many years ago? One reason is people are not being taught the full gospel of Christ by preaching. Then preachers preached the plan of salvation, Scriptural worship, Christian living, and exposed denominational errors. There were no denominations in apostolic times, and there could be none now if all preached and practiced that which was preached and practiced

as recorded in the New Testament, using only this Book for their doctrine and practice. A faithful gospel preacher is one who is a strong advocate of undenominational Christianity. He proclaims what the very word of God proclaims. He says, as did Paul: "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9: 16; cf. Jer. 20:9).

Too, in many churches today on Sunday morning the numerous announcements that are made plus extra songs that are sung cuts the preacher's time for him to speak to about fifteen minutes, although he is abundantly able to preach a great sermon from God's Word. Again, some churches now are no longer having Sunday night services but different groups meet in homes for social visits with a very brief devotional. A small class is held in some room in the building, and those who failed to attend worship that morning may go to some room with some member and there take the communion. The nice, large expensive auditorium that was built and used for years is now only used once a week (maybe with the exception of a funeral) for a little more than an hour.

A faithful gospel preacher has a strong desire for preaching, and he does not extend fellowship of approval to religious groups that do not teach and follow the pattern of New Testament Christianity. He realizes that the only Scriptural way for religious unity is by all following the teaching of the Bible. The Word of God will judge all in the last day (John 12:48; Rom. 14: 12; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Matt. 7:21-27).

In Paul's last charge to Timothy, his son in the gospel, he said:

> I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word (2 Tim. 4: 1-2).

A preacher must be a man of conviction. He must believe in his message. A preacher is human, but he declares a heavenly message (2 Tim. 3: 16-17). He preaches because he cannot help it. Personally, I would say if I had my life to live over again, I would choose to be a preacher. When I was a freshman in high school, I attended a gospel meeting, and one night in the sermon the preacher said, "I had rather be a gospel preacher than be the President of the United States of America." Now, with the passing of years, I can better understand what he meant by the statement.

A preacher deals with life and death, with time and eternity. He must believe what he says. He must be a man of boldness. A preacher is not to entertain. He is to preach to save immortal souls (Gal. 1: 10; Jas. 5: 19-20; 1 Thess. 2:4-6). The pulpit has a great power for good. A preacher should be easily understood; he should touch the hearts of his hearers. But, when a preacher compromises God's Truth, he fails. Preachers need to know God's Word and preach it like it is. There is only one gospel to preach. The aim of every gospel preacher is to teach that there is a life beyond and to encourage his listeners to obey the Lord to receive everlasting life (Rev. 14: 13; 22: 14). Preachers should always preach a tender, loving, personal Christ, One who would "have all men to be

saved" (1 Tim. 2:4; cf 2 Pet. 3:9). He ought ever to preach, as has often been said: "As never to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men."

A preacher should have great reverence for the Scriptures. Three things must always be clearly taught in gospel preaching: (1) all men are sinners and in need of forgiveness (Rom 3:9); (2) Christ is the only Savior of sinners (John 14:6); (3) one must obey the Lord to be saved by hearing the gospel and believing in Christ as God's Son, repenting of sin, confessing faith in Christ as the Son of God, and by being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (See Mark 16: 15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 22: 16; Rom 6:4; Heb 5:9). Else, why should one call Him "Lord, Lord" and do not the things that He says? (Luke 6:46). The obedient believer then has the promise of the Lord that he has been saved. All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to the risen Christ (Matt. 28: 18), and whatsoever He commands must be done, and His Word is the end of all controversy. There has not been given since the apostolic age any further teaching (Jude 3: John 16: 13). All people today live under the New Testament of Christ (Heb. 1: 1-2; 9: 15-17).

VII. PRAY FOR PREACHERS

The need is great for members of the church to pray for their preachers. Paul asked the Christians to pray for him when he wrote his letter to the Romans:

> Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together

> with me in your prayers to God for me (Rom. 15:30).

This is the request that comes most frequently from our missionaries. They say: "Brethren, pray for us." They feel the need of, and ask, for the prayers of their brethren in their behalf. If Paul, the inspired apostle, felt the need of the prayers of the brethren in his behalf and for the furtherance of his work, how much more should gospel preachers feel the need of their brethren praying for them. Christians everywhere should pray for the ministers of the gospel. Earnest, sincere prayers do much good (Jas. 5: 16; 2 Cor. 1:11). Members of the church should have great love and high respect for all faithful gospel preachers.

CONCLUSION: GREAT REWARD

Finally, in our study of preaching, we should note that the faithful gospel preacher has the promise of a great reward awaiting him, which the Lord will give to him in the day of judgment. Paul said there was laid up for him "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge," would give to him "at that day" (2 Tim. 4:8).

Earlier in his ministry, Paul said to the Thessalonians:

> For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy (1 Thess. 2: 19-20, NKJV).

Did not Paul indicate in this statement that when they all got to heaven, one of the most delightful joys of that life would be for some soul to say to him that something he did or spoke helped to bring him to heaven?

Daniel wrote:

> And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (Dan. 12:3).

May we, as God's faithful preachers of the Word, be among that redeemed number to inherit the joys of heaven whom we have had part in teaching them the way of salvation. For, "he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11: 30).

The Psalmist declared:

> They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psa. 126: 5-6).

We must sow; but we shall reap. There is sorrow in our sowing, there is rejoicing in our reaping. This is very expressive of a gospel minister's life. Let us, therefore, continue to be soul winners for Jesus, and we shall receive a future reward for our labor. We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves, for our "labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Heaven will have great joys in store for us when we get there. No matter how dark the present may seem to be at times, if we will obey the Lord and faithfully "preach the word" and live the Christian life, eternal life will be ours. No crown upon the brow of man can compare with that bright and glorious crown which will adorn the brow of all those who have thus preached the gospel. Certainly the Christian faith gives us much to look forward to when we think of the life to come and the reunion in Heaven with our dear Savior and all the redeemed of the ages (1 John 3:2, Rev. 7: 13-17; 21: 1-27; 22: 1-5). This is more wonderful than the mind of man has ever dreamed!

WORKS OF OBEDIENCE

CLARENCE DELOACH



Clarence DeLoach was born in Dickson County, TN, in 1936. He and Eddie (Lowe) are the parents of four and grandparents of seven. Fifty years of preaching were celebrated in August, 2001. He graduated from FHC and DLC. Has conducted over 400 gospel meetings and has 33 years of radio preaching and 15 years of TV preaching. Conducted campaigns in South America and Europe He has authored three books and produced two video series. He recently retired as pulpit preacher for Walnut Street church in Dickson. Serves on the Advisory Board of FHU and American Heart Association and is Lieutenant Governor of Kiwanis Clubs in Middle TN.

When Paul said, "not of works, lest anyone should boast," he did not exclude any and all human activity in one's salvation. The influence of Calvinism upon the denominational world has clouded the minds of many on human responsibility in salvation; in particular the doctrine of "unconditional election."

Several different kinds of works are mentioned in scripture. We are not saved by certain kinds of works.

The works of the law cannot justify. Paul wrote to the Galatian churches that were in danger of being swept back into Judaism—

> Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified (Gal. 2:16).

If keeping the laws, statutes and ceremonies of the Law could save, then Christ died in vain. Our salvation is not in human performance, but through divine propitiation (Rom 3:25).

A major problem with the first Jewish converts was understanding their freedom in Christ. At the meeting of the apostles and brethren in Jerusalem concerning the Christian's disposition toward the law, Peter challenged his Jewish brethren with these words, "Now, therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10).

Christians have been called to liberty. "Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). To the Galatians, Paul wrote, "It was for freedom that Christ set you free" (Gal. 5:1).

While the emphasis of the Galatian letter is the nature of Christian liberty, Paul hastened to correct some of the abuses. He said, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty, only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve

one another" (Gal. 5:13). Jewish Christians had difficulty understanding Christian liberty because they were so accustomed to legalism. Gentile Christians had difficulty with liberty, because of their background of license. So, both needed much teaching.

The works of righteousness which we have done. "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:4,5).

Look at the contrast – not works of righteousness which we have done, such righteousness in the sight of God is as filthy rags. But, He saved us "by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." This parallels Acts 2:38. Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one 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."

The washing of regeneration is baptism for the remission of sins. The renewing of the Holy Spirit is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Baptism, therefore, is not a work of righteousness which we have done. But, it is the means by which God cleanses us by the blood of Jesus. The salvation which results from baptism is a work of God.

Any work of human achievement or merit. "Not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:9). If salvation were on the basis of human attainment, it

would be a matter of debt, not grace (Rom. 4:4,5). A works-oriented salvation would give man reason to boast and glory in himself. In true salvation, there is absolutely no reason to glory in oneself, but only in the Lord.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

While grace is unearned and unmerited, it does not eliminate human responsibility. Grace taught and learned motivates submission, humility and obedience. Such responsiveness, Paul describes as "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16.26). Such obedience is not boastful. Grace is not cheap! It does not make one irresponsible; it makes us more responsible! Paul asked, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" (Rom. 6:1-2) Faith itself is called a work of God (John 6:29), God grants repentance unto life, though it is an act of the human will (Acts 11:18). While baptism involves human activity, it is "faith in the operation of God" that brings cleansing and justification (Col. 2:12).

It is unthinkable that anyone would think that the humble obedience of a penitent believer in baptism could possibly be "a meritorious work." Can you imagine the three thousand on Pentecost who had heard the message of the crucified and risen Christ going away boasting of their salvation? Luke says that rather than boasting in themselves they "praised God" (Acts 2:47). They understood that God had done for themselves what they could never do for themselves. Jesus paid the price we could never pay. An old song states it well:

I owed a debt I could not pay
He paid a debt He did not owe
I needed someone to wash my sins away
So now I sing a brand new song
-- Amazing Grace
Christ paid the debt I could never pay.

From beginning to end, the scheme of redemption—including all that God has done, is doing and will do—is one continuous act of grace. The emphasis of apostolic preaching was to tell men what God had done before telling men what God wants them to do.

CHRISTIANS ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). To Titus, Paul wrote, "Christ [...] gave himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

The emphasis of James is Christianity in shoe leather. Paul and James do not contradict, they complement each other. Paul wants us to understand that our justification before God does not come as a result of "the rules we keep" or "the regulations we follow," but by trusting and confiding in the work of Jesus on our behalf at the cross. James wants us to understand that the justified, the saved, will express their faith in works that men can see. A faith not expressed is a dead faith. You cannot see my faith

except in terms of my conduct. James talks about a "show-me" faith. He wants us to move out of the academic into the practical. Not a "saying faith," but a faith with legs on it.

It will help us when studying Paul and James to remember that Paul is talking about the **root** of our justification, while James is talking about the **fruit** of our justification. Paul's emphasis is the **provision** of our salvation; James' focus is the **proof** of our justification. Faith is never alone!

A faith that does not produce a changed life is dead. The **new birth** of James 1:18 must be followed by the **new behavior** of James 1:19,20.

James gives three marks of a dead faith in Chapter 2:

First, it has no compassion. Look at verses 15-17, "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Real faith is more than "partaking of the Lord's Supper," or "singing praise" or "listening to sermons." It gives a deep concern for others. It is going to change how you react to people. It is going to give you compassion. Many "talk" a good religion, but the "walk" is missing. James is telling us to put your feet where your mouth is.

Second, a dead faith has no communion. Consider verses 19, 20. "You believe that there is

one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" Some have no more faith than the devil. As a matter of fact, the Devil is more orthodox than many preachers. He believes so much that it causes him to tremble. He believes that Jesus is "the Son of God" (Matt. 8:29). You would be surprised at what the Devil believes. He believes that Jesus is holy (Mark 1:14). He believes that He is the anointed of God (Luke 4:41). Satan believes that Jesus is the holy, pure Son of God and that He is the Messiah. A large segment of the liberal religious community does not believe that.

What is the point James makes? The Devil believes and trembles, literally He shudders! The idea is, one is so frightened that his skin crawls or his hair stands up on the back of his neck. He believes, but it has never brought peace. The demons are tormented—they believe, but have no communion with God. Do you know people like that?

Real faith brings peace! "Perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4:18). Justification by faith brings "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). God has not given us "a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (II Tim. 1:7).

You may believe the right facts about God, be orthodox in doctrine; make passing grades in theology and still go to hell. You may know the book from "cover to cover" but if you do not know Jesus you are lost. No communion! No commitment!

Third, a dead faith has no real conversion. It has no compassion for man; no communion with the Lord, because it has no basic change. If your religion does not change you, you ought to change your religion. If Christ has been impressed upon the heart, He will be expressed in the life.

A converted man has life abiding in him, but an unconverted man is dead in trespasses and sins.

A person who says he believes Jesus but does not love the scriptures, or pray, or meet with fellow Christians, is self-deceived.

Real faith lays hold of God's grace and works through us. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love" (Gal.5.6).

In James 2:21-26, the writer uses two illustrations from the Old Testament, and one from the body. Abraham believed God! In Genesis 15, He **said** he believed God, but in Genesis 22 Abraham **demonstrated** his faith when he offered Isaac. Rahab, the harlot not only **said** she believed in Joshua's God, but she committed and risked her very life to hide the spies, thus **showing** her faith in action. In her response she, like Abraham, perfected faith.

The third illustration is that of a body. Life to the body is represented by works, and without works, the body is dead. When the body does not move, breath—it is dead! So, a faith that does not move, does not act, does not walk, is dead.

CONCLUSION

Works of humble obedience give no occasion to boast. There is no merit involved. Let us understand that "when we shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

The old song "Rock of Ages" says it well:

Not the labor of my hands
Can fulfill the law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save and Thou alone.

As exclusive as is the saving grace of God, yet obedient faith with works is essential to appropriate it. Otherwise, the whole world would be saved for "by the grace of God, Jesus tasted of death for every man."

God's grace opened a well of water for Hagar, something she could never do for herself, yet the Bible says, "she went and filled the bottle with water" (Gen. 21.19).

God's grace opened the Red Sea for the Israelites, something they could never do, but they were commanded to walk through. Can you imagine any Israelite boasting of what they had done? They glorified God!

And when a penitent sinner comes forth from the waters of baptism what happens is something he could never do for himself. Can you imagine one complimenting himself or thinking he has earned salvation?

A Christian who serves the Lord with great fervency and faithfulness has nothing whereof to boast. He can glory in the cross! (Gal. 6:14) and say with Paul "By the grace of God I am what I am" (Rom. 15.10).

BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

CLARENCE DELOACH



Clarence DeLoach was born in Dickson County, TN, in 1936. He and Eddie (Lowe) are the parents of four and grandparents of seven. Fifty years of preaching were celebrated in August, 2001. He graduated from FHC and DLC. Has conducted over 400 gospel meetings and has 33 years of radio preaching and 15 years of TV preaching. Conducted campaigns in South America and Europe He has authored three books and produced two video series. He recently retired as pulpit preacher for Walnut Street church in Dickson. Serves on the Advisory Board of FHU and American Heart Association and is Lieutenant Governor of Kiwanis Clubs in Middle TN.

Three years ago when preaching in England and Scotland, I was privileged to go by the little town of Only, England. It was here that John Newton (1735-1807) preached, lived, and was buried. I stood in the pulpit where he preached, and visited his grave marker outside.

John Newton became a sailor at seven, and soon became vulgar, blasphemous and skeptical. On an African-England voyage, a powerful storm left the sailors exhausted and despairing. Newton began to reflect upon his life as the ship pitched to one side. When the ship righted itself, John began to pray. Back in England he began to study the Bible. He

resigned from his slave-trafficking and began to preach. He preached for more than four decades.

No doubt, John Newton would have been forgotten by history had it not been for a song—Amazing Grace.

> Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
> That saved a wretch like me!
> I once was lost, but now am found.
> Was blind, but now I see.
>
> 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
> And grace my fears relieved;
> How precious did that grace appear
> The hour I first believed!
>
> Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,
> I have already come;
> 'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far,
> And grace will lead me home.
>
> When we've been there ten thousand years,
> Bright shinning as the sun.
> We've no less days to sing God's praise,
> Than when we've first begun.

Most would agree this is the most popular, well-known hymn ever written. It is sung more, has been recorded more, and continues to touch our hearts.

On his memorial stone, John Newton had his own epitaph inscribed. It reads, "John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in

Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored and pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy."

This song has blessed the lives of all the redeemed in Christ. We are humbled by it and if our hearts are right, the truth it expresses will make us more responsive, grateful and dedicated to Him who saved us from our sins.

We need to see grace as Paul did! He is preeminently the "apostle of grace." Grace opened and closed his letters. Of 155 references to grace in the New Testament, 130 are found in Paul's writings. Grace was the secret of his vibrant life. Paul worked from grace! Grace motivated him. He could say, "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Cor.5:14), and "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Listen to Paul's affirmations on grace:

> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me (2 Cor. 15:10).

> Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more (Rom. 5:20).

> To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8).

Paul could say "Look at me – my life is a trophy of His grace. My ministry is a gift of His grace. That grace is amazing, abounding and marvelous!"

We sing it! "And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story saved by grace." "Mercy there was great and grace was free, pardon there was multiplied for me. There my burdened soul found liberty—art Calvary." Sing with "grace in your heart unto the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Grow in it! "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). Stand on it! "Through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:2). Speak with it! "Let your speech always be with grace [...]." (Col. 4:6).

Our life is a monument of grace and our lips are mouthpieces of it, "to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

No word in the New Testament better comprehends the "good news" in Jesus Christ than the word *grace*. The gospel concerns (1) the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus we read of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; (2) the message proclaimed and received, thus we read of "the gospel of the grace of God," and "the word of His grace."

In this study, our focus is upon salvation by grace through faith. No greater statement on how a

sinner is saved can be found than Paul's classic statement in Ephesians 2. The context of that whole chapter needs to be considered, but the heart is in verses 8-10. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

WHAT IS GRACE?

The Greek word for grace is *charis*. Several words in the New Testament derive from it. Words like rejoice (chara) and charisma. In classical Greek, the word means beautiful, lovely, attractive and delightful. Other derivatives of the word include gift, forgive, thanksgiving and thankful. In Latin, the derivative of the word includes gratis, gratitude, grateful, gracious, graceful, etc. Grace, then, is the quality of graciousness in the giver that results in a quality of gratitude in the receiver, which in turn makes the receiver gracious to those about him. There is no Bible doctrine more basic than grace. In justice, we get what we deserve. In mercy, we do not get what we deserve. In grace,, we get what we do not deserve.

Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense. In many ways it comprehends more than we can put into words because it expresses the infinite character of God. And while the New Testament brings God's grace into sharper focus in Jesus Christ, "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and

truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:16,17). However, it is a mistake to conclude that there is no grace in the Old Testament. Moses wrote, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen. 6:8). Just as there is law in the New Testament, there is grace in the Old Testament. These words, when understood, are not mutually exclusive. God's character does not change. "For I am the Lord, I do not change [...]" (Mal. 3:6).

Grace is the "unmerited favor of God." Since it is undeserved, no one is entitled to it. Since it is a gift, no one can demand it. It is more than favor – it is divine help for the helpless and hopeless. It is love for the unloving and the unlovely. Paul expressed it well when he affirmed, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). And again, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) (Eph.2:4-50).

God does not love us because we are valuable, we are valuable because God loves us. God does not love us because we are somebody, we are somebody because God loves us.

Paul graphically expressed grace when he wrote, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

WHAT GRACE DOES

It brought salvation. Paul wrote to Titus, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age" (Titus 2:11,12).

That salvation, available to all, is described in graphic ways:

- From condemnation to justification (Rom. 5:1);
- From bondage to liberty (Col. 1:14);
- From enmity to reconciliation (Rom. 5:10);
- From sinfulness to forgiveness (Eph. 1:7);
- From filthiness to sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2);
- From rejection to acceptance (Eph. 1:6);
- From a stranger to a son (Gal. 1:4);
- From an alien to an heir (Rom. 8:17);
- From afar off to nearness (Eph 2:18);
- From no representation to an advocate (I John 2:1);
- From a child of Satan to a citizen of Heaven (Phil. 3:20);
- From the power of darkness to the Kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13).

All of these blessings are available by the grace of God. Jesus "by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9). If salvation were by grace alone, all would be saved. But, not all have received His grace. Some have not heard of "the

word of His grace." Some have not obeyed "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:32).

HOW IS GRACE ACCESSED?

Paul explained to the Roman Christians, a people who had "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered," thus "having been set free from sin" (Rom. 6:17,18). An obedient faith is essential to appropriate the grace of God. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

CONCLUSION

God's grace came teaching, and man, while undeserving, must hear, understand and respond to the message of grace. Faith results from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). That message must be obeyed. Obedience does not nullify grace, it appropriates it. Grace is God's hand reaching down to undeserving man, faith is undeserving man's hand reaching up to His.

The fundamental importance of faith can be seen in the following facts:

1. It is imperative to pleasing God. "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" (Heb. 11:6).

2. It is the means of accessing the grace of God. "For by grace are you saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8).
3. It is the manner of the Christian's conduct. "For we walk by faith, not by sight? (2 Cor. 5:7).
4. It is the root, the underlying principle of our lives, "and the life which I now in the flesh live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Faith expresses man's response to all that God is and does. According to Hebrews 11:1-3, this faith is not blind optimism. It is not a manufactured "hope-so" feeling. It is not mere mental assent. It is not a leap in the dark. It is not blind acceptance without evidence. Rather, it is confidence, obedience, and trust in God's word in spite of circumstances or consequences. It operates simply. God speaks, and we hear. We trust his word and act on it. Faith, according to the Hebrews writer, is a very practical thing. It enables us to understand what God does.

It gives us insight to see what others cannot see, and the power to do what others cannot do. It was their faith that enabled the worthies in Hebrews 11 to treat the future as present and the invisible as reality. In Abel, we see faith worshipping (v.4); in Enoch, faith walking (v. 5,6); in Noah, faith working (v.7); in the Patriarchs, faith waiting (v. 8-22); in Moses, faith warring (v.23-29); and in Joshua and Caleb, faith winning (v.30, 31).

FAITHFULNESS

CLARENCE DELOACH



Clarence DeLoach was born in Dickson County, TN, in 1936. He and Eddie (Lowe) are the parents of four and grandparents of seven. Fifty years of preaching were celebrated in August, 2001. He graduated from FHC and DLC. Has conducted over 400 gospel meetings and has 33 years of radio preaching and 15 years of TV preaching. Conducted campaigns in South America and Europe He has authored three books and produced two video series. He recently retired as pulpit preacher for Walnut Street church in Dickson. Serves on the Advisory Board of FHU and American Heart Association and is Lieutenant Governor of Kiwanis Clubs in Middle TN.

INTRODUCTION

Some of you have visited Yellowstone National Park. There are many breathtaking sights. Many geysers in that park are spectacular, but the most popular is called "Old Faithful." Every 65 minutes, she blows her top. About 170 feet down, a shaft of boiling water makes its way to the top. This gush moves upward every 65 minutes *faithfully*.

The Holy Spirit produces fruit in our lives. Paul identified that fruit as "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, **faithfulness**, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:23,24).[1]

FAITHFULNESS REQUIRED

Faithfulness is a quality we admire, but God requires it. Paul stated, "It is required in a steward that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:1). It matters not how great your ability is, how intelligent you are, or how great your personality is—if you cannot be depended on, you are no good to God or man.

THE MEANING OF FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness is integrity, honesty, trustfulness and loyalty. Can you be depended on? If I were to ask each one in this room to write five letters to people you can really trust, depend upon, would you get one of the letters?

There is a crisis of dependability in America. A recent Gallup poll revealed that 40% of the American work force call in sick when they are not sick. They short change customers, trim corners, and cheat on examinations. Mr. Gallup went on to say, "My observations as a scientific researcher is that America is in a crisis of the first magnitude. The crisis is not political, it is not military—it is spiritual and moral." A crisis of integrity in America!

What about the church? Can you be depended on? Are you faithful? When we stand before the righteous judge of all men, will we hear the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" (Matt.25.21).

Think with me as we examine the marks, motives and methods of faithfulness.

MARKS OF FAITHFULNESS

The first mark of faithfulness is at the very core of our lives as Christians—we need to be **faithful to our families.**

Repeatedly, the Word of God addresses this matter. Paul summed it up in these words, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8). If you are not faithful at home, how can you be faithful anywhere? A religion that does not begin at home does not begin!

A Christian man needs to be faithful to his wife—morally and sexually. There is no greater mark of unfaithfulness than adultery. But, you do not have to be physically unfaithful to her to be unfaithful. A man could be married to his job, or have a "love affair" with sports.

Many children grow up with a deep hostility to their parents rooted in resentment because their parents were unfaithful to them. They made promises and commitments to them that they did not keep. Children have an incredible memory, and when you promise something, you had better keep it.

A second mark of faithfulness is suggested in Luke 16:10. Jesus said, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much." What if you were given a million dollars—cold cash with taxes paid? What would you do with it? Most of us could think of

many things, but Jesus says the test of what you would do is what you are doing with what you have. What are you doing with the hundred dollars you have?

The point is we need to be **faithful with our finances.** Look at verse 11. "Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Our Lord is saying that the test of what you would do in the spiritual realm is reflected in what you do in the physical and monetary realm. Some are not given great spiritual blessings because they have not been faithful in their financial obligations. Lots of people get this backward, reversed in their thinking. They think that if they are a good, spiritual person, then God will bless them with prosperity, but in the passage above, Jesus said just the opposite. When you get right materially, God will bless you spiritually. In our local churches, when Christians get right in the material and financial realm, blessings of souls saved, spiritual revival and growth will result.

A third mark of faithfulness is to be **faithful to the fellowship.** By this, I mean the local church. Paul said, "we are members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). Fellowship entails care, sharing, participation, and involvement. The body assembly is so vital, and when one member is missing the body is impaired. Every member can give encouragement, loyalty and support. Your presence in the assembly says two important things about you. First, that God is important to you, and second, you are important to me.

A fourth mark is **faithfulness to the faith.** Be faithful to the gospel, the Word of God, that divine body of inspired truth called **the faith** (Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:5; Jude 3). Sadly, some take the scriptures and they wrest them, dissect, vilify, and scorn them. We have theologians who instead of knowing and teaching the Word, as the Word suggests, they sit in judgment on the Word.

If ever a generation needs to be faithful to the Word of God, it is this one. There are ominous clouds hanging over us. Let us be faithful to the Word of God. We are always just a generation, not only from apostasy, but from paganism.

MOTIVATION FOR FAITHFULNESS

The highest and greatest motivation for our faithfulness to God is his faithfulness to us. Just imagine how terrible it would be if we could not know for sure whether God would forgive us! But, we can be sure! Why? Because of his faithfulness. John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins" (I John 1:9).

And consider how bleak the prospects would be with all the evil forces in the world, and the power of Satan, if we could not be sure of provision and victory. But God is faithful—He will keep you, preserve you and provide for you! Paul affirmed, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

His mercies are new every morning and his compassions fail not. We can burst out in song, "Great is thy Faithfulness." His faithfulness to us in every realm should motivate our faithfulness to him.

THE METHODS OF FAITHFULNESS

Just how are we going to be faithful to him?

First, we need to be faithful in the **small things.** Every big thing is made up of many small things. Your body is composed of every little part—cells, molecules and structure. The vast oceans are made of many small drops of water. All the ages of time are made of millenniums, centuries, decades, years, months, days, hours and minutes. Your life is made up of day-by-day choices. It is the small things that make up the big things. Be faithful in the small and you'll be ready for the big challenges. Before David was made King to oversee Israel, he was a shepherd watching over sheep.

An old evangelist once said, "Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian service difficult is wrong for me, and I must turn away from it."

Second, we need to be faithful in the **secret things.** What you are in the dark when no one knows—that is the index to your character. You know and God knows!

When Michelangelo was up on high scaffolds painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel with painstaking care, giving to every minute detail, someone asked, "Why take so much time with all the details, no one will ever know?" Michelangelo replied, "I will know!"

Third, we need to be faithful in the **sacred things**. Keep your heart warm and responsive to the biddings of God. Let us build and battle at the same time. Be alert! Vigilant! Aware! Keep your face in the Book! Keep on loving one another! Stay deathly afraid of sin! Keep on the whole armor of God! Do not play loose! Stay together! Keep on keeping on! Like Paul, keep the faith! (II Tim. 4:6). Do the work God has called you to do and never let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go,
There are battles to fight, by day and by night
For God and the right, and I'll never let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go,
I'm sick, 'tis true, worried and blue
And worn through and through, but I won't let go

I want to let go, but I won't let go
I will never yield--what? Lie down on the field and surrender my shield?
"No," I will never let go.

I want to let go, but I won't let go.
May this be my song, mid legions of wrong
O God, keep me strong, that I'll never let go!

ENDNOTES

1. All scripture from NKJ unless noted.

WORSHIP GOD: IN SPIRIT & IN TRUTH

DAVE MILLER



Dave Miller is a native of AZ and Chairman of the Department of New Testament Studies at Apologetics Press. He is also the host of the nationally televised TV program "The Truth in Love." His formal education includes three masters degrees and a PhD. from Southern Illinois University. He writes extensively, conducts numerous gospel meetings, and appears on several lectureships every year. His book, "Piloting the Strait," deals with the changes affecting churches of Christ. Dave and his wife, Deborah, have 4 grown children and three grandchildren. They reside in Montgomery, AL.

The Bible has a great deal to say about worship. Much material has been produced within churches of Christ on the subject. Much of the change currently being promoted among churches of Christ centers on worship. The agents of change are seeking to renovate and restructure the worship practices of the church. But what does the Bible say regarding *acceptable* worship? What is God's will on the matter?

WORSHIP DEFINED

Before exploring answers to these questions, we need a clear understanding of the meaning of the term "worship." An examination of the Hebrew and

worship are alluded to in the New Testament: (1) ignorant worship (Acts 17:23); (2) vain worship (Matt. 15:9); (3) will worship (Col. 2:23); (4) angel worship (Col. 2:18); (5) spiritual worship (Rom. 12:2); and (6) true worship (John 4:24). Five acts or avenues through which worship may be directed toward God during the New Testament era are spelled out in Scripture as consisting of: prayer, singing, observance of the Lord's Supper, teaching/preaching/Bible reading, and financial contribution (Matt. 26:26-29; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 16:1-2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). New Testament worship is conspicuously silent on the use of instrumental music, handclapping, and dancing, even as it omits animal sacrifice and the burning of incense. Some today are even incorporating candles in their worship, even though candles, in our sense of the term, were unknown in antiquity and never employed by God in worship![2]

Inherent in the notion of worship is the principle of authority. Worship is either right or wrong, depending upon God's will. The only right worship is that which is authorized by God. It is imperative for the reader of the New Testament to "key into" the fact that the apostles of Jesus Christ were divinely commissioned to communicate for the entirety of the Christian era the worship behaviors that God sanctions. Jesus informed the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth and show them things to come (John 16:13). The "truth" and those "things" obviously included worship protocol. Paul informed the Corinthians that "Timothy [...] will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17; cf. 11:16; 14:33). Who could possibly deny that the "ways in

Christ" included how worship is to be conducted? Paul wrote Timothy for the expressed purpose of informing him "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15). This authorized behavior certainly extended to worship behavior. These verses demonstrate that the apostles were busy conveying, among other doctrines, standard worship specifications for the assemblies of the churches of Christ. What we find in the New Testament is a binding report of what we are supposed to do in worship.

RIGHT AUDIENCE

Jesus emphasized the necessity of uniformity and conformity for all worshippers in John 4:23-24 – "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." This premiere passage clarifies once and for all the central components of biblical worship. Correct worship necessarily possesses *the proper audience*: God. Jesus said, "the true worshippers will worship *the Father* [...] for the Father is seeking such to worship *Him*" (John 4:23). Paul said worship in song is directed "*to the Lord*" and entails "giving thanks [...] *to God the Father*" Eph. 5:19-20). Jesus firmly insisted to Satan that God and God alone should be the only recipient of worship (Matt. 4:10). No one and no thing is worthy of worship besides God. Only Deity is deserving of worship.

But notice very carefully that *who God is* closely correlates with the nature of worship. Jesus

said, "God is spirit" – that is, His essential nature is spirit. God does not have corporeal form nor is He bound by time, space, or place. Perhaps the central confusion of our day, among those who clamor for change in our worship, centers on the identity, nature, and attributes of God. Even as the gods of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are not the God of the Bible, even so, many who claim to be "Christian" are directing their religious pursuits toward a god whom they have fashioned in their own minds. When a man writes a book titled "In the Grip of Grace," he demonstrates that he has conceptualized a god who is different from the God of the Bible.

The God of the Bible is all-loving, gracious, and compassionate. But at the same time, He requires people to conform to His worship specifications without embellishment, adjustment, or spontaneity. How do the current views of God and worship square with the fact that the God of the Bible sent fire to burn among His people, followed by "a very great plague" (Num. 11:3,33)? What kind of a God would threaten to wipe out virtually the entire Israelite population – not once, but on repeated occasions (Ex. 32:10; Num. 14:12; 16:21,45)? Who is God that He would condemn an entire generation to aimless desert meandering – including children – for 40 years (Num. 14:32-34)? Who is God that He would send poisonous snakes among the people, resulting in multiple deaths (Num. 21:6)? Would the God whom people claim to worship today effect the deaths of multiplied thousands of His own people (Num. 16:49; 25:9; 1 Cor. 10:5,8-10)? Could it be that people today have misassessed the one true God in their worship practices – like Ananias and Sapphira did (Acts 5:1-

11)? Could it be that perhaps the time has come to abandon the popular "celebration" (i.e., "party time," cf. Ex. 32:6) approach to worship in order to return to the cautious, respectful, reverent, unassuming approach to worship found throughout the New Testament? Is it not time to return to the *beginning* point: fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7; cf. Heb. 10:31; 12:29)?

RIGHT ATTITUDE

Correct worship also possesses *the proper attitude* by being conducted "in spirit." This phrase refers to the disposition of the heart and the mind. The worshipper must genuinely engage his spirit in the worship activity. He must be mentally and intentionally involved. He must have an humble, attentive mindset. He will worship with sincerity and earnestness. Both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 note that singing must done "in your heart." 1 Corinthians 14:15 records, "I will sing with the spirit and [...] with the understanding." The psalmist said, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord' " (Ps. 122:1). We are to worship God "with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28).

Once you have the correct actions in place for worship, the real effort comes in keeping your heart and mind focused on what you are doing. Worship "in spirit" takes work – real effort! It takes mental and physical preparation. Unfortunately, the current climate in the church tends to treat worship as a time for entertaining the worshipper and catering to the worshippers' wants. Consequently, worshippers have lost the deep, reverent mindset that approaches the

worship assembly with a strong sense of respect and cautious intention to please God.

This lax attitude is especially evident in the change that has come over many congregations with regard to dress. Much of the casual clothing worn in local church assemblies is a direct manifestation of a casual attitude toward worship. Worshippers are wearing casual clothing that they would not think of wearing to a wedding, a funeral, the theater, or even jury duty. Dress in current American culture is generally more casual than preceding generations, in keeping with the breakdown of discipline and self-control. Dress unquestionably *reflects* attitude (and can also *create* attitude). Just ask the military!

Observe also that "in spirit" is not to be equated with one's emotions.[3] "Spirit" refers to the human spirit, i.e., the mind. Many in our day are confused about the meaning of "spirituality." They think if their feelings and emotions are being stimulated in a worship assembly, the occasion has been very "spiritual." But the "spiritual" person in Scripture is the one who earnestly seeks to come to an understanding of God's will, and then diligently obeys that will. "Spirituality" consists of being governed by the biblical substance and content authored by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13-15; 14:37). Since the Word of God was authored by the Spirit, to be "spiritual" is to imbibe His teachings and to engage one's own spirit in a receptive encounter with the Holy Spirit's message (1 Pet. 2:2,5). His thoughts, opinions, and precepts are permitted to impact the human spirit (Rom. 15:27). So "spiritual worship" entails responding rationally to God's will with worship that is approved by Him (Rom.

12:1-2). "Spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19) are songs whose lyrics (i.e., words) convey correct biblical concepts.

Hence, worship assemblies are not more "spiritual" when handclapping, drama, praise teams, or baby dedications are introduced. In reality, such unbiblical innovations actually make the worship service *unspiritual* – since they are not authored by the Spirit. That worship assembly may be more exciting, more emotional, more stimulating, more interesting, and more entertaining, *but, by definition, it will not be more spiritual.*

RIGHT ACTION

In addition to the proper audience and the proper attitude, correct worship requires *the proper actions*. Worship must be "in truth." For example, 1 Cor. 14:40 states that actions in the worship assembly must be done "decently and in order," while Heb. 12:28 records that worship must be done "acceptably." The current assault on worship includes an attempt to dodge the clear import of the expression "in truth." Some say that worshipping "in truth" does not refer to worshipping according to divine instruction. It is argued that the phrase "in spirit and in truth" is simply a Hebraism meaning to worship sincerely and devotedly. But a thorough examination of the underlying language issue reveals that "in truth" refers to God's instructions that stipulate how an action is to be performed.[4] In a significant textbook on hermeneutics among churches of Christ, Clinton Lockhart wrote: " 'In truth' means under the direction of the truth as revealed in Christ."[5]

GOD'S VIEW OF THIS MATTER

God always has required that humans approach Him "in truth," i.e., according to the divine directives that He revealed to man. The only worship that has ever been acceptable to God has been that worship which has been undertaken with: (1) a proper attitude, frame of mind, and disposition conducive to spirituality; and (2) faithfulness to the specific items that God pinpointed as the proper external acts to be performed. God never has accepted one without the other. He always has required both: the right action, with the right attitude. Notice the following chart of scriptures that enables us to see how Scripture is its own best interpreter:

PASSAGE	ATTITUDE	ACTION
John 4:24	spirit	truth
Josh. 24:14	sincerity	truth
Ecc. 12:13	fear God	keep commands
Acts 10:35	fear Him	work righteous
James 2:17	faith	works
1 John 3:18	word & tongue	deed & truth
Deut. 10:12-13	fear/love/heart	walk/ways
Rom. 1:9	with my spirit	in the gospel

To emphasize one dimension of obedience over the other is to hamper one's acceptance by God. Bible history is replete with instances of those who possessed one without the other, and as a result were unacceptable to God. The Pharisees (Matt. 23:3), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:2-4), and the people of Amos' day (Amos 5:21-24) engaged in the external forms, but were unacceptable because of their

insincerity. Paul (Acts 22:3; 23:1), Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2), and Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6) all demonstrated genuine motives, but were unacceptable to God because of their failure to observe the right forms.

Think for a moment of the many people in biblical history who failed to approach God "in truth" – that is, they approached God in worship, but did so without sufficient attention to complying with the details and guidelines that God had articulated. Cain's sacrificial offering was rejected by God (Gen. 4:5-7; Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12). Likewise, Nadab and Abihu engaged in an action that God "had not commanded them" (Lev. 10:1) – proof positive that worship actions must be commanded by God. The boys made "minor" adjustments in sacrificial protocol, and were burned to death (Lev. 10:2). Their worship was labeled *disrespectful* by God, as well as a failure to show Him to be *holy* (Lev. 10:3).

Saul took it upon himself to offer an unauthorized burnt offering (1 Sam. 13:13,14), but on a subsequent occasion attempted to justify his further disobedience on the grounds that he was concerned about *sacrifice* (1 Sam. 15:19-23). Saul was making the same argument that people make today when they insist that they have a right to "enhance" worship with a variety of innovations! But when Samuel declared God's sentiments, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22), he was articulating the perpetual precept of God – i.e., that all humans must conform meticulously to God's instructions. Uzzah's action on the occasion of the relocation of the ark was sternly rejected (2 Sam. 6:1-7; 1 Chron. 15:12,13). When Jereboam I introduced alternate worship

practices into the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings 12:25-33), God brought disaster upon his house (1 Kings 14:10). King Uzziah was quarantined for life due to his wrongful worship actions (2 Chron. 26:16-18). All of these individuals experienced the displeasure of God for their *deviation from divine directions in worship*.

God has not changed in His insistence upon man's loving obedience to His instructions (John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 5:3). The Old Testament was written, among other reasons, in order for Christians to learn from the example of those who departed from God's way (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). New Testament faith (the kind of faith that Christians must possess if they wish to be pleasing and acceptable to God) is obedient trust – trust/faith that conforms to God's will (Heb. 11:6; James 2:24).

The psalmist understood that God's truth consisted of God's written words (cf. Ps. 119:30,43,142,151,160). So did Jesus when He said, "Your word is truth," and declared that the basis of judgment would be the words that He spoke (John 17:17; 12:47,48). Worshipping God "in truth" is equivalent to "doing truth," which entails "deeds" or external actions that are prescribed by God (John 3:19-21; cf. loving "in truth" in 1 John 3:18). When Jesus taught the way of God "in truth" (Matt. 22:16), He related information that accurately represented God's will. When the Colossians heard "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5), they heard the specific tenets, doctrines, requirements, and teachings to which they had to conform their lives.

CURRENT WORSHIP TENDENCIES

Some churches of Christ are operating on the basis of inappropriate, unbiblical objectives and goals in worship. Some churches have "worship committees" that apparently have no clue what their real responsibility is – i.e., to plan and structure worship so that the focus is on *God*, not the worshipper. In keeping with the tone and tenor of our entertainment-crazed culture, some in the church feel that worship ought to be entertaining (though they may not willingly admit their motivation). They go to great lengths to stimulate the tastes and desires of the audience – a tacit admission that the focus is on the *people*. Worship, to many, has become a spectator sport! Can you imagine first-century Christians going to such lengths to stimulate the crowd? Can you imagine them manipulating the lighting in the catacombs? Or perhaps placing a choir group behind a rock so that their singing could echo through the death chamber in an eerie, chilling fashion? A recent billboard advertisement that promoted a denominational worship service unwittingly divulged more than it intended: "Inner-tainment!"

We must come to recognize that entertaining ourselves, satisfying our own needs, attempting to revive our interests to escape our own boredom, and attracting others with manmade lures, are all simply unbiblical, cheap, inferior substitutes for simple, unpretentious, meaningful, spiritual worship. We surely spend too much time in the brotherhood trying to sound good to ourselves instead of sounding good to God by focusing on Him and His wishes. Sounding good to God has nothing to do with the way we

sound, since, if the externals are in place, God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). People today seem to be oblivious to the fact that worship can be the object of God's *hatred* (Amos 5:21)! God prefers *no* worship to *contemptible* worship (Mal. 1:10)!

Instead of attempting to renovate worship for our own benefit, what we need to do is cultivate our appetites for pure, New Testament worship. When I was a child, I did not enjoy the worship assembly just like I did not always enjoy eating a meal. Do you remember your mother insisting that you eat your vegetables? Her rationale was: (1) they're *good* for you; and (2) you must *learn* to like them. Like virtually everything of value in life, one must grow, cultivate, develop, and mature in life's activities.

Very few worthwhile endeavors in this world come naturally. We must work, sweat and suffer if our activity is going to be worth anything. Moving forward from childhood, both physical and spiritual appetites have to be matured. The individual must be taught (even made) to stick with it. We have to keep eating nutritious foods to *learn* to like them. The unpleasantness is worthwhile because those foods enable the body to receive proper nutrients and nourishment.

So it is in the spiritual realm. We need to stick with the simple worship behaviors specified in Scripture. We need to *learn* to like them – because they are good for us! If we resist them, and look for "new and exciting ways" to worship, we are merely showing the same immaturity, the same childish rebellion that children show toward physical foods. In

fact, the innovations that are causing such a stir in the brotherhood are equivalent to the candy and soda that children prefer over eating their vegetables. To change the metaphor, they are pacifiers that spiritual infants need to keep them content. In biblical terminology, they are "will worship" (Col. 2:23).

We are living during a time when change, discontent, and restlessness is rampant. People tire very easily of the same old thing, and quickly look for a replacement. This phenomenon is true of the cars we drive, the mates we marry, and the houses in which we live. But Christians ought not to be so susceptible to cultural currents and human inclinations. We need to "keep our wits about us." People who divorce their mates when things become a little difficult, people who jump from one house to another or one car to another or one job to another, have an *attitude* problem. They have an internal problem that does not go away after they make a change in their external surroundings.

So it is in the church. If worship has become boring and non-meaningful to a member, so much so that he feels the need to change churches or liven up the worship assembly with theatrics, he has a spiritual, internal problem – a heart problem. His restless discontent is more of a reflection of his own spiritual condition than of the status of the worship assembly. Blue Bell ice cream, Coca-Cola, and Big Macs all share in common the fact that you want them to stay the same. You expect them to taste the same – every single time you taste them!

Repetitiveness and sameness are, therefore, not inherently bad. God has enjoined repetition and lack of change in many areas, and expects us to keep it that way. Your mate expects the same! Shame on the man who puts away the wife of his youth because she is getting old and she's "the same old woman" he married twenty or thirty years ago. Likewise, shame on the Christian who puts away the simple worship of the New Testament church because it's been the same old thing for so long. Just because an action is the same and predictable, that action need not necessarily be boring. In the end, *it depends upon the attitude of the individual.*

When we came up out of the waters of baptism and sang "O Happy Day" or "Tis' so sweet to trust in Jesus, just in simple faith to plunge me 'neath the healing, cleansing flood," were we thrilled and excited? If so, who has changed? Manipulating external gadgets and gimmicry will not revive a genuine, heartfelt attitude of worship. We must change our own heart – melt it, soften it, prick it. We have a heart problem, and it is up to us to change that heart (i.e., repent). Our worship toward God ought to be like His mercies and compassions toward us – "they are new every morning" (Lam. 3:23). If we want our needs met, if we really want to achieve personal fulfillment and satisfaction, the only bonafide, surefire way to do so is to conform to *God's* will – not our own.

PURPOSE IN WORSHIP

What is the ultimate goal of worship? The Bible is very clear on this matter: *worship is to please God.* Remember Jesus said that the Father is

"seeking" true worshippers (John 4:23). God desires that people love Him enough to comply with His worship directives. Of course, Paul made clear to the Athenian philosophers that it is not as if God *needs* human expressions of worship to somehow fulfill, complete, or satisfy Himself (Acts 17:25). But He does want what is best for His creatures, and knows that only in our devoted pursuit of deity can *we* achieve our ultimate potential and happiness. Jack Lewis stated it well when he wrote: "If the primary task in worship is to make worship conform to Scripture, then clapping and stomping have exactly the same support in Scripture that instrumental music does – none at all."[6]

The purpose of worship is echoed repeatedly in the New Testament. Even Jesus did not come to do His own will, but the will of the Father (John 6:38). Jesus said He always did those things that please God (John 17:4; cf. 17:4). Should *we* not want to please God in our worship of Him? Jesus indicated that the very core and essence of biblical religion can be summarized as obeying God (Matt. 22:37). So worshipping God as *He* specifies should be our focus. Paul said we are to glorify God with our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20; cf., 10:31) – which surely includes the use of our bodies to worship Him. Every thought and action in our worship ought to be brought into conformity to God (2 Cor. 10:5). When Paul declared, "to God be the glory," he meant that everything in life and worship must be focused on pleasing God (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; Eph. 3:21). Our goal, aim, and purpose in life is to please God (2 Cor. 5:9).

PRACTICAL WORSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to worship "in spirit and in truth," the worshipper must muster his/her powers of preparation and concentration. The sincere worshipper pre-decides to express the praise, homage and adoration that constitutes worship. Worship is deliberate and intentional. It therefore requires forethought and preparation. Perhaps asking ourselves the following questions would be helpful:[7]

1. Am I coming before God with a sincere heart?
2. Am I allowing my relationship with others to keep me from proper worship (Matt. 5:23-24)?
3. Am I drawing near to God in purity and holiness, or am I allowing sin to be a barrier between God and me (1 John 1:6-10)?
4. Am I really trying to focus my full attention on God (Ex. 20:4-6; Rev. 5:9-14)?
5. Am I fixing my vision on the Lord of glory to such an extent that my hungering desire is to draw near to Him (Matt. 5:6; James 4:8)?
6. Am I singing enthusiastically, praying fervently, giving cheerfully, and lovingly remembering Jesus during the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 14:15; 11:23-28; 2 Cor. 9:7)?
7. Am I coming to God in worship with the full knowledge that the only reason I have such precious access to God is because of what Jesus did at Calvary (Matt. 27:46; Acts 4:12)?

8. Am I worshipping solely to "see what I can get out of it," or is my heart's desire to offer praise, thanksgiving, and glory to my Lord and King (Rev. 4:8-11)?
9. Am I willing to let God break me, mold me, and make me a vessel of honor for His service as a result of having been in His presence for worship (2 Tim. 2:21)?

Additional considerations and suggestions include:[8]

1. Commence preparation on Saturday by freeing oneself from concerns that will enable focus on spiritual matters on Sunday, including a good night's sleep, and awaking with the intention of devoting the Lord's Day to the Lord;
2. Rise early enough on Sunday morning to avoid rushing;
3. On the way to the church building, prepare the mind for worship by prayer and meditation;
4. Enter the building with a quiet and reverent demeanor, greeting others in a subdued tone;
5. Enter into the song service with your whole being, not being fearful of what others think about your voice, but singing enthusiastically;
6. Give the preacher a sympathetic hearing, being attentive and seeking to make personal application of the sermon;

7. Do not allow the Lord's Supper to become a common-place ritual; make it a genuine communion with Christ and His suffering;
8. Come with a feeling that you are a part of the congregation, that you are wanted and needed, and that you intend to contribute your time and talent to its growth.

CONCLUSION

The truths of God regarding acceptable worship are easily understood. The issue is simple: do I engage in worship in order to stimulate myself and feel that I am benefiting, or do I engage in worship to please God? Lewis noted: "If I am going to give a present to my wife, shall I pick out something I like or something she likes? Who is to be pleased? The same is true with worship with God."[9] May God help us to worship Him "in spirit" – i.e., out of hearts that are filled with sincerity and earnestness. Likewise, may God help us to worship Him "in truth" – i.e., in accordance with His revealed will!

In closing, think, if you will, of some of the great worship moments in Bible history. The first thing Noah did when he stepped off the ark was to build a worship altar to God (Gen. 8:20). Abraham built worship altars to the Lord virtually everywhere he went (Gen. 12:7,8; 13:4,18; 22:9). Can you envision in your mind Paul and Silas at midnight in the inner prison, fastened in painful stocks, their backs beaten and bruised, praying and singing hymns to God (Acts 16:25)?

What about the great contrast made by the Hebrews writer? He described the awe-inspiring spectacle on the occasion of the reception of the law of Moses at Sinai. The mountain burned with fire. Lightening, thunder, and the sound of a trumpet caused the people to tremble and to beg Moses to be the one to speak to them lest the voice of God, Himself, destroy them. The scene included thick darkness. Moses, himself, was so frightened that he declared, "I exceedingly fear and quake" (Heb. 12:21). Any person or animal that even touched the mountain was to be executed. In contrast, we have come to Mt. Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. "See that you refuse not Him who speaks" (Heb. 12:25). "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28).

Perhaps the greatest worship scene in Scripture is the one depicted for us in the Revelation where we are taken into the very throne room of God in heaven (Rev. 4). Out of the throne comes lightening and thunder. He Who sits upon the throne is surrounded by an emerald rainbow, a crystal sea, 24 elders on 24 thrones, and 4 living creatures. The living creatures give perpetual glory, honor, and thanks to God with the words, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." The 24 elders fall down before the throne, cast their gold crowns before Him, and worship Him forever. They exclaim, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created."

ENDNOTES

[1] Gleaned and synthesized from several sources including: Gary Workman's lecture at the Fort Worth Lectures, "Thou Shalt Worship the Lord Thy God," in *Exegetical Studies of Great Bible Themes* (Bedford, TX: Christian Supply Center, 1986), pp. 274-290; Wendell Willis, *Worship* (Austin, TX: Sweet Pub. Co., 1973); Jack P. Lewis, "O.T. Word Studies in Worship," unpublished manuscript.

[2] James Orr, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939), pp. 552-553. The Mosaic "menorah," which was part of the tabernacle furniture, was a lampstand whose immediate object was merely to provide light in the holy place during the night hours.

[3] The reader is urged to study the chapter "The Shift To Emotion" (pp. 52-63) in the author's book, *Piloting the Strait.*

[4] See a discussion of the meaning of "in truth" in *Piloting the Strait*, pp. 183-184.

[5] Clinton Lockhart, *Principles of Interpretation* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Pub. Co., 1901), p. 84.

[6] Jack P. Lewis, "Worship: Biblical or Cultural?" *Gospel Advocate* (Aug. 1996), p. 26.

[7] Mike Vestal, "A 'Check-List' For Improving Public Worship," *Granbury Street Bulletin* (Sept. 29, 1996), Cleburne, Texas.

[8] Randall Medlin, "Worship."

[9] Lewis, p. 26.

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN

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PURPOSEFUL PLANNING OF GOD

The church is the fulfillment of God's purpose of the ages (Eph. 3:8-13). There is a general misunderstanding / misconception about the church. The importance of the church has been minimized.

Ephesians 3:8-13 is much misunderstood, but very informative in declaring God's eternal plan.

Unto me, who am less than the least of

> all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory (Eph. 3:8-13, KJV).

The church reveals God's eternal purpose in Christ. Ephesians 2:11 through Ephesians chapter 3 reveals the manifold wisdom of God.

> Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 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: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made

> both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:11-18).

The past condition of the Ephesians is set forth in Ephesians 2:11-12. What the Ephesians became in contrast to what they were is set forth in Ephesians 2:19-22.

> Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

They became *"fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."* In Christ both Jew and Gentile were *"builded together"* by the Holy Spirit.

(Eph. 2:22). All who come to Christ do so in the same way.

THE "DISPENSATION OF THE GRACE OF GOD" (EPHESIANS 3:1-6)

> For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

THE *"MYSTERY OF CHRIST"* (EPHESIANS 3:3-11)

The *"mystery of Christ"* made known to the apostle Paul was *"that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."* The *"mystery of Christ"* was a *"mystery"*only in that it *"was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."* (Eph. 3:5).

The *"mystery of Christ"* is no longer a mystery.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:25-26).

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself (Eph. 1:9).

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19).

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:26-27).

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ (Col. 2:2).

> Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds (Col. 4:3).

"THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST" (EPHESIANS 3:8)

"Unsearchable" shows that man on his own could have never uncovered God's plans for his salvation. God's manifold wisdom is revealed in the church. The glorious church (Eph. 5:27), purchased by the blood of Christ, (Acts 20:28), is composed of those who through Christ come to God (John 6:44-45).

"THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD" (EPHESIANS 3:10)

"Now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." "Manifold" means *"many-sided."* The church demonstrated to all *("principalities and powers in heavenly places")* the unfolding of God's plan of salvation through Christ.

Old Testament promises, prophecies, and pictures, were made clear by the establishment of Christ's church.

> And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis

> 3:15). The "seed" of Genesis 3:15 is the same "seed" as promised to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3). The "seed" is Christ (Gal. 3:16). "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

The *"manifold wisdom of God"* is demonstrated by Christ' resurrection. *"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead"* (Rom. 1:4; cf. Eph. 1:19-21).

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

"ACCORDING TO GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE IN CHRIST JESUS" (EPHESIANS 3:10-11)

That for which the prophets had diligently searched was now made known.

> Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not

> unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

PROMISES OF THE CHURCH / KINGDOM
THE PROMISE OF GENESIS 3:15

The veiled promise of Genesis 3:15 is made clear in the New Testament. Christ is the seed of woman (Isaiah 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23).

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

The promise of the Messiah was made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). The promise was repeated after his separation from Lot (Gen. 13:14-17). The promise was again repeated to Abraham when the Lord foretold of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. (Gen. 15:1-21). The promise was to be through Sarah's seed, Isaac (Gen. 17:1-27). The promise was not through Ishmael, but *"in Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (Gen. 21:12). The promise was repeated following Abraham's test (Gen. 22:15-19).

Abraham would have a numerous family (Gen. 13:16; 17:2, 4; 22:17). From the time of God's promise to Abraham, the rest of the Old Testament deals with Abraham's family (descendants). God would be a God to Abraham and his seed. (Gen. 17:1-8). God would give to Abraham and his seed an everlasting possession (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18-21;

22:18). This promise was fulfilled (Cf. Acts 7). God would bless all nations through Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). The promise was renewed through Jacob (Gen. 28:10-15), and repeated to him (Gen. 35:9-15). The promise continued through Judah (Gen. 49:10). Christ came from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14).

PROMISE TO JUDAH

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah" (Gen. 49:10). *"Sceptre"* refers to kingdom (Cf. Psa. 45:6; Heb. 1:3, 8). Christ is *"the Lion of the tribe of Judah"* (Rev. 5:5; cf. Heb. 7:14).

PROMISE OF THE MESSIAH FULFILLED

The promise of the Messiah was fulfilled from Adam through Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1 and Luke 3:23-38). Christ was of the *"house of David"* (Luke 1:27). Christ was the *"seed of David"* (Rom. 1:1-4); the fruit of the loins of David (Acts 2:25-31); and *"the sure mercies of David"* (Acts 13:33-37, Cf. Acts 13:22-23).

PROGRESSION AND LIMITATION

The progression and limitation of the promise of the Messiah is clearly set forth. Christ's lineage is traced through Adam and Eve, "s*eed of woman"* (Gen. 3:14-15); Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3); Isaac (Gen. 17:1-27); Jacob (Gen. 28:10-15, 35:9-15); Judah (Gen. 49:10); and David (2 Sam. 7:12-17).

The promise was fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 1:1;

Luke 3:23-38; Gal. 3:16).

PROPHECIES OF THE CHURCH / KINGDOM
NATHAN'S PROPHECY TO DAVID
(2 SAM. 7:12-17; 1 CHRON. 17:11-15)

The church/kingdom was to be built by the seed (descendant) of David (Acts 2:30). It was to be built after David's death (Acts 2:29). Jesus built *"his house"* (Acts 2:30, 47; 1 Tim. 3:15). Jesus was to sit on the throne of the Lord (1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chron. 29:23; Acts 2:32-36). The throne was to be established (Isaiah 9:7; Acts 2:30, 34-35). The Messiah was to rule on the throne (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33).

Christ was to rule as priest (Zechariah 6:13). He was to sit and rule (Acts 2:33-35; Heb. 8:1). He would be priest (Heb. 7:1-28). Christ could not be a priest on earth (Heb. 8:4). Hence, there is no literal, physical, earthly rule.

ISAIAH'S PROPHESY

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the

law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:2-3).

"IT SHALL COME TO PASS IN THE LAST DAYS"

The *"last days"* began on Pentecost of Acts 2 (Acts 2:15-17; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). The kingdom is indestructible (Heb. 12:28).

The Lord's house was to be established (*"mountain of the Lord's house"*). The *"Lord's house"* is the church (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:20-22). The church and the kingdom are the same. *"The keys to the kingdom"*/church (Matt. 16:19), were used in the establishment of the church (Acts 2). The Lord's Supper is to be observed in the kingdom/church (Matt: 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:20-30; Cf. Acts 20:7). The kingdom/church now exists (Col. 1:13).

The Lord's house was to be *"exalted above the hills." "Hills"* refer to other institutions. Christ is exalted (Eph. 1:20-22). The church is Christ's fulfillment (Eph. 1:23). Christ is glorified in the church (Eph. 3:21).

"ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT"

"All nations" include Jew and Gentile. Jesus said: *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd"* (John 10:16). Both Jew and Gentile are reconciled in one body/church (Eph. 2:16). The kingdom/church began on Pentecost of Acts 2 (Cf. Acts 2:5; 8:4-5; 11:20-21). All are invited (Matt. 28:18-19; Col. 1:23).

"HE WILL TEACH US HIS WAYS"

The old law (Law of Moses) was abolished. The new law was to be given (Heb. 8:8-13; 10:9-10; 9:16-17). God's method of *"drawing"* is through teaching (Isaiah 1:18; Acts 17:2; John 6:44-45).

"OUT OF ZION SHALL GO FORTH THE LAW"

The place was to be Jerusalem (Luke 24:47-49). The apostles were the proclaimers (John 20:21-23). The gospel is the law of the Spirit (John 16:13-15; Acts 2:4; Rom. 8:2). We are now under the law of Christ (2 Cor. 3:6:11; Gal. 6:2; James 1:25). The terms of the Great Commission were announced in Acts 2:32-38.

DANIEL'S PROPHECY

Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. 2:31-35), and Daniel's interpretation of it foretold the kingdom of Christ (Dan. 2:36-45).

There would be four kingdoms, i.e., the Babylonian kingdom (Dan. 2:38; BC 600); the Medo-Persian kingdom (Dan. 2:39; 5:25-30); the Macedonian kingdom (Dan. 2:39); and the Roman kingdom (Dan. 2:40-43).

Daniel's prophesy was fulfilled (Dan. 2:44; Luke 3:1-3).

Daniel's vision (Dan. 7:13-15, BC 555) was fulfilled (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 19:12; Eph. 1:20-21).

PICTURES OF THE KINGDOM / CHURCH

Adam is a type of Christ. (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4). The ark is a type of the church. Israel's deliverance from Egypt is a type of our deliverance from sin (1 Cor. 10:1-6). The tabernacle is a type of the church.

PREPARATION FOR THE KINGDOM / CHURCH
PREPARATION OF THE EIGHTY-FOUR PREACHERS

John was a preparer, a forerunner (Isaiah 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1; Cf. Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:19-36). John came to prepare a people (Luke 1:17, 77). John prepared the way for Jesus (John 4:1). John preached that the *"kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt. 3:1-3; Luke 3:1-3; 26 AD).

Jesus taught that the *"kingdom is at hand"* (Matt. 4:17; 30 AD).

The apostles taught that the *"kingdom is at hand"* (Matt. 10:7; 30 AD).

The seventy preached that the kingdom is *"come nigh"* (Luke 10:9 – 32 AD).

The kingdom was to appear (Luke 19:11) and to come with power (Mark 9:1). Before Jesus' ascension, the apostles expected the kingdom to be established (Acts 1:16), though they had a misunderstanding of the kingdom.

PROPOSED BY CHRIST

Jesus said, *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18). *"I will build"* was future tense then (32 AD), so it had not already been built when Jesus made this statement. Jesus did not say, *"I will enlarge, or add to, etc."*

"My church" shows possession. Jesus had the right to build the church (Acts 20:28; Matt. 28:18). This is singular *"church,"* not plural, *"churches."*

"Gates of hades" has reference to the unseen, spirit realm. Christ's death, burial and resurrection would not prevent his building his church.

The foundation of the church prophesied in Isaiah 28:16-18 was fulfilled by Christ (Matt. 16:18). Christ was shown to be the Christ by his resurrection (Rom. 1:4). Christ is the only foundation (1 Cor. 3:11).

PERIOD/PLACE OF THE KINGDOM/CHURCH

The kingdom was to be established *"in the last days"* (Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28). The period was Pentecost following Christ's resurrection (Acts 2:1ff). Had the church been established before Christ died, it would have had (1) no foundation (Isaiah 28:16); (2) no head (Eph. 1:20-23); (3) no blood (Acts 20:28); (4) no Spirit. (John 7:38-39); and (5) no gospel (Matt. 16:20).

This was fulfilled when Christ *"came to the Ancient of Days"* (Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 1:9-11). The

kingdom was to come with power (Mark 9:1). The apostles were to wait for the power (Luke 24:49). The power was to come with the Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Spirit came upon the apostles on Pentecost of Acts 2.

PERFECTION (ESTABLISHMENT) OF THE CHURCH / KINGDOM

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law"(Gal. 4:4).

In keeping with *"God's eternal plan"* and the *"manifold wisdom of God,"* and *"unsearchable riches of Christ,"* the church came into existence. The church began on Pentecost day following Christ's resurrection as recorded in Acts 2. For the first time the church is spoken of as being an existing institution (Acts 2:47).

The church is God's family (1 Tim. 3:15). God's children are in his family. One enters God's family by being *"born again"* (John 3:5). On the day of Pentecost of Acts 2, those who heard, believed, repented and were baptized were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:36-47).

PATTERN FOR THE CHURCH / KINGDOM

The plan of worship for the church is set forth in the New Testament.

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers [...] And the Lord added to the church daily

such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42, 47).

"Apostles' teaching" is the gospel of Christ (John 20:23, 2 Thess. 2:13-15, 2 Tim. 2:2). One is to *"learn"* (Matt. 28:20; 11:29; Col. 3:16). *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17).

"Fellowship" is from the Greek word *"koinoia"* which refers to giving (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 4:15-16). An example is Acts 2:44-45.

The Lord's Supper was a part of the worship of the church. (Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20, 29-30; 1 Cor. 11:23-30; Acts 20:7).

Singing was a part of New Testament worship (Cf. Acts 2:47, Eph. 5:18-19, Col. 3:16-17, Heb. 2:12, 1 Cor. 14:15).

PRAYER, PLEA AND PLAN FOR UNITY

The Lord prayed for unity (John 17:20-23). The apostle Paul set forth a plea for unity (1 Cor. 1:10); and the plan for unity (Eph. 4:1-6).

PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH / KINGDOM

The church (Eph. 4:11) consists of saints (Phil. 1:1; Acts 11:29), elders (Acts 11:30), deacons (Acts 6:3-5), evangelists (2 Tim. 4:1ff), teachers, etc.

POSTURE OF THE CHURCH/KINGDOM

Christ is King over his kingdom (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15). He was born to be King (John 18:37), and he was crowned (Acts 2:33, 36).

The church/kingdom is described as the *"kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 3:2; 7:21); the *"kingdom of God"* (Matt. 6:33; Mark 9:1); the *"kingdom of Christ"* (Eph. 5:5); and the *"kingdom of his dear Son"* (Col. 1:13).

The law of the kingdom is God's will, the gospel of Christ (Matt. 7:21-29; Rom. 1:16).

Christ's kingdom is spiritual and not material. He declared that *"my kingdom is not of this world"* (John 18:36). The kingdom is entered by spiritual birth (John 3:5-8).

The church is *"the called out"* body of God's people.

PREEMINENCE OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 1:15-23 shows the preeminence of the church.

> Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being

> enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Christ was raised to be King (Eph. 1:20). By the resurrection of Christ, God's power was demonstrated (Eph. 1:19-20; Rom. 1:4). Christ was raised *"to sit"* (Acts 2:30-34), and he is now sitting (Heb. 8:1). He was to be king when he would be priest (Zech. 6:13; Cf. Heb. 8:1- 4).

"Far above all principality [...]" (Eph. 1:21). Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18; Acts 3:22-23).

"Hath put" (past tense) all things under him (Eph. 1:22).

"Gave him to be head [...]" (Eph. 1:22). The preeminence of the church is emphasized by the relationship of Christ and his church.

"Head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22). Christ is the head of the church because it belongs to him (Acts 20:28). Christ is head of the church because he rules over it. Christ is *"King of kings, Lord of lords"* (1 Tim. 6:15).

"The fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23). *"Fullness" (pleroma)* means *that which fills up something.* The church is the fullness of Christ. One must be in Christ to be in God; and in God to be in Christ, (John 17:20-23). One must be in the church to be in Christ; and one must be in Christ to be in the church. Salvation is in Christ/in the church (Eph. 5:23, 25, 27).

PURCHASED BY CHRIST

The relationship of Christ and the church is seen from Ephesians 5:22-27.

Christ is the head of the church, he is the savior of the body (Eph. 5:23); and he purchased the church (Eph. 5:25) *"that he might sanctify and cleanse it"* (Eph. 5:26); and *"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"* (Eph. 5:27). Christ purchased his church with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH/KINGDOM

Daniel foretold that:

In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. (Dan. 2:44).

Paul wrote:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor.15:20-2).

MARRIAGE

THOMAS C. MILLER



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As we return to basics, and as we look to see what the Bible says about various elementary things, we come to the matter of what the Bible says about marriage. This should be of great importance to us for two reasons. First, since some 92% of all people ultimately marry, and since most children today are products of marriage, all of us are affected either directly or indirectly by marriage. Second, marriages are not doing very well these days. Many efforts are being made to undermine, or even destroy, the institution of marriage. In fact, we point—with no pleasure at all—to the trail of broken marriages and unhappy homes in America and around the world. For the sake of people's happiness, our country's strength, and heaven's population, we need to return

The Hebrews' writer declared:

> Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28).

CONCLUSION

The *"manifold wisdom of God"* was made known *"unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places"* in the establishment of the church/kingdom.

> Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory (Eph. 3:8-13).

once again to God's Book to see what He has said about marriage.

The Senior United States Senator from West Virginia, Robert C. Byrd, has written:

> Most stable societies have been built upon the family and home. When the influence of family and home decline, the result is predictable. Values, standards, and manner deteriorate. Morality is loosened. Anti-social behavior grows. We have seen such of the end-result in the crime statistics, in the figures which tell us of the increase in runaway children, in the epidemic proportions of venereal diseases, in the soaring divorce rate, in the decline in church attendance, and in the growth of mental illness. The circumstances of life in much of present-day American militate against the family and home. But a restoration of home and family responsibility in our country are basic necessities if the America we have known and cherished is to be preserved for our posterity.[1]

Who could disagree with the Senator's assessment? Therefore, let us turn to God's Book for instructions regarding marriage.

AN OLD TESTAMENT PRINCIPLE

There is a statement in Proverbs 22:28 that has been used many times by preachers and lecturers, and I will use it again today: "Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set." The landmarks referred to were those set up to define property boundaries.

J. A. Thompson has observed, "The landmark defined the limits of a man's divinely allotted portion, his inheritance. To remove this was to encroach on something God had appointed."[2] This would certainly explain why a curse was place upon anyone who would tamper with them: "Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor's landmark" (Deut. 27:17).[3]

We are saying in this series of lectures that God has set some divine landmarks regarding marriage, and that man has no right to remove them. I would conclude, in fact, that God's laws regarding marriage are as binding as those regarding any other matter, including those regarding baptism or acceptable worship. The landmarks regarding marriage that we will explore in these lectures are:

1. Monogamy
2. Oneness
3. Permanence, and
4. Submission and Love.

These landmarks are like four great corner posts that mark God's boundaries in regard to marriage. When they are respected, marriages will be all they can be and all God wants them to be. This

makes perfect sense to me, because God knows more about marriage than anyone else. After all, it was His idea.

It was God who said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable for him" (Gen. 2:18). After naming all of the animals, it is said of Adam, "But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable for him" (Gen. 2:20). God then made a woman out of Adam's rib, "and He brought her to the man" (Gen. 2:22).

God, in a very real sense, performed the first marriage. He brought the woman to the man. As the Sovereign God and the Originator of marriage, He has the perfect right to be the One who determines what is acceptable in marriage.

Let us begin to examine His landmarks for marriage one at a time.

MONOGAMY IN MARRIAGE

The first landmark is monogamy. An English dictionary will define monogamy as, "the practice or state or being married to only one person at a time."[4] It is a compound word in the Greek language from *monos*, single and *gamos*, marriage.

As we shall see, however, the Scriptures go further in defining monogamy than a dictionary definition does. According to God's plan, monogamy is one man married to one woman for life. As the first human family was formed, God said, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined

to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Jesus, Himself, referred back to God's original plan for marriage and said, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'" (Matt. 19:4,5). In keeping with this, Paul wrote, "let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2).

Although polygamy (one man with more than one wife) and polyandry (one woman with more than one husband) were both practiced in Bible times, it seems they were never sanctioned by God. They were allowed by Him and regulated by Him, but I do not believe that He ever approved them. I would place these marriages in the same category as the divorces allowed under the Law of Moses. Of them, Jesus said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8). I would argue that God has always had only one plan for marriage and that one plan involves one man for one woman for life.

Some point out that plural marriages were never expressly condemned in the Old Testament, and this is true. The Old Testament does, however, clearly point out the bad effects this practice had on people. This is especially seen in the case of Jacob (Gen. 35:22; 37:18-28), David (2 Sam. 13:1-29; 15:1ff), and Solomon (1 Kings 11:1-12).

While we note that neither polygamy nor polyandry is lawfully practiced in this country, we are not without examples of the violation of God's law regarding monogamy. For instance, sexual relations with anyone other than one's own marriage partner are a violation of God's plan. This would include pre-marital or extra-marital sex. Both adultery (*moichos*, unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another) and fornication (*porneia,* illicit sexual intercourse of any kind) are "works of the flesh," and Paul says, "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

Bill McCartney, former football coach at the University of Colorado and founder of Promise Keepers, has stated that 62 percent of men attending Promise Keepers struggle with sexual sin in their lives and that no other issue even comes close to that figure. This is true despite the fact that 75 percent of all Americans agree that marital faithfulness is essential to a strong marriage. This is another example of our propensity to say one thing and do another.

In commenting on these conflicting statistics, Prentice A. Meador has written, "Movies depict fatal attractions and dangerous liaisons. Afternoon television makes adultery appear routine and even glamorous. Cheap papers sell scandalous stories of infidelity and distrust. One such writer says, 'Trash sells; truth doesn't.'"[5]

Ladies and gentlemen, we simply must not listen to the world. We must listen to God. Paul's words to Timothy should be heeded by all, "keep

yourself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22). God knows what is best for us, and His laws regarding sexual purity are in our best interest.

Another example of a violation of God's marriage laws is same-sex marriages. We have repeatedly pointed out that it is one man and one woman who are to be married. People of the same sex may have a monogamous relationship according to a dictionary definition, but they are certainly not in a God-approved relationship.

The Bible is clear in condemning homosexuality, even if the people are in what is often called a "loving, committed relationship." Under the Law of Moses, God had commanded, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22). In writing concerning those who did not know God and had not glorified Him as God, Paul said,

> God gave them up to vile passions. For even their woman exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26,27).

I scarcely see how language could be clearer! Homosexuality is against nature. It is an abomination before God.

Proponents of homosexuality say that 10 percent of all people are homosexual. Television talk show host, Rosie O'Donnell (an admitted lesbian), in an interview with Fox TV's Bill O'Riley, claimed that 10 percent of the whole animal kingdom is homosexual. (One would wonder where she got her information.) Surveyors say the percentage in regard to humans is actually only about 1-2 percent. But, even at that, the percentage is too high. It is especially staggering when we consider that there are 6.2 billion people in our world. God never intended for people to engage in same sex sexual relationships, and He has plainly condemned such in His book, the Bible.

It is perplexing to me that anyone would call this the "gay" lifestyle. It is anything but gay. An Internet search for statistics regarding homosexuality produced some alarming facts, all of which were found to be fairly consistent from list to list. For example, homosexuals account for 80 percent of the serious sexually transmitted diseases in the United States. Homosexuals are 6 times more likely to attempt suicide than non-homosexuals. The average age at death for homosexual men is 41.5 years. Whereas the average heterosexual admits to having 8 sexual partners in a lifetime, the average homosexual has between 10-106 partners per year and more than 50 percent of these are one-time affairs. A Kinsey Institute study showed that 43 percent of homosexuals estimate that they have had 500 or more partners and most of these were people they did not know before the day they had sex with them. Homosexuals commit more than 33 percent of all

reported child molestations in the United States. Is it hard to see why God condemns this practice? In no way is it a happy lifestyle, and in every way it is dangerous to the practitioner and to society.

I say it again: God's plan is for one man to be married to one woman for life. That is His definition of monogamy. A violation of this landmark will result in ruined lives and untold suffering. And, do not forget that there are eternal consequences, too. Remember, "those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

ONENESS IN MARRIAGE

The second landmark is oneness in marriage. Listen again to Genesis 2:24. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." In God's plan, 1 + 1 = 1. That is not new math; it is very old math. It dates back to the very first couple, Adam and Eve. The two of them became one.

ONENESS IN THE SEXUAL PRIVILEGE

This oneness can be seen in a variety of ways. Obviously, the sexual union of marriage partners is a way of becoming "one flesh" and that is what is under consideration in Genesis 2:24. In his commentary on Genesis, our own Edwin Jones has written, "Independent households with shared responsibility and mutual sexual privilege are therefore established as God's will for marriage partners."[6]

It is important for us to understand that sexual relations between a husband and wife are neither sinful nor dirty. The Hebrews' writer said, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

This short passage tells us three important things about marriage. First, it tells us that marriage is honorable. It is not unnatural or dishonorable for a person to marry. There is no added virtue in remaining unmarried. Unmarried people are not intrinsically more spiritual than married people. Second, it tells us that the marriage bed is undefiled. In this text, "the bed" is used euphemistically for physical intimacy in marriage. Sex between marriage partners is natural and desirable. There should be no stigma attached to it. Please note that Genesis 2:25 says of that first couple, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Third, it tells us that God will judge all those who pervert His plan. This judgment often comes in this life, but it will most certainly come in the next. We simply cannot please God without following this standard of sexual purity and marital faithfulness.

Not only are sexual relations between rightfully married mates a marital privilege, they are also a marital responsibility. Paul points out that one of the reasons for marriage is to prevent immorality: "because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). He follows this by speaking of "affection due" one's mate: "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does" (1 Cor. 7:2).

The Old Testament beautifully treats the subject of marital love in the Song of Solomon. There has been much discussion in regard to how one should interpret this book. Some have argued that Solomon represents God, and his wife represents Israel. Many conservative scholars have said that Solomon represents Christ, and his wife represents the church. I wonder if it should not be interpreted just the way it naturally sounds, i.e., as a husband and wife who love one another and celebrate marital love.

There is plainness and openness in the language used, but there is no crudeness or obscenity even hinted at. What beauty and power exists in marital love!

> Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised (Song of Solomon 8:6,7).

To show the importance of this "one flesh" relationship in marriage, Paul gives only one reason to abstain from sexual relations, i.e., to give one's self to spiritual things. But, even then, it is to be with

consent and only for a brief time. "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor. 7:5).

In commenting on this section, Howard Winters has written,

> This is God's plan, God's order, God's command. The husband and wife have mutual needs, mutual privileges, and mutual obligations. They are to satisfy each other in order to prevent being tempted by the appeal of fornication. It is therefore an error of vast magnitude to conclude, as some have done, especially in the Middle Ages, that sexual activity in marriage is a necessary evil. Quite to the contrary, when two are one (that is, when they are married), their intimate relations are by the design and will of God. This means that they are both honorable and pure (Heb. 13:4), the highest expression of the deepest mutual love, and the most enriching physical experience created by God for human pleasure.[7]

It should not surprise us that Paul used the "one flesh" relationship to show why marital unfaithfulness is wrong. "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'" (1 Cor. 6:16). It is inconceivable that a person who is "one

flesh" with his/her own mate would seek to violate that relationship by becoming "one flesh" with another person to whom he/she is not married. This is a treacherous and dangerous violation of the God ordained relationship between a man and a woman in marriage.

ONENESS IN PURPOSE, PLANS, AND DREAMS

While I am convinced that this is the primary meaning of God's plan for oneness in marriage, I will also admit that there are other considerations. There should certainly be oneness in purpose, plans, and dreams. Marriages simply cannot survive when mates are going in opposite directions. Common goals, plans, and dreams, however, can only be determined by open, honest communication—both prior to marriage and in marriage itself.

Marriage means sharing, talking, listening, touching, helping, giving, protecting, and committing to one another—and all of this takes time. Marriage does not mean the absence of all problems and difficulties, but it does mean that these things are approached as a team.

I remember a couple that were members of the first congregation in which I preached fulltime. They were young, well educated, and very bright. He was a dentist, and she was a teacher on the college level. They were involved in business ventures and had political interests. She even held a state office. They had everything one could want, with the exception of one thing. They did not have a happy marriage. I

remember the day they told me they were getting a divorce. The reason was simple—at least as they saw it. They had drifted apart. They had nothing in common. They no longer loved one another. They were no longer one.

ONENESS IN CHRIST

In commenting on oneness in marriage, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to also speak of oneness in Christ. A common faith in Christ, and a common commitment to Him, His Word, and His church will certainly help sustain a marriage. Prentice A. Meador quotes Richard Dobbins as saying, "The closer a man and his wife get to Christ, the clearer they see how important it is for them to stay close to each other."[8]

I understand that in context, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 is referring to association with false teachers. The statements made and the questions asked, however, allow a more general application, too.

> Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.

Marriage can be an unequal yoking. In fact, it can degenerate into no yoking at all. What you end

up with is two people, but they are certainly not one. But when there is oneness in Christ, there is a firm foundation upon which to build. For this reason, Christians should marry Christians. And, I mean more than the fact that church members should marry church members. Of all the things we want in a marriage partner, at the top of the list should be our desire for someone who will help us go to heaven—and that means a faithful Christian.

Though I do not know where I first got a copy of Penny Tanksley's "Marriage Takes Three," I have long thought it is right on target. It suggests that actually 1 + 1 + 1 = 1. Let us not leave the Lord out of our marriages.

I once thought marriage took
Just two to make a go.
But now I am convinced
It takes the Lord also.

And not one marriage fails
Where Christ is asked to enter,
As lovers come together
With Jesus at the center.

But marriage seldom thrives,
And homes are incomplete,
Till He is welcomed there
To help avoid defeat.

In homes where God is first,
It's obvious to see
Those unions really work,
For marriage still takes three.

May we strive for oneness—with all its facets—in our marriages.

PERMANENCE IN MARRIAGE

A third landmark for marriage is permanence. We have already stated this principle, but it deserves a more thorough discussion.

CURRENT STATISTICS

I realize that statistics can be manipulated and made to say almost anything we want them to. However one views current statistics in regard to permanency in marriage, they are not good.

The statistics presented here are from the National Center for Health Statistics.[9] A July 24, 2002 report said that by age 30, three-quarters of women in the U.S. have been married and about half have cohabited outside of marriage. The report also found that unmarried cohabitations overall are less stable than marriages. (Is anyone really surprised by this?) The probability of a first marriage ending in separation or divorce within 5 years is 20 percent, but the probability of a premarital cohabitation breaking up within 5 years is 49 percent. After 10 years, the probability of a first marriage ending is 33 percent, compared with 62 percent for cohabitations. This same report also shows that marriages that end do not always end in divorce. Many end in separation and do not go through the divorce process.

A May 24, 2001 report said that 43 percent of first marriages break up within 5 years. This data came from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, a study of 10,847 women 15-44 years of age. As an observation, Jeffrey Koplan, Director of the Center for Disease Control, said, "Past research has shown that divorce is associated with higher rates of mortality, more health problems, and more risky behaviors such as increased alcohol use," (It makes you think God knew what He was doing when He declared that marriage is to be permanent; does it not?).

Again, from the National Center for Health Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau, the most current statistics show that the likelihood of a new marriage ending in divorce is 43 percent. Remember that this statistic is only for first marriages. When second, third, and even forth marriages are added with this figure, it is easy to see why statisticians are saying that more than half of all marriages are now ending in divorce. Dr. Phil McGraw, of television fame, sets the figure at 57.7 percent. The staggering count is that more than one million marriages end in divorce each year in America, and this has been true since 1979.

One cannot help but wonder why there has been such an increase in the statistics regarding divorce. The answers are numerous, but the following must surely be considered. First, there is now a much greater acceptance of divorce as a means of resolving conflict in marriage. The attitude is, "If it doesn't work, there is always divorce." A few years ago, people did not threaten one another with divorce. People were

committed to their marriages and worked hard to make them successful. Now divorce has become the easy way out of difficulties in marriage, and the difficulty does not have to be all that big.

Second, divorce has become socially acceptable. It is no longer a scandalous thing to be divorced or to have divorce in one's family. In fact, we have come to expect it to happen. People from presidents to preachers to common folks have experienced it. Please do not misunderstand. This is not to say that divorce is never justified, for we shall see later in this study that it can be. However, it does illustrate that we have become calloused to it.

Third, people are not as religious or as church going as they formerly were. Even those who claim to be religious and do attend church more or less regularly are not very affected by their religion. The attitude toward divorce has changed even among leaders of religious denominations. We do not hear much preaching against divorce, even from our own pulpits.

But, whatever is happening in the world about us, we must go back to the Bible to see what God has to say about the matter.

THE OLD TESTAMENT VIEW

From the very beginning, God intended for marriage to be permanent. Divorce was never in His blueprint for the home. Malachi 2:16 declares, "For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce."

Have we forgotten verse 15? It begins, "But did He not make them one [...]?" This takes the matter all the way back to the beginning. I find it more than a little interesting that the last book of the Old Testament connects with the first book of the Old Testament to make the point that God intended for marriage to be permanent and that He hates any violation of His divine plan.

Now, this does not say that God hates divorced people, but that He hates divorce. Divorced people are to be loved and ministered to. That is what God would want us to do. We must not treat them as if they have some kind of leprosy. But, He would also want us to hate divorce as He does.

Did you ever wonder why God feels so strongly about divorce? I will mention two things that must surely be very high on His list of reasons. First, He hates divorce because it is the breaking of a solemn covenant. Covenant is at the heart of Malachi 2. God had a spiritual covenant with His people, and that covenant served as a symbol for the marriage covenant. In marriage, a man and woman do not say, "Until divorce do us part." They say, "Until death do us part." That is a promise of mutual commitment before both God and man. God expects people to honor that commitment. Every divorce is a covenant not kept. And, by the way, people who will not honor their marriage covenant are likely not to honor other covenants either.

Second, God hates divorce because He does not want people to suffer the pain that divorce inevitably brings. Divorce is ugly. Divorce is hurtful.

As we shall see later, God has given one exception to the "until death do us part" vow, but even that does not make divorce pretty or desirable. When a man and woman divorce, the one flesh intended by God is torn apart, and there is no painless way for that to happen.

Researchers have discovered that divorce ranks third—only behind the death of a child and the death of a spouse—in causing pain and stress. There is emotional pain, psychological pain, financial strain, loneliness, and bitterness in the wake of a divorce. Added to this is the fact that children are often the silent victims of divorce. Their lives are torn apart, and they are devastated. They often blame themselves for the failure of their parent's marriage. The God who loves people and wants the best for them simply must hate divorce.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

I would not want us to think that only the Old Testament stands in opposition to divorce. Jesus, Himself, spoke clearly to the matter. In Matthew 19, what He said followed a question by the Pharisees, who were the self-proclaimed puritans of their day. (The problem was that their cleanliness was more outward than inward.) Putting Jesus to the test, they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Matt. 19:3). Their emphasis was on "for just any reason." The Law of Moses clearly provided for divorce (Deut 24:1ff), and they knew that. But, what about divorce "for any and every reason?"

Deuteronomy 24:1 was actually designed to slow down rampant divorces and also to protect women who were being taken advantage of by these divorces. The passage was never intended to be seen as a law of divorce, but rather as a way of controlling the divorces that were already quite customary.

Not everyone interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 in the same way, however. The debate was violent and had to do with the meaning of "some uncleanness" (literally, "a thing of nakedness") in the text. This was an issue between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. In commenting on this, Jack P. Lewis has written:

> From the words "a thing of nakedness," stressing "nakedness" *(ervath)* Shammai deduced that there might be divorce for unchastity. From the word "thing" *(dabar)*, Hillel deduced that if the woman burned the bread (that is, for the smallest cause) she might be divorced.[10]

On whose side would Jesus' answer fall? Jesus refused to be drawn into their debate. Just as was done in Malachi 2:16, He went back to God's original plan for marriage and affirmed that plan as God's ideal. He asked,

> Have you not read that He who made men at the beginning made them 'male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two

> shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate (Matt. 19:4-6).

Were those questioners not familiar with God's original plan? Had they not read what had been plainly written? Did they not understand that the bond between marriage partners is the work of God? Jesus wanted them to know that divorce for any reason would separate what God had joined, and that is not man's prerogative to do. In fact, the construction of the original text (combining the negative Greek participle *me*, "not," with the present tense, imperative verb *chorizeto*, "let separate") means to cease doing something that is being practiced. Jesus said, "what God has joined together, man must stop separating."

Thinking that perhaps there was a weakness in Jesus' answer, the questioners asked about the certificate of divorcement allowed under the Law. "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?" (Matt. 19:7). In answering their quibble, Jesus said, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8).

Please note that Jesus said that Moses permitted divorce. Moses did not command divorce; he allowed and controlled it. Though a concession, it was never a part of God's original plan. Jesus said, "but from the beginning it was not so." Lewis makes the interesting observation, "Jesus appealed from Deuteronomy to Genesis; they appealed from

Genesis to Deuteronomy."[11] The Pharisees thought that Genesis must be viewed in the light of the concession in Deuteronomy. Jesus, however, said that the concession in Deuteronomy must be viewed in the light of God's original plan in Genesis.[12]

The logical question that would follow is, "Why?" Why, then, did Moses allow divorce? Jesus said it had to do with the hardness of the people's hearts. Again quoting from Lewis, "divorce is a bad custom that grew out of a degenerate people."[13]

But, why would God relax His law? Why would He make this temporary concession? J. W. McGarvey has a very interesting answer to these questions.

> Had the law propounded at creation been re-enacted by Moses, many would have refused to marry at all, preferring an illicit life to the hazard of matrimony under a stringent law, and others finding themselves unhappily married would have secretly murdered their wives to gain their liberty. As a choice of two evils God therefore temporarily modified the law out of compassion for women.[14]

Jesus' answer to the original question was, "No." "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any cause?" "No, it is not lawful." He does not, however, say that there is no cause for divorce. While it must not be "for just any cause," a cause is given. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits

adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matt. 19:9). Earlier, as a part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said the same thing. "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery" (Matt. 5:32).

"Sexual immorality" is from *porneia* and refers to any kind of unchastity. Jesus is saying, "no, not for **every cause**, but for this **one cause**." He knew that there would be situations where a marriage partner would not be content to keep his/her vows regarding fidelity. In that case, an exception is given. With this one exception, a person may divorce a mate and marry another marriageable person and not be displeasing to God.

Some argue that there is no exception at all, but I would wonder why Jesus used the word "except," if there is no exception. The exception, however, does not negate the original plan. It simply allows for a special situation. Today, we must allow what Christ allowed in this regard. We must not become people who sanction divorce for just any cause. On the other hand, if the Lord made an exception, we must preach and teach it, and honor it.

I would also point out that this allowance in not an obligation. A person is not obligated to put away a mate for unfaithfulness. A number of things must be taken into consideration. What is the attitude of the unfaithful mate? Is it a recurring problem? Has repentance taken place? Many people have found

the ability to forgive an unfaithful mate and to continue in that marriage and even to find happiness again.

In His discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus elevated marriage back to God's original plan for it. Many then, and many today, would consider His teaching too restrictive. But, we dare not disregard what He said or even apologize for it—if we want the best life here and if we want eternal life with Him after we die.

THE TEACHING OF PAUL

Not that such is required to validate the point, but it is interesting that Paul restates what Jesus said about divorce.

> Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife (1 Cor. 7:10,11).

At the beginning of this chapter, we note that the Corinthians had written to Paul and had asked about a variety of matters relating to marriage. In the case of people who were already married, Paul does not give any new revelation. He acknowledges and repeats the Lord's teaching in this regard. Married couples are to stay married—that is God's plan.

Certainly, there were special problems during that time. Sometimes believers were married to pagans. Talk about unequal yoking! What about that? Can the believer say, "I am a believer and you are not, so I will just divorce you." No!

In commenting on this passage, the late Howard Winters has observed:

> As far as I can determine there is no case when a Christian would be justified in being the cause of a broken marriage. He may break the marriage when fornication has been committed by his partner (Matt. 19:9); or he may consent to the departure of an unbelieving mate (vv. 12-15), thus ending the marriage relationship when it's the unbeliever's choice. But in no case should he be the cause of the dissolution.[15]

When one departs from the marriage, Paul gives only two choices, "let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." This would take for granted that the leaving of the marriage was not for a Scriptural reason, for Jesus had already made an exception there. The one who leaves a marriage for any reason that is contrary to God's plan has no right to remarry.

All of these passages considered—Malachi 1:15,16; Matthew 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 7:10-11—make one very powerful point. Marriage is to be permanent. We may not have the wisdom of Solomon to know what to do in every hypothetical—often highly

convoluted—"what if" situation, but we must never waver from the position that God wants marriages to last until death parts the marriage partners and that He has only given one exception to that plan. We must preach that from our pulpits, teach it in our classes, and model it in our homes.

SUBMISSION AND LOVE

The fourth landmark for marriage is a double one—submission and love. Many people, who are still married to one another, are quite miserable. These couples are technically still together, but they are not "one flesh." The may live in the same house and even sleep in the same bed, but there is open warfare being waged in that home.

Cleveland McDonald has made an interesting analogy in regard to marriages being happy and successful.

> The guests at the wedding reception usually admire first the beauty and then the taste of the bridal cake. Pictures are made as the couple make the first cut. No one would be foolish enough to say that such a beautiful creation just 'happened.' They know that the necessary ingredients are blended in the correct proportions and then baked. After this, it is decorated by skillful hands before the final product is ready for display. Yet many a couple cuts the wedding cake and have not given as much thought to what is required to

> create a lovely marriage relationship as the baker has given to producing the cake.[16]

Furthermore, McDonald has the following to say about marriage failures: "Many times the difficulties arise because the couple have not really considered what it takes to make a successful marriage, and do not realize that a real effort must be made to blend these ingredients into a harmonious relationship."[17] I am saying today that submission and love are two of the ingredients that help make a relationship harmonious.

MUTUAL SUBMISSION

In writing to the Ephesians, Paul said, "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). There has been more than a little difference in understanding how this verse fits into Paul's instructions in this chapter. Some view these words as the conclusion of the preceding statement. Our King James Bibles and New King James Bibles, in fact, have them that way. Others set them apart as a bridge between verses 20 and 22. The New English Bible makes a separate paragraph out of this short verse. Still others see these words as the opening of the instructions regarding proper family relationships.

In regard to this, F. F. Bruce has written:

> The household code which follows (Eph. 5:22-6:9) is a special application of the Christian grace of submission; it is introduced by this general exhortation to

> mutual submissiveness. Christians should not be self-assertive, each insisting on his or her own way. As the Philippian believers were told, they should be humble enough to count others better than themselves and to put the interests of others before their own, who 'emptied himself,' 'humbled himself,' and 'became obedient,' even when the path of obedience led to death on the cross (Phil. 2:3-8).[18]

However they are placed, they still say what they say. Mutual submission is one of those great rules of all Christian relationships. We must have concern for one another. We must feel a sense of liability for one another. Though true elsewhere, this is especially true in marriage.

The word used here is from *hupatasso* and is an old military figure and means, "to line up under." Can you imagine the difference it would make in marriage if we would learn to do exactly this? What if every husband thought of his wife before making any decision? What if every wife thought of her husband before making any decision? What if every married person's first concern was for his/her mate? What if every wife truly wanted to make her husband happy? What if every husband truly wanted to make his wife happy? What if we all would be strong enough to get on our knees and serve our mates?

To the contrary, we are often very selfish in our marriages. We want what we want when we want it no matter how it affects our mate. This is sheer

childishness. In commenting upon immaturity in marriage, the late Thomas B. Warren has written:

> First, I would suggest to you that emotional immaturity manifests itself in selfishness. A little child is selfish. He is wrapped up in himself. He cares little or nothing about the trials, troubles, sorrows, and needs of others [...]. How many husbands and wives have this kind of attitude? [...]. When both husband and wife are immature, then real trouble results.[19]

We all need to be reminded from time to time to fight selfishness and to follow Paul's instruction, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3,4).

SUBMISSION OF THE WIFE TO THE HUSBAND

After speaking about submission in a general sense, Paul moves to the more specific of the wife-husband relationship. "Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).[20] In writing to the Colossians, the wording is changed only slightly: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18).

Some level of submission is involved in any human relationship. In the home, God's order is that

the wife be submissive to the husband. This does not mean that wives are inferior. In many ways they are superior. It does mean, however, that wives are to place themselves under the headship of their husbands. This deference is done "as to the Lord," i.e., as a part of the wife's duty to the Lord.

Paul affirms that the wife-husband relationship is a part of God's order. "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). Putting these in descending order, it is God, Christ, man, woman. This order helps us to see that inferiority is not at issue. Christ is in no way inferior to God, the Father. He is, however, submissive to Him. In like manner, though not inferior to their husbands, wives are to be submissive to their husbands.

Unfortunately, some husbands have abused the teaching given here. They equate their headship in the family with the absolute right to rule, even to the point of abusiveness. Please note Paul's safeguard against this kind of attitude and behavior. "For the husband is the head of the wife, as (and I emphasize "as" -tcm) Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body [...] and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Eph. 5:23,33).

What kind of Head of the church is Christ? Is He abusive? Does He make unreasonable demands? Is He harsh? The answer to all of these is, "No, He is not." If husbands want to know what it means to be the head of the family, they must look at the example of Jesus with His bride, the church. This means that

the husband finds his pattern for conduct in the conduct of Christ toward the church.

In this connection, Willard H. Taylor has observed, "Any sacrifice and self-giving that creates a sense of well-being and security will normally evoke free and loving submission from his wife."[21] I would further state that most wives will have no trouble submitting to the headship of a husband when she knows that he loves her, thinks first of her, and protects her with his life.

Cleveland McDonald has a most appropriate observation that agrees with my own.

> The couple with good communication between themselves experiences little difficulty in this area, for the wife is attuned to the needs and desires of her husband. Since he loves her as Christ loved the church, the wife's desire is to please her husband so that orders or commands are not necessary. In Titus 2:4, young woman are asked "to love their own husbands," so that the submission of the wife is based on reciprocal love between husband and wife . . . Where this mutual love exists as God intends it, the wife does not find it difficult to accept her husband as the head of the home.[22]

MUTUAL LOVE

In addition to submission, love is one of the landmarks of a successful marriage. You see, someone may submit to another out of fear, or because of some advantage it allows. Husbands and wives are to love one another fully. Note again the writings of Paul: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her [...]. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies [...] let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself" (Eph. 5:25,28,33).

Since husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, we might ask what kind of love Christ had for the church. It was a giving love. It was an unconditional love. It was a sacrificial love. It was a sanctifying love. Not only **was** it this kind of love; it still **is** this kind of love. All right, husbands, there is our example!

Lest we think that this love only flows from husband to wife, we turn out attention back to Ephesians 5. At the beginning of the chapter, Paul said, "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love [...]" (Eph. 5:1,2a). Remember that this is the chapter that talks about husband-wife relationships, and it begins with the injunction to "walk in love." This means that husbands are to love their wives and wives are to love their husbands. In addition, Paul instructs older women to teach younger women "to love their husbands" (Tit. 2:4).

As you know, **agape** is the term most often used to describe the Christian ideal of love. This kind of love is a decision of the will, and it places the welfare of the beloved ahead of the welfare of the

lover. *Agape* is not just an emotion. It has to do with the mind and the will. Can you image what kind of marriage would be maintained by two people who loved each other to this degree?

If you are wondering about the characteristics of this kind of love, read Paul's description of it:

> Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not easy provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

Many years ago I clipped a poem by Helen Welsheimer, which reads:

> She is so beautiful, so pure, Dear God.
> He is so fine, so fearless as they stand
> Together at the threshold of their dreams.
> Oh, grant them length of days within the land.
>
> Oh, always may her shining eyes be proud
> Of him to whom she plights her troth today,
> And may he be as tender through the years—
> Theirs be a love time cannot take away!
>
> Teach them, our Father, marriage is much more
> Than one low-roofed, small house where two shall live,

More than new rooms, resplendent with bright gifts
Which happy friends, well-wishing them, may give.

Love bears all things, believes, hopes, endures,
With stronger bonds than vows or nuptial kiss,
Love vaunteth not itself, seeks not its own,
Love never fails...Father, teach them this!

Frank Sinatra was right when he sang, "Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage." God put love in marriage, and a marriage cemented by love will be a success.

CONCLUSION

I am satisfied that most—if not all—of the problems in marriage have arisen from the fact that we have listened to the wrong people and have not followed God's divine blueprint for marriage. Everyone is an expert these days in regard to marriage, or so it seems. To build good marriages, we must start with the right book, and that book is the Bible. In it, we find ancient landmarks, which have been placed by God and which must not be removed. They are: monogamy, oneness, permanence, submission, and love.

A number of years ago, I heard Senator Jennings Randolph of West Virginia deliver a baccalaureate address at my alma mater, Ohio Valley College in Parkersburg, West Virginia. He talked

about the Bible his mother had given him on his wedding day. It bore this inscription, "Each for the other; both for God." I will never forget those words. I think of them again today as I close these lectures on marriage. Oh, how we need to write them indelibly in our minds and focus on them in our marriages. "Each for the other; both for God."

Thank you for the opportunity to study with you in these three sessions, and may God give us the strength to follow His landmarks for marriage, so that our marriages and homes will be blessed by Him.

ENDNOTES

[1] A call to Senator Byrd's Washington office identified this as a part of one of his "Byrd's Eye View" newspaper articles, but no exact date could be given.

[2] J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. (Inter-Varsity Press: England, 1974), p. 266.

[3] All quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

[4] *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus.* (McMillian, 1996).

[5] Prentice A. Meador, *Promises to Keep* (21st Century Christian: Nashville, 1998), p. 201.

[6] Edwin S. Jones, *Studies in Genesis* (Quality Publications: Abilene 1996), p. 24.

[7] Howard Winters, *Commentary on First Corinthians.* (Carolina Christian, 1987), p. 83.

[8] Meador, Op. Cit., p. 184.

[9] The statistics on Cohabitation and Divorce were obtained from the National Center for Health Statistics website at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs.

[10] Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Part II. New Living Word Commentary Series, Everett Ferguson, Editor. (ACU Press: Abilene, 1984), p. 65.

[11] Ibid, p. 66.

[12] Paul used the same kind of argument in Galatians 3:19 in regard to the Law of Moses and the promise made to Abraham. He argued from the Law (i.e., the later regulations) back to the promise (i.e., the original plan). He argued that the Law must be viewed through the promise and did not in any way negate the promise.

[13] Op. Cit., p. 66.

[14] J. W. McGarvey, *Fourfold Gospel* (Standard Publishing: Cincinnati, n.d.), pp. 539-540.

[15] Winters, Op. Cit., p. 86. (I do not intend for this quote to imply an acceptance of any kind of so-called "Pauline Privilege," which says that the believing spouse in not bound to the unbelieving spouse any longer and is, therefore, free to marry again. Paul would hardly allow later in the chapter what he had forbidden early in the chapter in verse 11. The use of the present tense verb in verse 15 shows that the "bondage" under consideration was one in which the person had never been, was not then, and would never be. The explanation in verse 16 shows that the bondage was an obligation to continue to make obviously futile efforts to maintain the marriage relationship. There was no certain knowledge that so doing would save the unbelieving spouse—which would be the reason to strive to maintain such a marriage.

[16] Cleveland McDonald, *Creating a Successful Christian Marriage* (Baker Book: Grand Rapids, 1975), p. 39.

[17] Ibid, p. 41.

[18] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (William B. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 382.

[19] Thomas B. Warren, *Marriage Is For Those Who Love God And One Another* (Warren Publications: Fort Worth, 1962), pp. 86-87.

[20] The verb in this verse is supplied by the previous verse.

[21] Willard H. Taylor, *Beacon Bible Commentary* Vol. IX (Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City, 1965), p. 240.

[22] McDonald, Op. Cit., pp. 64-65.

BALANCE: FAITH AND WORKS

WILLIAM WOODSON



William Woodson was born in Jasper, AL. He attended DLC, FHC, Union, HGSR, and New Orleans Theological Seminary (M.Th. and Th.D.). He served as Chairman of the Bible Department and Lectureship Director at FHC. He founded the graduate program in Bible at DLU. Bro. Woodson retired from Lipscomb in 1996. Since his first sermon in 1950, he has preached in many states. He has done local church work in AL, MS, and TN, most recently with the Granny White church in Nashville. He is the author of three books, including *Changing Agents* and *Churches of Christ*. He and Jeanne (Creasy) are the parents of three children and the grandparents of five.

The biblical principles previously studied in the discussion of Balance: Grace and Law are equally applicable to this topic and will not be repeated in detail in this presentation. The essence of the previous study was that the interpretation one gives to one or more verses on grace must agree with and balance with one or more verses on law. To fail to do so is to produce contradiction between verse and verse, verses and verses. That way lies atheism. So it is with faith and works. If one's interpretation of verses on faith is reached and sustained by omitting or misinterpreting verses on works, the result is flawed, unbalanced interpretation. This exegetical principle, once understood and applied, reveals the falseness and failure of denominational interpretation of verses on grace and law and faith and works. It

applies to all other efforts in interpretation, but it is especially applicable in this study. The previous study makes it unnecessary to repeat several items therein discussion; although we turn to the present effort with them in mind.

SALVATION BY FAITH

Clearly the New Testament teaches lost men and women are saved by faith! To deny this truth is sheer disregard for the words of the text! No representative man among us has ever, to my knowledge, denied we are saved by faith! If so, and others know of him, he is a maverick and very mistaken! I doubt even one could be named by any critic of our heritage.

Whether one speaks of "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" (John 3:16); "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8); or any of dozens of other verses teaching one is saved by faith, our brethren have always and still do believe these verses as strongly as anyone else! This a fact and no reason exists to deny it.

WORKS AND SALVATION

There are numerous verses that teach the need of appropriate "works" in becoming and remaining a child of God. Some examples concerning becoming a child of God are: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"(Matt. 7:21); "But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"(Acts 10:35); "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6); "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24); "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). Some examples concerning remaining a child of God are: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10); "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 2:116-17). The person who rejects any and all "works" to become a Christian and remain a Christian is obliged to explain how these and other, similar verses are true?

ABRAHAM, FAITH AND WORKS

Perhaps no clearer example concerning faith and works can be observed than the case of Abraham.

Beyond question, Abraham believed in God: "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23).

Abraham did "works" that were acceptable to God: "They answered and said unto him, Abraham is

our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39); "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (James 2:21).

However one goes about to explain, not explain away, these verses, the fact is that Abraham did "works" that were acceptable to God. The texts actually use the word "works" and that fact will not go away. How is one to understand these verses as related to those noted just before? How can they be balanced with the others? Here is the question that neither the denominational world nor change agents among us can accurately and honestly answer without recognizing their views of faith only are wrong! This fact must be faced and faith only cannot be defended in light of this truth!

Abraham was not justified by "works":

> For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. 4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:2-5).

Here the need to properly and accurately balance these verses so as to show there is no contradiction in the Bible is as incumbent on one who

believes as I do that works of obedience are necessary for salvation, as it is on the one who denies works are in any way related to or necessary from salvation! Either there is a contradiction that should be admitted; or the truth in all of these verses, and others of like nature, should be learned and followed. Any other way leads at the bitter end to the rejection of Scripture!

Look again at two words "**glory**" and "**debt**" in Rom. 4:2, 4: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to **glory**; but not before God; Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of **debt**."

"**Glory**" is the rendering of the noun *kauchama*, It is also rendered "boasting" (2 Cor. 9:3). The verb is rendered "boasted" 2 Cor. 7:14; "boast" (9:2; 10:8, 13, 15, 16; Eph. 2:9). Of interest also is the fact that the noun rendered "glory" in Romans 4:2 is rendered as follows in other translations: "to boast about" RSV; "could quite fairly be proud of what he achieved" Phillips; "ground for pride" NEB; "reason for boasting" Barclay; "ground of boasting" Conybeare and Howson; "*something* to boast about" NKJV; "something to be proud of" Moffatt; Goodspeed; and "something to boast of" Williams. In Romans 4:2 "to glory" has to do with that of which one can boast, of which one can be proud; in short, an accomplishment on his own initiative and effort.

"**Debt**" is the rendering of *opheilema* here and in Matt. 6:12, and "due" in Romans 13:7. The kind of "works" discussed in Romans 4:2-5 is the kind that entitles the doer thereof to boast and to claim he has

placed God in debt to himself. Were the "works" of Abraham noted above of this kind or nature?

Note carefully Heb. 11:8:"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." After the death of Abraham, God said to Isaac that he would perform the oath he had made with his father Abraham, would make his seed as the stars of heaven, and all the nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed. The stated reason for this blessing through Abraham was: " Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). Did Abraham's obedience to God's voice and keeping his charge, commandments, statutes. and laws entitle Abraham to boast before God? To claim God's blessings to him were blessings of the nature of debt? No one can seriously make such a statement. It is clear, therefore, that obeying God, keeping his charge, commandments, statutes and laws is not a ground for boasting, or of claiming that a debt must be paid by our God. It was not so with Abraham; is not so with us! Here is the heart of the discussion about faith and works: Of what kind or nature are they: Are they (1) works of obedience to the commandments of God, or (2) are they works of such nature as will entitle the doer thereof to boast and claim God is indebted tom him?

The words of James forever settle this matter. James wrote a discussion as to the need for faith to act, to do what was involved in a particular situation (otherwise, it is dead so far as the action needed to be

taken is concerned), whether another needed warmth or nourishment, James 2:16. Faith, therefore, if it does not act in keeping with the will of God in a particular situation, is dead, being alone (v. 17). Faith without the obedience that submits to God is no better than that of demons (v. 19). So, faith without works is again stated to be dead (v. 20).

James noted that Abraham's faith and works were the appropriate explanation of what he was discussing in that Abraham was justified when he offered his son on the altar (v. 21; Gen. 22:9-12). The aorist participle, *anengkas*, "had offered," shows the offering was prior to the justification. The conclusion one should "see" was that the faith of Abraham was working (imperfect active verb, *sunergo*) with his "works" and "by" (*ek*, out of) works his faith was made perfect (v. 22). Thus, Scripture was fulfilled and Abraham was called the Friend of God (v. 23). Abraham's works did not provide a basis for his boasting before God and did not place God under debt to him! Instead, the works expressed the resolve of Abraham to be obedient to God in what he was commanded to do.

This is the heart of the distinction we are insisting upon between works that have nothing to do with salvation in Christ (the works of the law of Moses, works of man's invention, that seek to place God under debt to the doer of the deed, or works that are used as a basis for glorying or boasting of one's moral or spiritual superiority), and those that have to do with the very means of being saved, i.e., works of obedience from the heart to the commands God has given so one can and will be saved by the grace of

God: an obedient faith that entails repentance, confession, and baptism for the remission of sins. This understanding balances the teaching concerning the rejection of such works as are used for man's boasting, for having the view God is obliged to save the person, and the works of submission to the will of God. It also provides the basis for understanding that works of obedience to the will of God are necessary before as well as after becoming a child of God.

The writer of Hebrews summed it up:

> Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:8-9).

Here the issue stands or falls! We stand with the truth of the necessity of obedience in the works God has given for our faithful submission to his will. We close with a most pertinent verse from Paul:

> But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

BALANCE: GRACE AND LAW

WILLIAM WOODSON



William Woodson was born in Jasper, AL. He attended DLC, FHC, Union, HGSR, and New Orleans Theological Seminary (M.Th. and Th.D.). He served as Chairman of the Bible Department and Lectureship Director at FHC. He founded the graduate program in Bible at DLU. Bro. Woodson retired from Lipscomb in 1996. Since his first sermon in 1950, he has preached in many states. He has done local church work in AL, MS, and TN, most recently with the Granny White church in Nashville. He is the author of three books, including *Changing Agents* and *Churches of Christ*. He and Jeanne (Creasy) are the parents of three children and the grandparents of five.

To "balance" two or more things means to bring them to be equal in number, weight, force, or value; to proportion properly the parts, or elements; to bring about the harmonious adjustment of two or more things so that one does not outweigh the other. To balance grace and law and faith and works in Scripture is to so understand each of these Bible themes that the harmony between and among them is evidenced and the proper value of each is accurately set forth, so that one does not outweigh the other(s) in one's understanding and application of these vital themes. The lack of such balance concerning grace and law and faith and works is the heartbeat of much false doctrine taught and believed in the religious world. This lack of proper balance between and among these vital doctrines is not due to Scripture,

but rather to the lack of proper understanding and teaching concerning each of these topics. The unwary may suppose the problem lies with Scripture, and be tempted to turn from truth to error as the result of the clash between purported teaching of the Bible on these themes, when the reality is that the truth on each is not properly balanced with the other.

The two subjects of these lectures relate so closely to each other that common qualities will be discussed in this section and the distinctions will be made evident in later parts of the study.

SCRIPTURE ALWAYS HARMONIZES

It is true that the teaching of the Bible on a given topic is always in agreement with, is balanced with, is harmonious with another related topic – in this instance grace and law and faith and works.

Jesus made this principle clear in his temptation by Satan. Satan urged Jesus to leap from the pinnacle of the temple to show he was the Son of God. The reason he gives was allegedly taught in the words of Scripture. Satan quoted Ps. 91:11-12: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." The proposal was that Jesus should leap from the temple to show he was the Son of God. The assumption was that God would instantly rescue him from such folly; otherwise, Jesus would show he did not believe the word of God, and was not the Son of God! Clever argument; but false!

In response to this misuse of Scripture Jesus stated: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. 4:7, quoting Deut. 6:16). Note carefully the word "**again**" [Greek *palin*].[1]

R. C. Trench was quoted as follows in Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament I*, 29-30:

> In that 'It is written again' of Christ, lies a great lesson, quite independent of that particular scripture, which, on this occasion he quotes, or the use to which he turns it. There lies in it the secret of our safety and defense against all distorted use of isolated passages in holy scripture. Only as we enter into the unity of scripture, as it balances, completes, and explains itself, are we warned against error and delusion, excess or defect on this side or the other. Thus the retort, 'It is written again,' must be of continual application; for indeed what very often are heresies but one-sided, exaggerated truths, wrent away from the body and complex of truth, without the balance or the counter-truth, which should have kept them in their due place, coordinated with other truths or subordinated to them; and so, because all such check are wanting, not truth any more, but error.

James stated that the words of the prophets "agree" with the facts about the reception of Gentiles into the church: "And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written" (Acts 15:15). There were

some who challenged the reception of Gentiles without their being circumcised, Acts 15:6. The consequent discussion evidenced the fact that Gentiles were acceptable to God by virtue of the death of Christ; the result was that those assembled were of "one accord" (15:25) in the matter. One reason was the statement of James that the Gentiles were acceptable according to the teaching of the prophets; specifically the words of the prophets "agree" with this fact. The word "agree" translates the Greek word *sumphonousin*, present tense of *sumphoneo*. The Greek verb [*sumphoneo*] means to fit (in) with, match (with), agree with" (Arndt and Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 1957, p. 788). One can easily see the connection with the English word symphony wherein harmonious sounds are produced when all of the musicians play the same note at the proper time. Imagine that the violinists are playing a classical symphony arrangement and the rest of the group is playing Turkey in the Straw and Home on the Range!

A far more serious discordant note is present when one interprets one or more verses of Scripture so that one group of verses clashes with another! The application of the words of the prophets was in agreement with, fitted with what God had foretold. So, the words of the prophets agreed with, were harmonious with, were in balance with their fulfillment in the NT time.

An example of the lack harmony in different statements is evident in the account of false witnesses against Jesus. Mark stated: "For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together" (14:56), and "But neither so did their witness agree together" (14:59). The translation

"agreed" and "agree" (vs. 56, 59, respectively) is from the Greek adjective *isos*, with "witness" [*marturia*] meaning "agreeing testimonies" Mark 14:56, 59 (Thayer, *Lexicon*, p. 307). Arndt and Gingrich render "[not] consistent" (*ibid.*, 381). Phillips renders "their evidence was contradictory" (v. 56) and "their evidence conflicted" (v. 59). When passages are not balanced together, are not construed harmoniously with each other, the conflict or contradiction shows a mistake has been made at some point.

The necessity of complying with the harmony of Scripture in interpreting one verse or group of verses in agreement--in balance as the present study notes--with the interpretation of another verse or group of verses is such that when one shows the interpretation in one instance is contrary to the interpretation in the other, one knows the conflicting interpretation is wrong and should be given up as erroneous and of no value.

One final observation on this necessity is from Henri Blocher:

> Discord is a symptom of untruth, as in the case of the false witnesses of Jesus' trial (Mk. 14:56, 59). Contradictors are to be refuted (Rom. 16:17; Tit. 1:9): it could never be done if the standard itself embraced several conflicting theologies. As matter of fact, the whole logic of our Lord's appeal to Scripture in argument (and similarly of his apostles') would instantly collapse if the presupposition of scriptural coherence were taken away. Even against the Tempter, Jesus relies

> on the internal consistency of his Father's Word, quoting Scripture to rebuff a twisted use of Scripture. 'It is written' would no longer settle the issue if it were conceded that several contradictory views compete with each other in the pages of the Book. The authority of the word of God would no longer function as it does in Scripture in that case (how could it function at all as supreme?).[2]

GRACE AND LAW

Grace and law are harmonious in the teaching of Scripture or there is a conflict, a contradiction, in the text of God's word in each occurrence of these two words. This sobering truth should cause those who interpret one or both of these great teachings so as to conflict with each other to pause, ponder carefully, and rethink what is being proposed.

GRACE AFFIRMED

Grace is truly a most vital teaching of Scripture. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17); it is made known through the "word of grace" (Acts 14:3; cf. 20:24, 32); Jews and Gentiles alike are saved "through the grace of God" (Acts 15:11). Grace and apostleship have been given "for obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; "to promote obedience to the faith" Moffatt; "obedience to the faith" NKJV). Justification is by faith that it may be by "grace" (Rom. 4:16). We must not "receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1; Heb. 12:15). We must not move from the grace of God to "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6) since to do so is

to "fall from grace" (Gal. 5:4). We have been and are being saved "by the grace of God" (Eph. 2:8, cf. v. 5).[3] One who has obeyed the gospel knows "the grace of God in truth" (Col. 1:6). God's purpose to save men by grace was brought to light by the gospel (II Tim. 1:9-11). We cherish the hope of life with God upon the return of Christ by the grace of God (I Pet. 1:13).

GRACE DEFINED

The most complete definition of "grace" I have found is that stated by our esteemed Guy N. Woods:

> A simple, but nonetheless full definition of 'grace,' is unmerited favor. I emphasize the adjective unmerited. It is not enough to say that grace is favor. It is indeed that, but more-much more. Genuine grace is favor of a special kind-that which is undeserved, unmerited, and freely bestowed by the Lord. . .We do not deserve it, we cannot earn it and, of course we cannot obligate God for it. Let this definition of grace impress itself indelibly on our hearts: grace is the unmerited favor of God.[4]

Reference could be made to similar expressions about the meaning of grace as used by representative men among us throughout the years, but these words suffice.

LAW AND GRACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Paul clearly stated: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not

be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39; cf., Rom. 10:4). The law of Moses was brought to an end by the death of Christ (Rom. 7:4; Eph. 2:12-14; Col. 2:13-14, etc.) For the one seeking to be justified before God by the law of Moses, Christ has become of no effect and the one so doing has fallen away from grace (Gal. 5:4 ASV). Both in Antioch and in Jerusalem, the edict was passed by some that "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved," and stated "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them, to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:1, 5 respectively). This false claim was vigorously resisted and shown to be without warrant in the will of Christ (Acts 15:1-29). Such dependence on the law of Moses for salvation in Christ contradicts, does not balance with, the truth of the gospel; it is false. It was false then; it is false now. Salvation by the grace of God is not attained by keeping the law of Moses!

All that said, and more as other verses set forth, it is still the case that the grace of God was present and operative during the period of the law of Moses. The Greek word for "grace" (*charis*) is present numerous times in the Greek translation of the Old Testament [Septuagint, LXX] and is the translation of eight different Hebrew words,[5] the most frequent being *chen*.[6]

The use of *chen*, *charis*, "favour" or "grace" in the OT is not exactly equivalent to "grace" *charis* in the NT, but there is some approximation, or possibly anticipation, of the meaning in the NT. Cf. God said of his people, the house of David, who had been exiled but were to return: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of

Jerusalem, the spirit of grace [Heb. *chen*; LXX *charis*] and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zech. 12:10).

Additional discussion on this topic would be interesting, but for the present study the essential point is that the Law of Moses did not contradict, but was in harmony with, the truth of grace in God's relation to Israel.

LAW IN SEVERAL NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

God foretold, through Jeremiah: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my **laws** into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10).

The Hebrew word rendered "laws" in Jer. 31:33 [LXX 38:33] is *torah*,[7] rendered in the LXX and NT text here *nomous*, plural accusative of *nomos*. FF. Bruce explains the significance of these verses: "In Heb. 8 the oracle of Jer. 31:31-34 was quoted in order to prove the obsolescence of the old economy; now [in Heb. 10:15-18, ww] it is quoted again in order to establish the permanence of the era of 'perfection' inaugurated under the new covenant."[8]

If there were no other verse(s) concerning "law" as it relates to the will of God in Christ in the New Testament, these verses would definitively show there

is "law" in the new covenant God foretold in Jer. 31:31-14. The presence of grace *charis* in Heb. 2:9; 4:16; 10:29, 28; 13:9, 25 (to say nothing of the entire "new covenant") shows the NT balances law(s) and grace! The very point of this study! But, more can be said.

Christ is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey [*tois hupakouousin*] him" (Heb. 5:9). By what means does one know how to obey Christ? One cannot obey Christ by obeying the Koran; by obeying the wisdom of the world; by obeying the commandments of the Law of Moses! It is self evident that obeying Christ means to obey what he revealed in the New Testament! Surely there can be no dissent from this fact. Jesus said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

There are several expressions that refer to such obedience to Christ: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests **were obedient to the faith** [*upekouon te piste*]" (Acts 6:7); Paul wrote that what avails in Christ is "**faith working by love**" (Gal. 5:6) and John wrote: "For this is the love of God, that we **keep his commandments**: and **his commandments** are not grievous" (I John 5:3). Paul observed that boasting" is excluded "**by the law of faith** [*dia nomou pistei*]" (Rom. 3:23). He also wrote: "For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2), and that in adapting his customs to those of the Gentiles, he was not guilty of refusing to obey the law of God: "To them

that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but **under the law to Christ**, ["under law to Christ" ASV; "under the law of Christ" RSV; Conybeare and Howson; "being under the law of Christ" NEB; "I am bound by the law of Christ" Bruce;]) that I might gain them that are without law" (1 Cor. 9:21). Paul further instructed Christians to bear one another's burdens, and "so fulfill the law of Christ" Gal. 6:2). I am of the view that this is the meaning of the "obedience of faith" that Paul referred to in Romans 1:5 and 16:26.

I would maintain that these expressions, and others one might add, are parallel in meaning with obeying Christ in order to become a Christian and to live the Christian life. Jesus instructed the apostles to teach those who were baptized "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Accordingly, in the New Testament there are commandments, laws, and a law that is to be observed in obedience to God in Christ. These are to be obeyed from the heart in becoming and remaining a child of God.

These laws, these commandments, this law are clearly distinguished from the commandments of the law of Moses; but they are commandments, laws, and a law nevertheless! They are to be obeyed in response to and within the grace of God, grace that is his unmerited favor, grace that is not earned, that is not deserved, and in obeying which by faith in submission to the will of Christ we are not meriting salvation or placing God in our debt. On the part of God, our salvation is by grace; on the part of man our salvation is granted by grace when one obeys the gospel from the heart to become a Christian and

when one continues to obey the commandments, laws, law of Christ in living as a child of God.

There is balance, harmony, full agreement between the teaching of grace noted above and the teaching of obedience to the law, commandments, laws of Christ. The symphony of truth on these topics is compelling in its beauty, harmony, and power when one welcomes the word of God in an honest and good heart (Matt. 13:23).

ENDNOTES

[1] One might be "tempted" in this instance to observe the presence of : Five Letters of Finality," noting that Jesus in these five letters in Greek and English laid to rest with finality the effort of Satan to tempt him by this mistaken use of an accurately quoted verse. For the present study, Satan's use and application of Ps. 91:11-12 did not "balance" with the clear instruction of Deuteronomy 6:16, and Jesus showed this fact by properly "balancing" the verses and refusing to leap from the temple pinnacle.

[2] Henri Blocher, "The 'Analogy of Faith' in the Study of Scripture," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (1987), p. 30.

[3] One may consider a more extensive discussion of these verses in my *Change Agents and Churches of Christ* (1994), pp. 194-200.

[4] Guy N. Woods, "Grace and Law," *Shall We Know One Another in Heaven?* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1988), pp. 146, 147.

[5] As given in the *Concordance of the Septuagint* by Hatch and Redpath, II, 1455.

[6] TDNT 9:389, note 116 stated: "62 of the total of 70 instances of *chen* in the Hbr. [Hebrew] canon are trans[lated] by *charis*...." Cf. Noah found grace ("favour" KJV, ASV) [*chen*, LXX *charis*] in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8).

[7] *torah* feminine noun singular, construct, with 1st per. sing suffix, of *torah*, "direction, instruction, law; instruction in the Messianic age Is 2:3=Mi 4:4; Is 42:2; 51:4; Je 31:33." Brown,

Driver, Briggs, *Hebrew English Lexicon* (1957), pp. 435, 436. Hatch and Redpath (II, 948) show the following verses in Jeremiah wherein *torah* is renderd by nomos (singular or plural): 2:8; 6:19; 8:8, 9; 9:13; 13:25; 16:11; 18:18; 23:27; [LXX 49]29: 12; [LXX 33]26:4; [LXX 34]27:18; [LXX 38]31:33, 36; [LXX 44]51:23.

[8] F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* Revised (Reprint 1191), p. 248.

SECTION II

NIGHT SPEAKERS

REKINDLING THE FIRE OF YOUTH EVANGELISM

ROGER JASON SHEPHERD



Roger Jason Shepherd was born in London, KY, to Roger and Sharon Shepherd on December 15, 1977. He is married to Lorrie Fernbert, of Memphis, TN. Shepherd was educated at DLU and FHU, where he received a B.S. Degree in Bible with an emphasis in Youth Ministry. Shepherd has worked in TN and WV. He has worked with the Future Preacher Training Camps for the last seven years. He has done mission work in New Zealand and is presently working as the Youth Minister and Associate Minister with the Camden Ave. church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV. Shepherd is a second generation preacher who was reared to love the Lord.

A gospel preacher was addressing an issue in his congregation. The issue that was plaguing the congregation was the members claimed to be bored in their spiritual journey. As the preacher was addressing those who made this claim of boredom he advised them by saying, "If you are bored in your walk with Christ and with your spiritual relationship with Him, then try evangelizing some unbeliever." Is this a true and honest statement? Was the advice given by the preacher worthy of consideration? Absolutely!

THE IMPACT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

We have a lot of people, young people in particular, who claim to be bored with worship, bored with Bible class, bored with devotionals, and bored with youth activities, just altogether bored with Christianity. If one will take a minute to examine more closely those who make those claims you will probably find something in common with all of them. They are not inviting, encouraging, studying with, or converting anyone. Evangelism is an element in their spiritual life that is not visible and is causing them to rapidly approach spiritual death. This is a matter of urgency and must be nurtured! Now, let us go back to the advice the preacher so graciously offered to us, "If you are bored in your walk with Christ and with your spiritual relationship, then try evangelizing some unbeliever." Evangelism is exactly what young Christians need to do in order to maintain not only their own spiritual well-being but insure that others will have the same opportunity to develop a life changing, meaningful relationship with Christ.

Young people, teenagers, can have the greatest impact on the age group that is most likely to obey the gospel. Why make this kind of observation? Consider "85% of persons will not become Christians unless they do so before the age of eighteen."[1] Paul told young Timothy: "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe" (I Tim. 4:12).[2] You do not have to wait until you are the "right age" to be an effective evangelist for the Lord. You can start right now regardless of your

age. May God help us as we attempt to "Rekindle the Fire of Youth Evangelism"!

IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A RECIPE

Do you like to eat? Chances are everyone would respond typically with the same response, "Yes I like to eat!" Consider a second question in connection with the first. Do you live to eat? Or do you eat to live? I hope you answered eat to live because if not, you could be in for a short ride on maintaining your physical health. Switch gears and consider your spiritual diet. Spiritually speaking concerning the word of God, "Do you live to eat or do you eat to live?" The answer should be both. Christians should live to eat, earnestly longing for the word of God in their lives. They should also eat to live and allow the word of God to bring them into spiritual maturity. Not only should you want to achieve good spiritual health for yourselves, but you should also be concerned for the thousands of individuals living in your world that are exhibiting poor spiritual health.

How many of you like to cook? I am not talking about cooking Mac-n-cheese or thawing out a bean burrito. I am referring to real home cooking: fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, dumplings, and those sorts of delicacies. In order to cook something that is eatable you many times will need to follow a recipe. Unless of course you are like my grandmother who did not use a recipe, she would use a "pinch of this and a pinch of that" and it would come out fabulous. As Christians and evangelists there is a

recipe we are to follow if we want to produce healthy spiritual lives.

There is a friend of mine by the name of Chip Pugh who loves to cook. In particular he likes to make hamburgers. You might be wondering, Hamburgers? That does not sound difficult to prepare. I mean all you need to do is buy some ground beef, mash it into patties, and throw them on the grill. How hard can that be? Well, if you make them the way Chip makes them everything must be just right. He makes barbeque burgers. His barbeque burger recipe includes barbeque sauce and other "secret" ingredients. Barbeque sauce can be good for burgers or it can be devastating. If you put too much barbeque sauce in the recipe, the burgers are too wet and soft so they fall apart, leaving you with Sloppy Joe, not a burger. So, in order to get them just right you have to follow his recipe for barbeque burgers.

Evangelism is like barbequed burgers. If you do not follow the recipe you will end up with something other than what you set out to make. So we have to be careful to follow the recipe. What recipe am I talking about? I am talking about the inspired word of God, the recipe for healthy spiritual lives. If you look at the word "recipe" in the dictionary you will find associated words like: "prescription, pattern; formula."[3] God has supplied to us the right formula, prescription, pattern, or recipe. The question is: are we willing to follow it closely, paying attention to every detail?

If we do not follow God's recipe then we could hinder more than help evangelism of lost souls. When using a recipe there is an ingredient list that will inform you of what you will need in order to prepare the given dish. For example, if we were baking a cake the list would call for things like milk, eggs, flour, frosting, etc. It is imperative that we include all the needed ingredients to insure a quality product. But it is also important to understand that in order to produce the dish described in the recipe we cannot add ingredients. For example, if we want a red velvet cake with vanilla icing, then we cannot add chocolate chips and peanut butter. It does not matter how much you like chocolate chips and peanut butter, it is not in the recipe. If we add those items to the mix we will not have a red velvet cake we would have something pretty disgusting. The same principle applies to evangelism. We cannot add to God's recipe if we want to produce fruitful, mature Christians (1 Cor. 4:6). With that in mind, what are some of those ingredients that should never be considered part of God's recipe for evangelism?

INGREDIENTS IN GOD'S RECIPE FOR EVANGELISM

First, the ingredient of laziness is not part of the recipe (Rom. 12:11). The easiest way to insure that something will fail is to do nothing. It does not matter what we are talking about, cooking, sports, school, or church, if you do nothing you will fail to please the one who is requiring the work. How many of you have friends that are not Christians and need the word of God? How many of you say to yourself, "I wish I had

more friends that were Christians." Well, I am here to tell you that wishing all day will not get it done. You have the ingredients needed but if you make no effort to get it done, it is sure to fail.

You could also throw into the mix extra ingredients to hinder the work of evangelism. In actual cooking you may be able to get away with adding a few "secret" ingredients. But dealing with the recipe God has given to us concerning the salvation of mankind you cannot add or take away from the recipe. The apostle John warned those readers of Revelation about adding or taking away from the recipe (Rev. 22:18-19). The same principle would apply to the other 26 books of the New Testament. God does not intend for His recipe to be tampered with or changed in any way, form, or fashion.

What kinds of things do religious chefs try to add or take away from God's recipe? How about things like taking away the necessity of baptism? The religious world has excluded God's calling for baptism in order to receive salvation. How about taking away the authority of the elders? The religious world, and sadly enough many in the church of Christ, has taken away the biblical authority in which God has ordained to chosen men or elders. They under-mind, disobey, grow impatient, accuse, and over-ride the leaders of the church. There is not enough space available in this writing to discuss all the things being added to the recipe of God's plan. To mention a few in order to bring about awareness of the destruction they can cause concerning the growth of the church would be beneficial. Adding ingredients like the expansion of

women's role in the leadership. By allowing women to lead in our worship services we are adding to the recipe. When the church welcomes, fellowships, or validates any proclaimed "believer" into the body of Christ we are adding to the recipe. When leaders and members of the church throw their opinions into the mix concerning issues like acceptable acts worship to God, man-made traditions or doctrines, commandments of salvation, role of women, etc., they are adding to the recipe of God's perfect plan for their lives and operation of His church. And when these types of things are added or taken away from God's recipe they will not produce a Christian but instead someone confused and following blindly false doctrine.

Tampering with the recipe of God is serious and carries with it serious consequences. Paul writes to us that if any man or even an angel from heaven should preach something other than that which God has given "he is to be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-9)! Young people please do not get caught up in hype, excitement, and your own desires to the point the gospel of Christ is perverted and destroyed. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being excited, but when it gets in the way of teaching and obeying the truth of God then it is unacceptable in the sight of God.

Another thing that is devastating to cooking in the kitchen is turning up the heat. A recipe may call for the oven to be set at 325 degrees and cook the food for 30 minutes. But you say, "I do not have 30 minutes so I will turn the heat up to 650 degree, so it will be done in half the time." More heat does not

equal less time in the kitchen and more heat does not equal faster Christians in evangelism. Turning up the heat in our conversations, actions, and approach does not help in successfully converting lost souls. In order to convert people to Christ we must be tactful, careful, patient, and teach them the truth in love (Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:6).

INGREDIENTS NECESSARY TO PRODUCE FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS

What are the ingredients to the recipe God would have us follow in order to produce faithful, fruitful Christians? The proper ingredients are found in Colossians 4:2-6 written by Paul:

> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let you speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

As we begin mixing the ingredients of evangelism, the first and foremost ingredient is prayer. "Devote yourselves to prayer," was the advice

of Paul (Col. 4:2). In order to properly and successfully teach lost souls about the life saving message of Christ you must take "I" out of the scenario. If a study with a friend does not go well or the friend is not converted in what you believe to be "due time," the common response is: "Why can't I get them to understand how important God's word is to their life?" Or maybe you say something like: "No matter what I do they are not going to be saved." These types of statements are negative attitudes showing through but at the same time they are true statements. There is nothing outside of sharing the gospel with an individual that you have control over. You cannot make the decision for them. You cannot repent and be immersed for them. You cannot provide the needed grace for them. You cannot cut and convict their heart for them. But God must assuredly can and will do those things for us. Before we walk as mature evangelist, we must first learn to kneel in prayer, asking God for His help and strength.

If you will examine evangelism in the New Testament you will be quickly led to see that God is in control and that He provides. Paul writes over and over about the fundamental fact that God provides solutions to people and situations you may view as hopeless or impossible. Consider the example given to us by Paul in I Cor. 3:5-9:

> What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believe, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So

> then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

You have established that the ingredient of prayer is essential in being an evangelist. Paul gives us instruction on what to pray to God for in order to be a good evangelist. You should pray that God will open a door for you to teach His word (Col. 4:3). Allow yourself to make a habit of rising out of bed each morning and praying to God that He will give you the opportunity to talk to at least one soul throughout the day. God will deliver the opportunity but you must be ready to accept. Opportunity is all around us; at the gas station, at school, at practice, at home, anywhere and everywhere. The fact is lost souls are in abundance. They are not hard to find. They are not hiding. Many times it is the Christian who is hiding behind a door that God is making available for you to open. We must make the most of the opportunities God gives us. Paul alludes to this in the latter part of verse four. Having an opportunity is one thing; doing something with it is another. So do not only pray that God will open a door for you, but be ready when He does.

The second ingredient in fruitful evangelism is action. Paul wrote: "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders" (Col. 4:5). Many times people have

the tendency to place the talking before the walking. But Paul says "conduct," or walk in wisdom. The action Paul is referring to the manner in which you live your life. One must walk as Christ walked. He must live as Christ lived. He must also behave as Christ behaved. How do you ever expect to convert souls to Christ if your life is exemplifying the furthest thing from true Christianity? If this ingredient is overlooked, you will do more harm than good. It will not matter what you have to say with your mouth if the message does not match your actions. We live in a society that likes to have proof. You prove something by being able to back up the verbal with the visual. Christianity is no different. People will want to see the visual in your life before they will believe the verbal.

The next ingredient is that of speech. But not just any kind of speech will do. Paul wrote: "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). First, notice that Paul wrote: "let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt" (Col. 4:6). Paul does not say, "let your speech criticize, brow-beat, or condemn." Too many times "Christians" look down their noses with an attitude of arrogance never allowing lost souls to come to understand the love of Christ. What is Paul talking about when he says "with grace, seasoned with salt"? He is saying let your words be selected carefully, tastefully, tactfully, in love. People deal with enough negative perspectives in life; why not share with them something positive.

Notice also that Paul says that our speech will come as a result of our actions: "so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). What response is he referring to? The questions, the curiosity that people will have because you are living differently than the world. This was what the gospels are all about; Christ answering questions, responding to people who noticed He was different. How about you? How many questions are people asking you? If not, why not? If so, how are you responding to those questions? Are you responding in grace, love, and concern for their souls?

The last ingredient to being a fruitful evangelist is preparation. Before a chef ever puts the dish in the oven there are preparations that must be made. The same stands true for evangelism. How do you prepare to be a good worker for the Lord? One must simply study the Word of God. Let it be your guide, the standard. You must study for yourself before you are ready to study with others. Paul wrote: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). You have to be able to handle the word of God in the correct manner. Does this mean that you cannot teach someone about Christ until you know everything there is to know? No, but you must continually be studying, improving your skills. If someone were to ask you something you do not know, tell them you do not know. But do not leave them hanging, find the answer. Study it yourself. Sometimes we rely too much on our preachers, youth ministers, elders, and so on. We allow them to do all the thinking and studying. There is nothing wrong with

seeking advice from those who are knowledgeable. But we cannot let their study account for your study. The truth is that each of us has an obligation to be students of the Word.

As a chef opens the oven door and is delighted with the outcome of his gourmet dish, so also will be God. God will be overjoyed and well pleased with those who follow His recipe in their lives. God desires that each of us be obedient and productive in His kingdom. Part of that responsibility is evangelizing lost souls. The material that has been outlined using the Word of God will help you achieve the spiritual goals set not only for yourself but also making a lasting impact on the lives of others. May God bless your efforts in taking the precious message of salvation to a lost world.

ENDNOTES

[1]Keeffauver, Larry. *Friends and Faith*. Group Publishers, 1986.

[2]The Scripture references in this writing will be from the New American Standard Update unless otherwise stated.

[3]"Recipe." *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. 3rd ed. 1997.

FAITH AND OPINION

THOMAS H. (TOM) HOLLAND



Thomas Holland, son of the late R.R. Holland of Rogersville, AL. Graduate of Athens Bible School, FHC/U, DLC/U (B.A.); ACC/U (M.A.); Southern IL U, (Ph.D.) Taught 1 year at Athens Bible School, 16 years at FHC/U, and 18 years at DLC/U. The past several has taught in Alabama School of Biblical Emphasis; In 1998 he and William Woodson founded the Columbia Bible Institute in Columbia, TN. Author of 67books including a complete set of sermon outlines covering all the books of the New Testament. Author of five homiletic textbooks and 9 books on Southern humor. Preached in TN, WI, IL, and TX. Has held meetings for fifty-two years in many States and foreign countries. Director of the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies. He is the father of 5 children and 6 grandchildren. Co-founder of the Diana Singing and has served as the MC of the Singing since its beginning in 1969.

The study of faith and opinion is actually a study of peace and harmony among God's people. Well-meaning brethren who make everything, from their perspective, an issue of faith and thereby decree lines of fellowship, create confusion, discouragement, and contention. On the other hand, those who would make everything in religion a matter of opinion, accepting the cultural mandate for a pragmatic, pluralistic "Christianity," for whom truth is relative, and "that's just your interpretation" mentality, surrender any real basis for determining truth from error. The latter approach opens the flood gate of digression.

A clarification of the words "faith" and "opinion" may rescue some who have become entangled in the bitterness of radicalism or the pseudo-spirituality of liberalism.

Explaining the difference in faith and opinion could be a means of delivering sincere people from a form of agnosticism and restoring or renewing their confidence in the Bible as a revelation from God to man.

A failure to distinguish faith and opinion is fraught with many serious consequences.

David W. Bercot, who did a careful study of the writings of the early church fathers, those who lived following the time of the apostles "between 90 and 199 A. D. "observed":

> It is obvious from the early Christian writings that there was a core set of beliefs and practices that were handed down from the apostles. The early orthodox Christians universally accepted such essential beliefs and practices. At the same time, there were obviously many things that the apostles never explained to the church in general...In these areas, there was considerable diversity of thought among the early Christians. Yet, they did not separate into a plethora of sects over such issues.[1]

The failure, or refusal, to distinguish faith and opinion hangs like a dark cloud over the Lord's church today. However, the penetrating rays of sunlight from God's Word can not only illuminate the spiritual landscape, those rays of truth can restore confidence in the true nature of the Bible, the Biblical orientation of the churches of Christ, and can be more soothing to troubled spirits than the "balm of Gilead."

The focal points of this presentation will be: one, definitions; two, discussion of the historical perspective; three, the application to our lives.

DEFINITIONS

An old observation declared, "A matter well-defined is half argued." The purpose of definitions is not to reflect on anyone's intelligence, but rather to clarify matters under consideration and to insure that we are on "the same page" in our investigation.

The need for clarifying the meaning of "faith" is seen in the many different meanings attached to this concept. J.D. Thomas said, "The word faith in theological circles is in some ways a very strange term...Analysis indicates that it (faith) has many and strange meanings and there is not much agreement about them."[2]

When we look into God's word we see that "faith" is an activity of the mind, heart, and will of an individual. The action is "belief." The name of the action is "faith" (Rom. 10:9, 10).

"Faith" is not a kind of "religious experience," a

"better felt than told experience," when there is no evidence to warrant an intelligent conclusion.

We are fortunate to have a "faith chapter" in our Bibles (Hebrews 11). A study of this chapter gives insight into the Biblical meaning of faith. One sees in Hebrews 11 what faith is by a study of what faith does.

For example, Noah was warned of God that a flood was coming and that Noah should build an ark according to God's directions. Noah's belief in God's word and his trust in God motivated Noah to build the ark "to the saving of his house (family)" (Heb.11:7).

Then we have the record of Abraham who was called of God to go to a land that God would show him. Abraham understood what God said and he trusted God so he did what God told him to do (Heb.11:8).

These and other examples demonstrate that faith requires testimony. No testimony from God, not faith in God. The Holy Spirit, through Paul's inspired pen, made it very plain: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom.10: 17).

When one's intellect (mind) embraces God's testimony (word), and when one completely trusts God to the extent that that person wills to obey God, that person has faith.

Vine defined the word translated "faith" as:

> Primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing (akin to **peithe**, to persuade)...The word is used of (a) trust...(c) by metonymy, what is believed, the contents of belief, the faith...(e) a pledge of fidelity.[3]

The dictionary and thesaurus have interesting information about the nature of **faith**. "Faith" is defined as: "a belief in the value, truth, or trustworthiness of someone or something; belief and trust in God, the Scriptures." Some synonyms for "faith" are: dependence, trust, reliance, confidence, persuasion, fidelity.[4]

Faith and obedience are so closely connected that the apostle Paul would emphasize at the beginning and ending of Romans the "obedience of faith" (Rom.1:5; 16:26).

God's word declares that God's people "walk (live) by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor.5:7). The word "walk," according to Vine, is "signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life."[5] This being true, then the question becomes: "How do I ascertain the faith by which I am to live?"

If God makes a specific statement about something then I have a basis for faith. (Rom.10:17). In appreciating God's declaration I need to keep in mind that God's word for faith today is given by His Son (Heb.1:1-3), and is found in the new covenant. (Heb. 8:7-12).

Old Testament Scripture is important to know.

The Christian may obtain patience, comfort, and hope from Old Testament Scripture (Rom.15: 4). However, if I want to know what God expects of me now then I must come to the New Testament (Matt.17:5).

Furthermore, faith requires that I inductively accept what God has revealed in the New Covenant. God's word which produces faith is not given in the form of a creed or catechism, it is revealed in a living form. For example, the subject of faith is not all given in one Scripture. There are many statements about faith in the Scriptures. If I live by faith then I must be willing to accept all that God has said in His word on this subject.

It is also important to know that God states things explicitly or implicitly. If I find in God's word examples of people doing what God commands, those approved examples provide implicit instructions for me. I can have faith in matters of true worship by accepting statements from His Son (John 4:24), and the Lord's Spirit-guided apostles (1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 5:18,19; Col. 3:16), and by examples of those who were obeying those commands of the Lord given through His apostles (Luke 22:19; Acts 20:7).

Rex A. Turner explained faith as:

> That which is enjoined in the New Testament either by expressed terms or by approved precedent...Matters of faith are established by the authority of the Scriptures by means of commands, necessary inferences, and approved examples.[6]

In order to have faith I must have God's word either in an explicit statement or an implicit direction. Unless I have testimony from God I cannot have faith. If I do not have faith I have no adequate direction for life (Jer. 10:23; 2 Cor .5:7). If I do not have faith I cannot have hope for life after this life (Heb. 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:7; 5:1-6). But it is also important for me to acknowledge that there is an area what God has not spoken.

In the Christian life there is an area of human judgment, there are matters about which God has not spoken neither explicitly nor implicitly.

An "opinion" is a matter about which one is at liberty to make a personal judgment. One is not at liberty to make a personal judgment about a matter of faith relative to acceptance or rejection.

An "opinion" is: "a judgment held with confidence; a conclusion held without positive knowledge."[7]

An opinion is one's personal privilege so long as he/she does not seek to **impose** the opinion on others. Opinions may be suggested but they cannot be commanded.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

When men decided to reject sectarianism and simply follow the word of God, to follow the word of God wherever it might lead, they recognized that there is a difference in faith and opinion.

Thomas Campbell's plan for unity was, according to West,

> A restatement in different words of Rupertus Meldinius famous maxim: 'In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity'. Campbell uses the terms faith and opinion. The former is based upon the expressed declarations of the Bible and the latter, upon things about which the Bible is silent.[8]

Alexander Campbell, commenting on the 1809 Declaration and Address and the determination to follow the Bible, wrote:

> We soon, however, found our principles and opinions at war on some points; and the question immediately arose, Whether shall we sacrifice our principles to our opinions, or our opinions to our principles? We need not say that that we were compelled to the latter, judging that our principles were better than our opinions.[9]

There is a realm of opinion in Christianity. There are things about which God has not spoken. To bind opinions is to make laws for God and that presumption is dangerous and divisive.

Through the years competent brethren have recognized the reality of opinions in applied

Christianity. In the famous Tabernacle Sermons, N.B. Hardeman quoted the motto of the Restoration Leaders: "In all things of faith, let there be unity; in matters of opinion, let there be liberality; in all things, let there be charity." Then Hardeman declared:

> If God has declared a thing and we can read it in His word, I would not move one-thousandth of an inch; I could not compromise one idea of faith taught by God's word; but if it be merely a matter of opinion, let me have it, but let me hold it to myself. I have no right to force my opinion upon anyone else. I am out of order, a disturber of the church, if I go about from house to house, or publicly try to push my opinion upon any member of the church. Let's hold that opinion as private property...and let brotherly love prevail so long as there is not a sacrifice of faith demanded.[10]

There is a matter of expediency in Christianity. If God has required us to do something but He has not specified how or the method of implementing the commanded instruction, then the way to carry out the command becomes a matter of judgment which needs to be guided by expediency so that God's will can be done in the most effective way.

Turner observed:

> Complete agreement of brethren on all matters is not required by the Scriptures, nor is it contemplated. The Bible

> contemplates that disciples of the Lord shall have full and perfect agreement on all matters of faith, but it does not contemplate full and complete agreement on matters of opinion, expediency, or Christian liberty.[11]

God's word has allowed for opinion, liberty, and expediency. There is a spiritual dimension of Christian liberty (Rom.14).

APPLICATION

Among those who still respect the Bible as the Word of God, plenary in its inspiration and complete in its revelation; people who have not embraced the relativism of the culture nor accepted the pseudo-faith of liberal theology, there seems to be three fundamental challenges: one, how do we know when a record or practice in the first century church is binding on the church today? Two, how do we distinguish faith and opinion. Three, how can we disagree about matters of opinion and expediency without becoming judgmental of motives, manifesting a bitterness of spirit, and harsh, critical, hurtful words written and spoken?

There is no question that our Lord prayed for unity on the part of His followers (John 17:20,21). There is no doubt that an inspired apostle urged the saints who comprised God church at Corinth to: "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you" (1 Cor.1:10). There is no difficulty in understanding that there is a unity produced by the Holy Spirit (Eph.4: 1-3).

However, there is a problem today in achieving and maintaining that unity and a part of the problem is the challenge of distinguishing faith and opinion.

Specific directions such as restoring those overtaken in a fault (Gal.6:1), can be readily understood. Prohibitive, protective commands can be easily seen: "Thou shall not commit adultery, Thou shall not kill, Thou shall not steal, Thou shall not bear false witness, Thou shall not covet (Rom.13:9), but some areas seem to be especially demanding and difficult.

Brethren have been careful to qualify a first century action as obligatory by using the word "approved" precedent or example. In looking for a binding or approved example one must have a background command. The question relative to an example then is: an example of what? What is the command being exemplified?

The example of Acts 20:7 has the background command of our Lord: "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19). Inductively, a sincere mind and heart can arrive at the time for keeping the memorial as instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ. He, though an inspired writer said "assemble" (Heb.10: 25). One who wrote the "commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37), instructed the church to eat the Lord's Supper when they assembled (1 Cor. 11:33). The first century church did this on the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

The application of Romans 14 must be done

with care. The Holy Spirit is not giving liberty in matters of faith. The liberty is in matters of opinion; those things about which God has not given specific instructions. If the Lord has not spoken on a matter explicitly or implicitly, then that matter is in the realm of opinion.

The application of faith and the exercise of opinion must be done in brotherly love. Jesus certainly emphasized the importance of His followers loving one another (John 13: 35).

The truth is to be spoken (or written) in love (Eph. 4:15). Withholding truth in the name of love is an abuse of love. However, to use Ephesians 4:15 as a justification for rancor, harshness and/or divisiveness is a violation of the context of Ephesians 4:15, namely, Ephesians 4:32, "Be ye kind one to another."

The Lord's church has paid and continues to pay a heavy price for what people have perceived to be ill will, even hatred, of people who claim to be the followers of Christ. It is time to renew a commitment to an ideal: "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, charity."

ENDNOTES

[1]*Will The Real Heretics Please Stand Up,* Tyler, Tex: Scroll Pub. Co., 1989, p. 5).

[2]*Facts and Faith,* (Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press, 1966), p.247

[3]*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,* (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co.) Vol. II., p. 71

[4]Webster's Dictionary

[5]*Op. Cit.,* p. 709, 710.

[6]*Fundamentals of The Faith*, (Montgomery, AL: Alabama Christian College Bookstore, 1972), pp. 64,65.

[7]Webster's Dictionary.

[8]*The Search for the Ancient Order*, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1949),p-.49.

[9]*The Christian System*, (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co.) Preface, xiv.

[10]*Tabernacle Sermons*, (Nashville, TN.: Gospel Advocate Co., 1938, p.229.

[11]*OpCit.,* p.67.

THE CHURCH

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Upon learning they have a child on the way, many young couples begin to plan for its future. They may take out extra insurance and begin a college savings plan. They often start to buy special furniture and decorate a room for the child. In this way, they are able to get everything in readiness for the arrival of that precious bundle of joy.

THE CHURCH FIRST EXISTED IN THE MIND OF GOD

In much the same way, before He even formed the world, God prepared a plan to save man, in case he should fall. Thus, we could say the church first existed in the mind of God. Paul wrote, "Blessed be

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1:3-4). Notice, Paul said God chose, even before the foundation of the world was formed, for those in Christ to receive every spiritual blessing.

Later, the apostle said, "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him" (Eph. 1:9-10). God was neither rushed nor delayed in carrying out his purpose. Instead, when the time was ripe, full or ready, God sent Jesus. He sent him to die, shed his blood, be buried and raised. Then, all the things that had been divided by man's rebellion could be united in Christ.

Several things might be included in the time being readied for the Lord. For instance, the Jews, by the time of Christ, should have seen their inability to live without sinning. It should also have been obvious the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Rom. 3:10, 23; 7:7-25; Heb. 10:1-4). The Gentiles should have seen the failure of their wisdom and the downward spiral into a depraved existence that had resulted from ignoring God and exalting man's wisdom. When Jesus and the apostles walked the earth, the Greek language had become the near universal language of the common mass. Rome had brought peace to much of the world through its

conquests and had opened up highways for relative ease in travel.

God's wisdom is many sided and can only be understood as he reveals it. At the time Paul wrote the Ephesian letter, God's great plan for the redemption of man had been made known to all in the church. God's eternal intent was at last taken to completion in Christ Jesus, the master of the church. No last minute revision is found in Paul's thinking. Instead, God's plan unfolded just as he intended before the world was formed (Eph. 3:10-11). In the margin of the A.S.V., one can find, "through the faith of him." Jesus faithfully followed the will of the Father when he gave up his life on the cross of Calvary (Eph. 3:12; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 10:5-10; 9:11-14, 22-28). His faithful sacrifice gives us boldness, which Summers says means "freedom to speak," and "access," which he says, "may also be translated 'introduction.' The Greek term expresses the idea of one being led into the presence of another. It was used in Paul's day of one who was introduced into the presence of royalty."[1] Jesus' sacrifice gives us freedom to speak in the very presence of God through prayer (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

GOD REVEALED HIS PLAN IN THE BIBLE

We have seen that the plan to save man in the church originated in the mind of God. Now, we need to see the plan was recorded, through inspiration's pen, in the Bible. Paul told Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [...]" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The word he used for "scripture" simply means "writing," or, in this case, recorded divine truth. At the time he

wrote to the young preacher, this would have included all of the Old Testament as well as at least 15 books in the New Testament (see 2 Peter 3:15-16). Other verses clearly indicate the remainder of the New Testament is also inspired (1 Cor. 2:9-13; 2 Peter 1:16-21; John 14:26; 15:26). These holy writings are the God "breathed out" word, or the actual words of God, as the word *theopneustos* would suggest. Paul said the words of God are useful in showing God's teaching, correcting mistakes, restoring one to a right relationship with God and teaching how to continue in the actions in which God wants his people to be involved. When the apostle spoke of making the man of God "complete," Guthrie says he used the word *artios*, which "describes a man perfectly adapted for his task." The Greek word for "thoroughly equipped" is another way of expressing the same idea.[2] It forcefully underscores the intent of sacred writings, which is to prepare a man to do every good work.

God chose the Bible, his "breathed out" word, as the means of revealing his plan to man. God's spokesmen, the prophets, did not understand the full meaning of the words they wrote. Instead, full understanding of the mystery was reserved for those who would live during the time when the law of Christ was in force. As Peter said,

> Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of

> Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

No wonder Paul could tell the Christians at Rome that they had been established according to the gospel of Jesus Christ through the "revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith" (Rom. 16:25-26).

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM ARE ONE

Within those inspired pages, God revealed that Jesus would build his church. Jesus said, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18-19). Clearly, Jesus used the terms "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably.

Jesus spoke of giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter and the eleven. Yet, with those keys they opened up the doors to the church. On the day of

Pentecost, Peter announced Jesus was seated on his throne as the ruling King, or Christ (Acts 2:32-36). The Jews who heard this "were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:37-38). After further exhortation, Luke reports, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). Luke then went on to report the faithful worship and daily work of those new converts and wrote, "The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). It is obvious the keys which were given by Jesus the King, or Christ, caused people to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. With their sins remitted, the saved were added to the church, Christ's kingdom.

The inspired writer told the Hebrew brethren, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect." Later, he went on to say, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:22-23, 28). So, it is said they came to the church and received a kingdom because the church and kingdom are one in the same.

THE CHURCH IS THE FAMILY OF GOD

As Paul wrote the first epistle to Timothy, he hoped to soon be able to visit with the young preacher in person about the organization of the church and the actions of those who make it up. However, he knew travel was uncertain and plans could suddenly be changed. Timothy needed the information about elders and deacons to carry out the charge he had received from Paul. If he were delayed in coming, Paul wanted Timothy to know the things comprising proper behavior in the church. He described the church as God's house, or dwelling place (1 Tim. 3:14-15; 1 Cor. 3:5-17).

The apostle may have also intended to represent the church as God's family, since the word "household" is used in this way in the New Testament. For instance, in Acts 11:14, Luke told of Cornelius receiving instructions to call for Peter, "Who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved." Similarly, the writer of Hebrews wrote, "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb. 11:7). So, it would seem the church is God's family and the pillar, or undergirding, of the truth. If the church fails to support the truth it has failed in its primary mission.

THE CHURCH IS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

A slightly different view of the church is presented when Paul, describing the relationship

between husbands and wives, says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). In the verses immediately before this statement (Eph. 5:22-31), the apostle had told wives that in yielding to their Lord a Christian wife will place herself under the control of her husband. In every organization of two or more people, someone must be the head. God's arrangement for the family was that man should be head (Gen. 3:16). This arrangement in the family foreshadowed the relationship of Christ to the church. Christ is the head of the church and she must place herself under his control. Christ came to give his life for the church, just as the husband should provide for, protect and defend his wife. Notice Paul uses the words "church" and "body" interchangeably, just as he did in Ephesians 1:22-23.

Christ's great love, as shown in Calvary's sacrifice, makes him worthy of being followed. The love he demonstrated was not the erotic or passionate love so often emphasized today. Instead, it was an intellectual commitment to the best interests of his beloved. Christ, in a self-sacrificing act of love, gave his life to set the church apart from the world through the cleansing his blood provides (Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28). The means of the church reaching that blood is through the baptism of each who would be a part of that sanctified body. There is a cleansing which takes place when one is lowered into the watery grave in obedience to the word (Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Having purchased the church with his own blood, Jesus is ever working toward its perfection

(Eph. 4:15-16). His desire is also for her purity that she may be ready to be taken home by her bridegroom in the great day of judgment (2 Cor. 11:2-3). The perfection of the church can only be attained through constant and faithful teaching of the truth (Col. 1:28; 1 Pet. 2:2). The church will not fully be ready for presentation to Christ until her members have put on immortality and stand purified before him because of having completed their walk in the light where Christ's blood kept them pure (Rev. 19:6-8; 21:2; 1 Cor. 15:55-57; 1 John 1:7). Christ's bride will be pure and without the spot of sin.

Christ actually put the love of the church above the love of his own body when he died on Calvary. In marriage, man and woman become one, thus when the husband loves his wife, he loves himself (Gen. 2:24). Men generally try to take the best possible care of their own bodies and keep them from injury. They pamper themselves and should do likewise to their wives, just as the Lord bestowed tender love on the church. As Adam could say Eve was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, Christ can say individual Christians are part of his body, flesh and bone. Just as husband and wife are to be faithful until death separates them, the church must remain faithful to Christ so it can have the ultimate union with him in heaven.

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

As has been seen, Christ promised to establish the church (Matt. 16:18-19). After Christ's resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, the Father made Christ the head of the church. "And

He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 3:22). Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). We must submit to that authority since there is but one Lord (Eph. 4:5).

Since the Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), membership is not determined by men. Membership is open to all people throughout the world (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16). In fact, Christ's followers are commanded to go into all the world to teach others so that Jesus might have more disciples. It should be noted that the word "church," in reference to God's people, is used in two different senses in scripture. Frequently, the word "church" is used to describe the entire body of the saved under Christ's authority. On other occasions, it is used to describe a group of saved people meeting in a particular location (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1). It may also be used to designate the saved in a particular region (Gal. 1:2).

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Outside of pronouncing Christ as the head, the New Testament does not give us an organization for the church universal. However, it does describe an organization for the local church. It appears that the apostles, under Christ, were over the church at Jerusalem and in Judea (Acts 6:1-4). However, shortly thereafter elders are mentioned (Acts 11:27-30). Toward the end of their first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas ordained elders "in every church"

(Acts 14:23). Paul directed the young preacher Titus to "ordain elders in every city" in Crete (Tit. 1:5). He went on to give a list of qualifications a man should possess before being appointed to such an office (vv. 6-9). Evidently, Paul expected Timothy, another young preacher, to also have occasion to ordain elders, since he provided him with a list of qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

It is the job of the elders to oversee (or be bishops to) the flock with which they work (Acts 20:28). This verse ought to remind elders of the headship of Christ, as it refers to the fact that Jesus purchased the church with his blood. Peter speaks of the elders' job of overseeing the flock and reminds them that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4). They cannot force the flock to follow them but should appeal for them to willingly follow. Their example before the flock should cause each sheep, or member, to want to follow. Also, the members should note that elders are to watch out for the safety of their souls "as those who must give account," which would encourage careful consideration of their leadership (Heb. 13:17).

THE ROLE OF DEACONS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

During the time in which the apostles lived, it is apparent elders were aided in their work by deacons. The New Testament does not say as much about deacons, but we can piece together some important facts. Thayer says the word translated "deacons" refers to "one who executes the commands of another, esp. of a master; a servant; attendant; minister."[3] Paul likewise lists some qualifications for

the men who would hold this office (I Tim. 3:8-13). The first seven men who appear to have held this office were those appointed at the direction of the apostles (Acts 6:1-8), though they certainly had some qualifications not listed in 1 Tim. 3. Notice that they were assigned a specific task and when it was carried out, the word of God increased and the church grew. This is not an honorary title. Deacons should strive to "minister well" (1 Tim. 3:13).

MISUSES AND ABUSES OF THE BIBLE

Some within the church have misused and abused the Bible. For instance, there are those who view it as a book of trivia. These individuals will spend hours discovering what is the middle book, chapter, verse or word in the Bible. They seem to delight in sending someone off in search of the 12-toed man or the oldest man. Yet, they struggle to explain God's revealed purpose for the church or what a man must do to be saved so that he might be added to the church.

Others decide what they believe and then open the Bible to find proof to support their position. As someone said, these people go to the Bible for confirmation rather than illumination. Peter referred to the writings of Paul, saying, "In which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16b). Such twisting often occurs when someone rips a passage from its context, thereby making God's word seem to teach something far different than it truly teaches.

D. R. Dungan described men who have an inordinate desire to please the world. He wrote, "Many men have been decoyed from the truth by popular applause. They have said something that sounded like heresy, and it received the approbation of persons of means and standing, and, desiring more approval, they ventured on more and graver utterances of the same kind."[4]

There are those who have misused the Bible because they place their trust in the thinking of a man or group of men. They may be heard to say, "I believe this because this is what my Dad believed." Or, they may emphatically report that a certain revered brother believed this and expect others to accept his thoughts as authoritative. Luke commended the Bereans, saying, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

The Bible is also abused by those who will read more into a text than is there. In interpretation this is called "eisegesis." For instance, some read Revelation 20 and read into it a 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. While study would help most to readily see through this, the problem is now compounded by new translations that place such additions within the text itself. A plain example of "eisegesis" can be seen in the New World Translation which has rendered John 1:1, "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." The simple addition of the little word "a" can create all sorts of confusion.

GUIDELINES FOR PROPER USE OF THE BIBLE

The existence of such abuses of God's word should cause us to seek a more thorough understanding of the Bible. We have already seen the Bible's claim to be the God "breathed out" word. There is ample evidence to prove the Bible is the word of God. For instance, numerous prophecies made years in advance portray with complete accuracy an event as it later would occur. Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is remarkable because he was to be a king and Jerusalem was the capital city at the time of his birth. Yet, Micah hundreds of years before had told God's people that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1). Who would have thought Israelites who had longed for the Savior for generations would despise and reject him when he came to earth? After all, for nearly seven hundred years before Christ's birth they had known Isaiah foretold the rejection of God's anointed (Isa. 53).

Too, the unity of the Bible stakes a claim to its inspiration. The Bible is comprised of sixty-six books written by approximately forty writers over a period of some sixteen hundred years. Included in the group who wrote are common fishermen, a doctor, a lawyer and a man who received the highest education possible in view of his becoming a potential world leader. Still, they write in a way that points the reader to man's struggle with sin, God's redeeming love and the Savior who has overcome the grave. Even books written by a single author are not as focused!

Once we accept that every word of the Bible is revealed by God, we need to become daily Bible searchers, like the ancient Bereans (Acts 17:11). While reading is important, it is equally important to realize careful study goes beyond a cursory reading. The blessed man is described as one whose, "delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2). One's searching of and meditating on the word of God will be more fulfilling if he recognizes God's word was written to the common man who could understand if he would only use a little common sense. For example, when Jesus says he is the door of the sheepfold, we know he is not a literal door. Other verses obviously refer to literal events, such as, "Jesus wept." Common sense will often help us to know which one we are reading at a given time. The Bible was not written in complex intellectual language, but in simple terms so that all could understand.

One must also be willing to work to understand the Bible. Timothy had known the scripture from the time of early childhood, yet Paul instructed him to study to be approved of God (2 Timothy 3:15; 2:15). This suggests work that is ongoing throughout one's lifetime, instead of one-time study. Mary recognized the importance of hearing the Master and chose it over other things of lesser import (Luke 10:38-42).

Additionally, proper use of the Bible is aided by an open mind. The Ethiopian Eunuch gained a fuller understanding of God's will for his life through one simple question. When Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He responded by asking a question of his own. "How can I, unless

someone guides me?" (Acts 8:30-31). Obviously, he had an open mind. Lessons can be learned from those who would seem least likely to know, if we will only listen with an open mind. Remember, Naaman learned the secret to being cured of leprosy from a captive servant girl (2 Kings 5:1-3).

Our understanding can be helped by a sincere desire to know the truth and obey its commands. In Matthew 13:10-17, Jesus' disciples asked Jesus why he spoke in parables. The Lord told them it was God's will that they should know these mysteries (verse 11). Remember, the gospel was a "mystery" in the Old Testament because it was not yet made known (cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Both the unbelieving Jews and Christ's disciples had been given the opportunity to see Christ's miracles and hear Christ's teaching. The unbelieving Jews saw the miracles, but refused to see the truth that Jesus is God's Son. They thus wasted their opportunities and caused God to take away even the opportunities they had. The disciples believed because of their opportunities, and God gave them a greater opportunity for understanding in the great teaching of the parables. Because they refused truth plainly set before them, the unbelieving found their hearts filled with earthly desires (waxed gross) and their ears unreceptive to the truth. To be sure that they received no light of truth, they actually closed their eyes lest they should see. We must beware lest we go to the scriptures with minds made up and refuse to understand the truth we may read there (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

As with any task, the proper tools can help us do a better job. In the case of Bible study, our

understanding can be increased if we gain access to the right tools. Having several different versions for comparison can be helpful. Use the standard translations which were done by committees (King James, American Standard, Revised Standard, et al). Avoid paraphrases, and one-man translations (like the *Living Bible Paraphrased* and *Today's English Version*). Also, avoid Bibles translated by a single group to support their doctrine, such as the *New World Translation*. Read the passage under consideration from all of them. Use a dictionary to discover the meaning of words you do not recognize or which seem odd in the context. Some have criticized the King James for its outdated words. Yet, all of their proper meanings can be found in a good collegiate dictionary.

A good concordance can be used to look up key words. Sometimes looking up other passages where a word is used can help. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* has a Hebrew and Greek dictionary in the back so the Bible definition can be readily looked up. A Bible dictionary can help us discover the meaning of a word, historical background, habits and customs of the people involved, descriptions of animals or plants, and laws of that day and nation. *Baker's Bible Atlas*, or some other geography book, can assist us in understanding the terrain involved, and give pertinent data on the people. Commentaries can help if one keeps in mind that they are written by men and were influenced by the author's thinking. Also, we need to learn to use the center column references and footnotes that appear in most good Bibles. Often an alternate word is given that could help us understand an entire passage.

If we would use the Bible in the best possible way, we must recognize God has dealt with man in different ways through the ages. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all heard the will of God for their lives and delivered that will to their families (Heb. 11:7, 8). At Sinai, God instituted the law of Moses for the children of Israel (Ex. 24:1-3). In the last days, God spoke through his Son. Moses' law was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross (Heb. 1:1-2; Col. 3:14).

Finally, all Bible study should be accompanied by prayer for wisdom from God that we might understand what we read and apply it to our lives. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). Such a positive promise should spur us to pray anytime we approach the Bible.

CONCLUSION

We have seen the church first existed in the mind of God. God's plan's for man's salvation in the church were revealed in the Bible. The church is described in various ways in scripture. It is the kingdom of Christ, the family of God and the bride of Christ. Christ is both the savior and head of the church. Elders serve under Jesus, the chief shepherd. Deacons aid the elders by ministering to the needs of the saints.

Since the Bible does reveal God's plan for the saved in the church, it is important that God's people

avoid misusing and abusing it. Some have abused the Bible by making it a book of trivia. Others open their Bibles only to prove theories they already hold. Unfortunately, there are men who are more interested in pleasing the world than they are directing the world in the Lord's way, so they use the Bible to support current, popular opinion. Some misuse the Bible because they place their trust in a man or group of men rather than reading it for themselves. Another group of people reads into a Biblical text more than is there.

Perhaps all these problems can be avoided if we will follow some simple guidelines in using the Bible. Having recognized that the Bible is the word of God, we need to become daily Bible searchers. We must work to understand the meaning of God's revealed will. Having an open mind and a sincere desire to know and obey the truth will put us well on the way to understanding God's message. Good tools assist developing a growing knowledge of God's "breathed out" word. Having several different versions, a good concordance, a Bible dictionary, a Bible atlas and some good commentaries can open our eyes to the full meaning of a particular passage. Also, it is good to realize God has dealt with man in different ways in three different ages. Finally, it is always important to ask God for wisdom to understand how to apply the knowledge acquired from Bible study to our lives.

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

ENDNOTES

[1] Ray Summers, *Ephesians: Pattern for Christian Living* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), p. 60.

[2] Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 165.

[3] Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 138.

[4] D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics: A Text-book* (Delight, Arkansas: Gospel Light Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 36.

EVANGELISM IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

STACEY MOBLEY



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INTRODUCTION

On one occasion it was said by our Lord: "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6: 38). That will is summed up when Jesus stated His purpose in coming to earth: "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10). Shortly before His ascension, there is an urgency in the perpetual mission of Christ in giving the great commission to the eleven,

> All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with You

always, even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:18-20).

Christ had a message for the eleven apostles. He came and spoke to them. The charge He gave to them was to go make disciples of all nations. The Gospel is for all, and there is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9; Eph. 4:5). Therefore, we see that the mission of the church is to save lost souls. The church today is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15) and the only means to carry out the great commission. Thus, "every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5: 42). The command given by Paul (Holy Spirit) to Timothy is forever our example: "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2: 2). Brethren, the greatest need in the entire world is the salvation of souls now lost. How, then, will we fulfill this great need to the billions who are lost? We must first concentrate on those who live next door, around the corner, in the neighborhood, this, then being the obligation and the opportunity for the local church.

In accomplishing this mission, the church must take advantage of every scriptural method available. The scriptures employ various methods by which this great work is to be accomplished. However, most agree that these methods may be divided into three main categories:

1. Evangelism
2. Benevolence and

3. Edification. It will be the purpose of this study to briefly consider all three in accomplishing the mission of the church—to save the lost.

WHAT IS EVANGELISM

The Greek word *evangelidzo* appears fifty-two times in the New Testament and is translated: "to bring good tidings of" (Luke 4:18; Rom. 1: 15). The gospel is the "good news" which is to be proclaimed to the world. Therefore, evangelism is the carrying of the "good news" throughout the world. The church is blessed and privileged to carry this saving message to a lost and dying world. God had a purpose for Paul:

> For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26: 16-18).

The objective of evangelism is to bring men from darkness to light, from death to from alienation from God to sonship in Christ. The need is great. The

time is now. The Source is none other than our Savior Jesus Christ.

THE COMMAND

A command is as great as the Commander who gave it is. If I were to give a command to you, there might be hesitation because of the source. If I were to give a command to my children, I would hope, because of the source, they would readily submit. Our command has come from the Creator of the universe. As recorded in Matt. 28: 18-20, the Record says:

> And having come, Jesus spake to them saying, Has been given to me all authority in heaven and upon earth. Having gone, therefore, make disciples (disciple ye) all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

With urgency, we should submit to the greatest Source to carry out our obligations. The church has been plagued too long with "keeping house." Every congregation ought to have a plan and a program(s) for evangelism. To meet every Lord's day only to engage in the acts of worship, and return to our homes is futile. There must be care and caution not to go from one extreme to another. We must be biblically balance in our approach. Some congregations engage in an active program to preach the gospel to

other nations, but do little at home. Many have the evangelistic zeal to go knock doors, but we must not forget to knock next door. Some are involved in multifaceted activities at home, but do little to spread the gospel beyond their own areas. Unfortunately, there are some that are doing nothing one way or the other to spread the gospel; could it be they have lost sight of the Source?

The church needs a revival and understanding of the only power today to save men. The early disciples recognized the gospel as "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1: 16). There was a sense of urgency and necessity in their labors. The information is not lacking today, the means and resources are not lacking, the will is our problem today. We know more Bible than we are willing to do. The apostle Paul stated that he taught "publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 5: 42), even in the face of persecution and opposition. After the death of Stephen there arose a great persecution of the church, and it was said of them: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Consequently, the gospel was preached "to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. 1: 23). I have often wondered what it would take us to busy ourselves in doing the same.

GOD'S SPIRITUAL LAW OF PROPAGATION

God gave at creation a universal seed principle that each seed will produce "after his kind" (Gen. 1: 11-12). There is a material creation; there is the spiritual creation. Concerning the material, the method was: miracle first, then natural law (Gen. 8:22).

Concerning the spiritual, the method was: miracle first, then spiritual law. There was a miraculous element in the early church (Acts 2). God's present law of propagation is seen in the kingdom parable about the sower: "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). Just as seed is planted to bring forth after his own kind, God demands preaching, teaching—sowing the seed. Before the Lord's church existed in any city on earth, that word—the "gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16), first was preached there. Where there is no seed, there can be no harvest. The evangelist Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them (Acts 8: 5-6). He went because the seed needed to be planted in the hearts of men. This was, and still is, true universally. Solomon said there is a time to speak (Eccl. 3: 7). Remember Philip and the Eunuch? Philip asked a question. "Understandeth thou what thou readest?" And he said, "How can I, except some man should guide me?" A few verses later Luke states that Philip "opened his mouth, and began at he same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:30-31, 35). First, notice that people need guidance in learning. The Bible is the only source of information concerning salvation and Christian living, but people need guidance in learning it. However, where there is guidance, there is sowing. Philip "opened his mouth!" There is a time to "stop the mouths" and there is a time to open our mouths. Paul wrote in Romans 10: 13-15:

> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not

> heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tiding of good things!

The passage teaches that God is rich unto all that call upon Him, and whosoever calls upon Him will be saved. Then Paul asks a series of questions. How can a man call on whom they have not believed? How can man believe unless he has heard? How can he hear without a preacher? How can he preach unless he has been sent? And what is the "sent" preacher to preach? Look back at verse 8: "the word of faith, which we preach." Verse 17 concludes: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." There is a needed message and a messenger to bring to fruition a child of God. The "seed" (word of God) must be planted! Moreover, may we get on with the preaching of the gospel and get off psychology, sociology, human theology, or any other "ology" that will not get the job done. One becomes a Christian by complying with the divine spiritual law of propagation.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

While here on the earth, Jesus once said to his disciples, "Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look upon the fields, hat they are white for harvest" (John 4: 35 NASB). Jesus says take a look and see! When we contemplate the sad spiritual plight of many in our nation and world, scripture serves as a reminder that the world needs

the gospel. God's missionary society is the church. The guiding awareness for the church in mission work is the fact that it is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3: 15). Preaching the gospel is the binding duty of the church. It is neither political nor social but altogether spiritual in its design. Its concern is not the entertainment of people but the saving of souls.

On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord, the apostles preached, by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Peter called on the hearers to "know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36). This they believed and inquired of Peter and the rest of the apostles: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's reply was simple: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins [...]" (Acts 2:38). Hence, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (v. 47). Their evangelistic zeal increased: "Daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5: 42). They went from adding to multiplying! "The number of the disciples was multiplied [...]" (Acts 6: 1), and "The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great number of priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6: 7).

And then we find the church at Jerusalem steadfastly continued "in the apostles' doctrine," or teaching" (Acts 2: 42). The success of the church is not converting, but preaching. Jesus said, go and preach, not go and convert. Everyone should have an

opportunity to hear the saving message, though not everyone will accept the message.

Yes, the greatest need to the local church is the challenge of evangelism. Churches are building-oriented; bank account oriented and not God oriented. Few of us ever consider what being lost really means. Jesus Himself recognized the lost condition of the world. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20: 28).

THE METHODS

By the giving of the Great Commission Jesus not only authorized but also obligated His followers to proclaim His message, the gospel, to every person in the world. It has been settled in heaven (Psm. 119: 89). The church then should busy herself in employing every scriptural means available to reach the lost. Again we read: "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10; cf. John 10: 10; 12:47; et al.). Therefore, our focus should be on the spiritual in all we set out to accomplish. "God is a spirit [...]" (John 4:24), and our objective must be on the spiritual in employing the scriptural means of saving the lost. Jesus did not instruct the apostles (nor us through them) to go everywhere relieving of pain, want, with a utopia here on earth. Heaven is up not down (Col. 3:1); men needed then as well as now the truth, that they may have their sins washed away and go home, not some "social gospel" for social problems.

BENEVOLENCE

The fundamental and primary work of the church is preaching the Gospel and seeking the lost. However, many benevolent acts are seen throughout the Lord's personal ministry. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: **who went about doing good**, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Acts 10:38). However, the Lord went beyond the physical for the purpose of the spiritual:

> Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name (John 20:30-31).

Jesus did not come for the temporary, but for the permanent. He came to redeem Men from their sins (Mark 2: 1-12). However, there is merit in seeking to save the lost by means of benevolent work.

God is benevolent and has always demanded his followers to reciprocate to those in need. **"Blessed is he that considereth the poor**: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble" (Psm. 41: 1). The word benevolent comes from two Latin words, *bene* (well or good) and *volens*, present participle of *velle* (to wish), hence to wish one well. Benevolence in the Bible carries a much broader meaning than simply wishing good fortune upon another. Wishing well does no good for wishing needs. James wrote: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And

one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (James 2: 15-16). John writes, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (I John 3: 18). John tells us about love we do not need—talk!

Paul (Holy Spirit) wrote to the churches of Galatia: "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6: 10). Our responsibility is limited with "as we therefore have opportunity." We cannot take care of the world's needs, but as opportunity presents itself, we do what we can. James writes, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1: 27). How great an opportunity to save the lost through benevolent acts. Our lights will shine brightly to the blind that we are the people of God (Matt. 5: 16). Ours, as is the Lord's, is to ultimately save those in destitute with God's only power, the Gospel. Many who have been assisted in their material needs have become aware of their spiritual needs and have obeyed the gospel. James said in the long ago, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of he kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2: 5). We must have compassion. We must use this great avenue of evangelism. Benevolence opens doors, and doors need to be opened.

EDIFICATION

When the members of the church are edified, precious souls will be brought out of darkness to light. Webster says that edification has to do with a "building, house to make; To instruct and improve, especially by a good example. To benefit morally or spiritually." The word edify comes from the Greek word "*oikodomeo*." It is most translated in the King James Version, "Build" or "Built." The word is translated "edify" only when applied to the church, and then only in the New Testament epistles. How then does edification relate to evangelism in the local church? When Christians are edified, the church will grow! I Peter 3: 18 instructs, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [...]." Colossians 2:7 says, "rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught [...]."

The church sorely needs building up. Spiritual strength in the Lord is imperative if the church would grow. This grew out of apostolic teaching for the infant church:

> And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [equipping] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ (Eph. 4: 11-12).

God's concern for the church is seen in this passage of scripture. We can busy ourselves in building up one another in various ways. Jude writes,

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith [...]" (Jude 20). Therefore, we should be building ourselves up. How then is this accomplished? People edify others in the Lord when they teach or attend Bible classes. They edify when they assemble with other Christians (Heb. 10: 25). They edify by spending time in one another's homes with other Christians. They edify when they visit the sick and praying with them. They edify in private study of the scriptures. They edify in bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6: 2). Singing is also a means of edification. We are commanded, "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" (Col. 3: 16). When the membership is edified, souls will be saved.

A crucial element in the local church is edification. This was seen in my arrival at Lakeside. The members were a stagnant pond needing building up. There was great potential, but no fire. Plans were implemented to "build up" the congregation. Within a matter of months the fire was rekindled and many were "coming to see." The word got out and we began to grow. Today our membership has doubled because of the enthusiastic efforts of men and women. If each member would do his part in edification, we "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13). "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20: 32).

PREACHING

Paul wrote, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1: 21). All the aforementioned are a means to this end—the preaching of the gospel. The preacher is commanded to, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4: 2). If the world is to be saved, we must sound off!

Evangelistic preaching is the public proclamation of the facts, commands, and promises of the gospel of Christ to an unbelieving world. Its aim is to save, not to entertain; to inform, not to mislead; to convict, not to tickle. It must come from a man whose life is filled with conviction, not compromise; courage, not cowardliness; urgency, not procrastination. Paul told Timothy, "do the work of an evangelist" (II Tim. 4: 5), which entails preaching. Brethren, too many of our pulpits are filled with men interested in numbers only and not saving truth. Therefore, the message is watered-down, soft-soaped, compromised, and neglected. We need men like the apostles who said, "For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 2: 40 NASB). Satan's forces will not intimidate God's man. Further, they were able to say, "[...] we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). They had sufficient reason to obey God: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus" (Acts 5: 30). Therefore, Peter and the apostles minced no words, but were emphatic about their charge. Men abort and paralyze God's truth when the objective is to please

men. The apostles would have none of it, neither would the apostle Paul bow down to the pressure of men: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1: 10). Who are we pleasing brethren? As a young gospel preacher, I have been told, "That's how they used to preach." What went wrong? The power is still in the gospel. However, as a nail is just a nail unless it is exposed to the hammer; the gospel, for its power to be effective, must be preached! Paul exclaimed, "For if I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). Preachers ought to tremble at this woe! Preaching should "get the attention" of its hearers. It was said, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart [...]" (Acts 2: 37). They were "cut to the heart" and asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" The preaching "moved the crowd." Our preaching needs to "move the crowd" one way or another.

In today's world, we have been blessed with numerous possibilities of carrying the gospel. Some of these will now be considered briefly.

1. **Radio**. Radio is an effective means of preaching the gospel. Many still listen to the radio. Almost all automobiles have radios. Many businesses keep their radios on throughout the day. There are those who tune in to hear "religious" messages.
2. **Newspapers**. Newspaper articles are most effective. Many "pick up the paper" to see the religious activity in the community and

read the articles therein. It is estimated that more than 85% of American households receive at least one daily paper.

3. **Correspondence Course**. A Bible correspondence course is effective in establishing contacts with interested persons in the community. These lessons can begin simple and progress in great in-depth study.
4. **Pulpit**. Still one of the most effective means of communicating the gospel. Preachers have a great opportunity to help people to see the dire need to change. Many are too comfortable in their seats and need to become uncomfortable with the desire to change. We need to provoke them beyond their present thinking to knowledge that is more concrete.
5. **Computer and the Internet**. Face it, we live in the "information age." We should take advantage of this great avenue. We are able to preach the gospel twenty-four hours a day to the world! We have been fortunate to set up our web site where my sermons can be heard daily; articles are written, and the plan of salvation given. Much more could be given but these should suffice for now.

CONCLUSION

The local church has a great responsibility of evangelizing the world. We have the resources to do the greatest work in the world. We must simply do it! The success begins with me and with the local church

of which I am a member. We need not do anything to "help" God. We trust God in doing exactly as He has said. The first century church took its obligation serious and the result was that multitudes became Christians. The local church is privileged as well as commanded to see that this is accomplished.

SECTION III

SPECIAL CLASSES

SOLVING CHURCH PROBLEMS

IVIE POWELL



Ivie Powell was born in Memphis, TN, and reared in West Memphis, AR. He received his education at FHU, Crowley's Ridge College, and Southern Christian University (B.A.) and Theological University of America (M.A. in counseling). He has preached the gospel for thirty-six years in fourteen states and Germany. He is presently the preacher for the Curry St. congregation in West Plains, MO. He and his wife, Linda, have two children and four grandchildren.

All conflicts have their origin when Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom.5: 12). Job declared, "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). So, whether it be the Patriarchal, Mosaical or the Christian dispensation, man's existence upon this planet has involved one conflict after another. The resolving of man's chief problem (sin) was the reason the Messiah was sent. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom.5: 8-9). Luke records, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Thus, the Messiah entered the world with the express purpose of dying for the sins of the world.

There was nothing that man nor the devil could do to stop Christ from dying for the sins of the world and establishing His church (Matt. 16: 18-19; John 10:17-18). The establishment of the Lord's church took place as is recorded in Acts 2 with about three thousand obeying the gospel (Acts 2:37, 38, 41). Soon the church faced conflict both from without as well as from within. Luke's recorded history of the Lord's church reveals there were very few periods of tranquility. Why? Because distinctive preaching, distinctive worship, distinctive work of the church, and distinctive living always brings opposition! Whereas, a lack of opposition is a strong indication that we are not being like the church of the first century! "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

EARLY CHURCH AND PROBLEMS

Indeed the church, the "called out of God," is the beautiful bride of Christ! She was in "the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph.3: 11). We should keep in mind that the church has a divine, as well as, a human side. The divine side, of course, is perfect, whereas the human side, as we are painfully aware, is not perfect. With good intentions, many have been so positive about Christianity that they have ignored discussing problems that often occur in the Lord's church. As a result, many are shocked to find many of the same problems in the church that are in the world. Preachers, as well as other Christians, need to remember that the Bible is replete with warnings (Acts 20: 28-31; I Cor. 4:14; I Thess. 5:14; Titus 1: 9-13; 2 Pet.2: 1-2, etc.). If we fail to warn brethren, we will

have their blood on our hands (Ezek.33: 7-9; Acts 20: 20, 26-27)!

Bear in mind, human nature has not changed through the centuries. Problems that faced the early church face us today. As one turns to the pages of Holy Writ he finds the following problems: lying (Acts 5: 1-11) and division (I Cor.1: 10-17). Paul warned of sins that overcame the children of Israel: idolatry, fornication, tempting Christ, murmuring; which could also overcome the Christian (I Cor.10: 1-13). False teaching concerning the resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15) greatly threatened the faith of many. Paul withstood Peter for showing partiality to the Jews (Gal. 2: 11-14). There were sisters at odds with one another (Phil. 4: 2). There was the sin of preeminence (3 John). In Galatians 5: 19-21 Paul lists the "works of the flesh" which many children of God were practicing. These same sins ("adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, reveling [...]") affect the 21st Century Christian as they did those in the early church.

PROBLEMS SINCE THE 1920's

An issue that greatly affected the church was instrumental music in worship. The problems the church faced over this issue actually started back in the late 1800's. A brief but intense flare-up over instrumental music in worship occurred in Kentucky as early as 1851.[1] The first congregation on record to adopt the use of the instrument was the Midway church in Midway, Kentucky.[2] Another problem that

greatly impacted the church in the late 1800's which has spread through the years, and is with us today, was the rise of rank liberalism. Dr. R.C. Cave, a rank heretic, delivered a sermon on December 1, 1889, in St. Louis, Missouri, which according to Earl West, stirred the brotherhood violently."[3]

> In the lesson "Cave dealt with God's revelation to the Old Testament characters in which he affirmed that an understanding of God was native to the soul, and questioned the understanding of God held by these Old Testament characters. A week later, he delivered another sermon and invited men to come to Christ as they understood him, despite the fact they might not believe in miracles, or even in the Bible.[4]

The Present Truth is a book that covers the writings of the late Foy E. Wallace, Jr. from 1930 to 1977. Some of the major problems facing the church during 1930 - 1935 were The Missionary Society, The Church and The Christian Colleges, Instrumental Music in Worship, Marriage, Premillennialism and Modern Versions. Another interesting book that reveals many problems is **Questions Answered** by David Lipscomb and E.G. Sewell. One of the major problems dealt with was whether or not an individual had to understand that baptism was for the remission of sins. Questions regarding the instrument and the Missionary Society were also at the top of the list. In the early 1900's until his death in 1940, Daniel Sommer strongly opposed Bible Colleges. He was indeed a force with which to reckon.[5] Another issue

that began to greatly trouble the church was the orphan home issue, which is still causing problems today.

The late Guy N. Woods was a prolific writer, championed debater, and marvelous gospel preacher. For well over twenty years, brother Woods conducted the famous Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman University. A collection of the questions and answers by brother Woods is printed in two volumes entitled **Questions And Answers**. A study of these two volumes shows the many problems that have faced the church through the years and many of which continue even unto this day. A sampling of the problems would include: Questions regarding Church Cooperation, Instrumental Music and the Missionary Society, as well as Marriage and Divorce. There were many questions regarding Women's Role in The Church, Modern Versions, The Holy Spirit and The Restoration Movement.

There have been numerous problems facing the church in the last thirty years many of which have been on going for generations. Of those that have greatly affected the church are: The New Hermeneutic, Women Interpreters, Is Truth Absolute and Attainable?, Fellowship with Denominations, Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit, Modern Versions, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, and Instrumental Music in Worship.

PROBLEMS TODAY WITH EXTREMISM

Always remember, problems or conflicts, when first sown, do not always find immediate reception! It

may be weeks, months or years before a major problem surfaces. As the gospel is planted and watered (I Cor.3: 6), so are conflicts! A look in the past reveals basically the same old problems and conflicts faced today, only in modern garb! Sin has not changed. As we look at the church today, we see Satan busily working day and night to divide the Lord's people. There are numerous camps scattered throughout the brotherhood vying for power, pitting brother against brother, congregation against congregation. No one camp is the "headquarters" for extremists. Extremists are responsible to a great degree for many brethren going over to antism and even liberalism! If a profile of an extremist were written by ten brethren ranging from the liberals, antis, to those of the middle of the road, you would have different views. To a great degree, it depends on whose ox is being gored! The early church was considered extremist. The denominational world considers the Lord's church extremist. All liberals consider anyone that strongly opposes them as extremist. Often those who are in the wrong will throw out the grenade "he is an extremist" to get the spotlight away from them. Many things could be said regarding what constitutes an extremist. Perhaps the following profiles an extremist: **An extremist meticulously fine tunes Christianity to his theology, and expects everyone to line up with his views, and only his group constitutes the "faithful few!"**

Have you noticed no one admits to being an extremist! Extremists always view others as being extremists and they are merely proclaiming and defending the truth! An extremist will "black ball" any

and every one that does not line up with them; they do not respect church autonomy; they will not listen to "the older heads," they will resurface minor issues making them a test of fellowship. There is no doubt about it, extremists are greatly responsible for splintering the church! Every elder and preacher needs to read Romans 2: 16-24 and ask himself, "Do I practice what I preach?" And is the precious name of God being blasphemed because of my conduct?"

Because of so much in-fighting, we have weakened and hampered our efforts to evangelize the world and strengthen the church! The words of our Lord and His servant Paul need to be preached in every pulpit of the Lord's church. "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand"; "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Matt. 12: 25; Gal. 5: 15)!!! As well as Proverbs 6:16-19 with emphasis on "he that soweth discord among brethren!" It is time for extremists to start practicing what they preach! Not only "Preach the word," but "be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (2 Tim. 4:2; I Tim. 4:12)!!!

PROBLEMS! PROBLEMS! PROBLEMS!

Someone has observed that a congregation is either presently involved in a problem, escalating toward one or is rebuilding because of a problem. Of course, this can equally be said of life in general. Every elder and preacher is acutely aware of potential problems within the congregation that could easily

produce a firestorm. Problems such as immorality, power struggles, marital problems, conflicts among the staff, murmuring, complaining, worldliness, general apathy, jealously, gossip, bitterness, prejudice, change agents, and of course outside interference to "Monday morning quarterbacks." A look, a word, a deed can easily set off a "spark" that can become a raging inferno! Probably 90% of elders' time is spent in keeping the "sparks" from becoming firestorms. It is no wonder many times elders feel like they have been walking in a minefield! If you have not, you now can see the magnitude of things elders have to deal with every week!

MAJOR CAUSES OF CHURCH PROBLEMS

Dr. Neil Clark Warren, a practicing clinical psychologist with over 30 years experience, gives the following advise to those entering marriage.

> One of the major causes of marital deterioration is unrealistic expectations of those entering marriage [...]. The strongest message married people need to hear is that they should expect a significant number of hassles, demands for change, power struggles, and hard-to-deal-with conflicts.[6]

Advise given to those entering marriage is also applicable to those who would be elders and preachers - "Expect a significant number of hassles, demands for change, power struggles, and hard-to-deal-with conflicts!"

How would you answer the following questions:

1. What are the major causes of church problems or conflicts?
2. What is the solution?

One could simply say sin is the cause of all problems and that is correct. Another could say all sin falls into one of three categories: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the Pride of life (I John 2: 16), and again that would be correct. However, people when asked those questions will be very specific. To find if this is the case, I asked those questions to folks from all walks of life – teenagers, ladies' Bible classes, college presidents, ministers and to a Wednesday night auditorium class. The top six answers were: pride, ignorance, leadership, lack of love, power and opinions. As for the solution, many simply said the reverse of the cause while others were very specific. The top six answers were: knowledge of the Bible, love, following the Bible, humility, prayer and qualified leadership.

Several years ago, brother John D. Cox wrote a wonderful and helpful little booklet entitled **How to Solve Church Problems**. The first three chapters deal with "Some Causes of Church Problems" in which he lists 12 areas:

1. Ignorance of the Word of God,
2. Binding Opinions,
3. Human Traditions,
4. Selfishness,
5. Hobbyism,
6. Desire For Preeminence,

7. Desire For Popularity,
8. Envy and Jealousy,
9. Obstinacy,
10. Hypocrisy,
11. Pride, and
12. Meddlers in Others Mens Affairs.[7]

Beloved, all of these areas are like dry kindling which can easily produce a fire within the congregation! All that is needed is a "spark" from a leader; the fire will soon be fanned from all directions, and if not contained and quenched, a firestorm will soon erupt! Dr. Ron Susek says once a firestorm is in full fury, chances of recovery virtually disappear. The reason is that this inflamed level of conflict quickly destroys good people while hardening evil people. Perceptions are radically blurred. When a firestorm ignites, there is an almost overnight collapse of reason, negotiation, tolerance, love and forgiveness. Factions take on a "we are right, and they are the enemy" mind-set. The following actions result:

- Emotion rules over reason;
- Fleshly behavior is accepted as the only way to handle the problem;
- Legalism obliterates grace. People sound like lawyers in their arguments;
- Man-made rules take supremacy over biblical instruction and spiritual sensitivity;
- Rigidity reigns; faults of others are spoken about with intolerance.[8]

Dr. Susek then adds: The call for spiritual attitudes and conduct is perceived as a manipulation to help the other side win. . .The lowest instincts of

human nature rise up in unbridled liberty:

- Tempers flare,
- Discussions deteriorate into destructive trading of accusations,
- Winning takes precedence over fairness,
- Justice is replaced by judgmentalism,
- Mercy is buried by retribution,
- The humble, servant nature of Christ is denigrated as weakness,
- Respect for human dignity is abandoned,
- Condemnation of any position except "mine" is justified. [9]

Finally, he says, "People believe they are engaged in a "holy war," and nothing is more dangerous than an evil spirit cloaked in a religious cause."[10] This assessment by Dr. Susek is right on target! The very thought of going through a firestorm tightens the stomach muscles, a lump forms in the throat, knees almost buckle, and a big "Oh no!" quickly races through our thoughts. It is no wonder that God set forth His qualifications for those who were to shepherd the flock (I Tim. 3: 1-7; Titus 1: 5-13). Being an elder is not for weaklings and cowards! May our heavenly Father bless every dedicated shepherd and remember; "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4).

SOME SUGGESTIONS ON DEALING WITH CHURCH PROBLEMS

What paradigm should one use to resolve potentially explosive areas of conflict? Stanton L.

Jones and Richard E. Butman in their book **Modern Psychotherapies**[11] quote a work identifying 260 distinct schools of psychotherapy. Which of these schools, if any, should one turn to for help? While these theories are interesting and very helpful, one must always remember that the Bible must be our basic textbook in solving any and all of life's problems! "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim.3:16-17). [Again we are told,] "According as his divine power hath given unto all things that pertain unto life and godliness [...]"(2 Pet.1:3).

All problems cannot be lumped into one category and dealt with alike. Usually when someone says, "Fellows, we have a problem," we think the worse. Actually, the word "problem" can be used in a positive as well as a negative sense. For example, the congregation is giving so abundantly we are concerned about them. Or, we have so many that want to use the Jule Miller Video tapes that they are "waiting in line" to check them out. How would you like to have the problem of seating because of overflowing crowds? Still better, We have so many that want to teach we are going to have to set up our classes two years in advance. And the preacher is so stretched that we need to secure the services of two more men. When an astronaut says, "Houston, we have a problem!" it is not meant in a favorable light. This is also the case when it comes to the Lord's church.

When it comes to actually dealing with major

problems many do not know where to start and where to end! As one approaches a problem, according to Dr. Jay Adams, there are four methods to consider.

1. Go around the problem. This is avoiding it.
2. Go aside the problem. Allow the problem to deflect one from the course.
3. Back away from the problem. This is giving up. And
4. Go through the problem – that is meet the problem with the attitude "It can be solved through Christ."[12]

Dr. Bill Flatt is an experienced gospel preacher, retired dean of Harding Graduate School of Religion and a licensed Counseling Psychologist. In his book **Personal Counseling,** Dr. Flatt outlines different approaches to marriage counseling. Among those mentioned is the Behavioral Approach. Regarding this approach, he cites Neil S. Jacobson's problem-centered approach. While he is primarily discussing marriage counseling, it is interesting to note how this same approach is applicable in solving church problems.

1. Define the problem.
2. Have them discuss possible solutions to the problem.
3. Eliminate most of the solutions you have suggested.
4. Choose a solution to the problem that is functional, scriptural, and that each can live with.
5. Reinforce behaviors that you wish to recur: do this in counseling and encourage them

to do it in their marriage.

6. After you have gone through these steps toward a solution, select another problem and repeat the procedure.[13]

All problems cannot be handled in the same way. However, there are some general principles that common sense, life's experiences, and a working knowledge of God's word will help equip one in dealing with church problems. Then too, we have to realize, as painful as it might be, that there are some problems we are not going to be able to solve. This does not mean that we have not dealt with the problem(s) adequately. The desired solution did not come about because the party or parties involved were not willing to do what is right. Judas Iscariot was hand picked and personally trained by our Lord, but it was his decision to betray our Lord and hang himself. Our Lord was not responsible for Judas' choice. By the way, this is a lesson that many parents fail to accept!

PRACTICAL, COMMON SENSE SUGGESTIONS

When it gets down to actually dealing with a problem, especially major problems, the desired result, of course is, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4:3)! Questions like: What is best for the cause of Christ? How would Jesus handle this problem? Is genuine love for Christ and all involved in my heart? What kind of elder, preacher etc. do I want to be after this meeting? How will the outcome affect the congregation? How will the outcome affect my family? And what about the community? Weighty questions, indeed, that should

be asked at the very outset of the meeting!

As so often is the case, many elders are not prepared to deal with church problems, especially those of a major nature. Many answers could be given as to why this is the case, but this is not the objective of this lesson. I will, however, say that if qualified men (That is those who meet the qualifications as set forth in God's word) are in the eldership any and all problems can be resolved according to the Scriptures!

I certainly do not intend to insult anyone's intelligence, but it is really amazing how many times the "small areas" are overlooked which can easily and quickly result in a total breakdown of resolving the problem. Having said that, the following Scriptural, practical and common sense suggestions are presented for your careful and prayerful consideration.

1. All elders should be informed of the up-coming meeting.
2. The eldership should and must devote themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4) in preparation of the meeting.
3. Never allow anyone to isolate one elder. All involved meet with the entire eldership.
4. Elders must never discuss confidential matters with their wives or anyone else.
5. Never meet with a large group. **BIG, BIG NO!!! NO!!!**
6. If the person you are meeting with is a "hot head" have them sit in the softest, deepest chair in the room.[14]
7. If you are to mediate two parties, do not

have them sit facing one another or beside one another. Elders should sit in a position where they are between the disputants if possible.[15]

8. Start the meeting with prayer. If you think it best, have the man who is really upset lead the prayer. Of course, if a woman, the elders lead the prayer.
9. Ask all parties involved the three questions brother Gus Nichols used to ask those whom he counseled. (1) Do you want to do what is right? (2) Are you willing to do what the Bible says? And (3) If after finding out what the Bible teaches, are you willing to do it **TODAY**? If any of the parties are not willing to answer "yes" to all of the questions then go back over them until they are willing. Otherwise, you will not resolve the problem.
10. Ask the questions that were mentioned in the introduction: "What is best for the cause of Christ?" etc.
11. Do not allow outsiders (preachers, elders, etc.) to attend the meeting unless they are directly a part of the problem. Even then, it would be best, to meet with them one-on-one.
12. Especially if preachers or elders are involved, ground rules must be clearly set out, agreed on and followed to the letter. Otherwise chaos will ensue. It is sad, but true, some of the most difficult people to counsel are elders and preachers.
13. Do not allow tape recordings of the session. There may be exceptions to this

rule, but generally tapes are used as grenades, mortars and missiles!

14. During the discussion, frequently ask all involved those penetrating questions: What is best for the cause of Christ, etc. And you may want to pause for another word of prayer.
15. The Bible is filled with passages that will help bind, and heal, if brethren are willing to "receive the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas.1:21b). Passages such as: Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 12: 17-21; Col. 4:6; Heb. 13:1 and James 3 need to be read as well as the following.

A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger (Prov.15:1).

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matt.7:12).

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God (Jas.1:19-20).

> Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled (Heb.12:14-15).
>
> But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another (Gal.5:15).
>
> For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses (Matt.6:15).
>
> And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, 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 (Eph.4:31-32).
>
> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Gal.5:22-23).

16. In some circumstances an outside mediator is needed. If that be the case, choose very

carefully who will be brought in to help bring resolution.

If prayer and the word of God cannot solve the problem(s) it cannot be solved! Why? Because when brethren harden their hearts to God and His word they have given themselves over to a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:28)! Unfortunately, there are those cases, when after all efforts have failed, for the sake of the body of Christ fellowship must be withdrawn (2 Thess. 3:6). Every effort should be put forth before this is done. When done according to the Scriptures it will glorify God, strengthen the church and hopefully restore the one(s) withdrawn from.

Yes, problems and conflicts in the church will always be with us. In one sense they are an indication that the church is alive and well. After all, Satan is not going to bother a dead church. We must do everything within our power to resolve church problems. Whenever a split occurs the consequences continue to live well beyond the lifespan of the disputants! Children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren are affected. The introduction of the instrument into worship and the Missionary Society are two prime examples! This is why it is so important that brethren think of the consequences of dividing the precious body of Christ!

The one verse that comes to my mind that will help resolve church problems is Matthew 7:12, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." The heart of Christ was that of a servant. "But made himself of no reputation, and

took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). Brethren, every problem in the church would be solved if children of God took on the attitude and disposition of Christ our Saviour! We are exhorted, "but by love serve one another" (Gal.5:13). We must always keep upmost in our mind that the world is closely watching how Christians treat one another as well as those as outside of Christ (2 Cor.3:2). May we so conduct ourselves, especially when differences occur, that the world see that we love one another (John 13:35)! In so doing Christ will be exalted; the church edified, and the world will see that we love one another not in word only "but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18)!

ENDNOTES

[1]Earl West, *The Search For The Ancient Order*, Vol.1, p. 308.

[2]Ibid, p. 312.

[3]Earl West, *The Search For The Ancient Order*, Vol.2, p259.

[4]Ibid, pp. 260-261.

[5]Ibid, p.292,298,304.

[6]Dr. Neil Clark Warren, *The Triumphant Marriage*, pp.33-34.

[7]John D. Cox, *How To Solve Church Problems*, pp.6-14

[8]Ron Susek, *Firestorm*, p. 44.

[9]Ibid, p. 45.

[10]Ibid, p.45.

[11]Stanton L. Jones and Richard E. Butman, *Modern Psychotherapies*, p.11.

[12]Jay E. Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, pp. 129-130.

[13]Bill Flatt, *Personal Counseling*, "Marriage Counseling," pp.1821-185.

[14]Beverly Potter, *From Conflict to Cooperation - How To Mediate A Dispute*, pp.22-23.

[15]Ibid, pp.19-21.

CLONING

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INTRODUCTION

"We're not going to give birth to a monster or an abnormal child. If there is serious abnormality, absolutely we will—and Dr. Zavos concurs that we will—abort."[1] With these words, an American couple justified their revelation that they were, in fact, going to pursue having a child via the process of cloning (with the help of Panos Zavos of the University of Kentucky). While being interviewed by Erin Runnion, the wife commented on the decision to have a child by cloning, saying: "I think that God really wants us to do that." But is this **really** what God wants? Have we examined cloning and advanced reproductive techniques in light of God's Word? Commenting on this, Richard J. Paulson noted:

> The Bible and other major religious writings forming the foundations of major religious groups were written at a time when assisted reproduction was beyond the scope of imagination. Therefore, there is no explicit prohibition against the use of ART [artificial reproduction technology] for the purpose of reproduction.[2]

Is this true? Are we allowed to do anything we want in regard to artificial reproduction, just because the Bible does not contain the words cloning, surrogacy, or nuclear transfer? What should the Christian's response be to this new, ever-changing medical technology? Well, someone might say with a simple wisp of the hand: "The Bible has the answer." Indeed, the Bible always has the answer. It is an eternally applicable source of Truth to which we may always turn. Isaiah 40:8 states: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." The question is, will we actually take the time to dissect and probe the Good Book in order to discern our responsibility concerning these and many other ethical issues?

Within our lifetimes, there can be little doubt that we will see serious scientific attempts at human cloning (by "serious" I mean experiments intended to carry a clone from its formation in the laboratory to birth via a surrogate mother). In fact, Italian *in vitro* expert Severino Antinori announced on Friday, April 5, 2002, that a woman taking part in his controversial human cloning project already was eight weeks

pregnant with a cloned embryo.[3] Nineteen days later, on Wednesday, April 24, 2002, Dr. Antinori claimed that as of that date, three cloned pregnancies were in progress.[4] Once we cross this threshold, human reproduction no longer will take place as God ordained, but will occur instead solely at the discretion of man (or woman!). The proof of this arrived in a startling announcement by Orly Lacham-Kaplan at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, who reported in July 2002 that she already had discovered a method by which to fertilize eggs using genetic material harvested from somatic (body) cells—**without the use of sperm.**[5] The implications of such a procedure are obvious. As one news report observed, this process "could help lesbian couples to have baby girls that are genetically their own." [6] As we sit idly by, scientific technology is rushing headlong down a slippery slope—with no regard whatsoever to the divine edicts set forth by our Almighty Creator.

Cloning bypasses the normal fertilization process requiring an egg and a sperm cell. It allows scientists to take a mature body cell, subject it to harsh treatment so that it returns to an "embryonic" mode, and then transfer that genetic material into an egg cell whose nucleus has been removed (leaving the egg empty, but healthy). Upon realizing that it no longer is in a hostile environment, the body cell "wakes up" and begins to develop—having forgotten where it came from and what it was on its way to becoming. As it begins to grow once more, it creates a whole new organism. This new organism then will be an exact **genetic** duplicate of the original body cell from which it was taken. But is this a safe and normal method of reproduction? Ask yourself what happens

to all of the embryos that scientists use to try to get the procedure "up and running," so to speak. How many failed human clones will we have to produce before we realize how morally bankrupt such a procedure really is?

THE DANGERS DOLLY DELIVERED

The news landed like a bombshell. It was completely unexpected. Hardly anyone thought it could be accomplished. Nobel laureates had suggested that it was extremely unlikely. One specialist in the field even had gone so far as to boast that it "was impossible," while another denied that it could "ever occur." Then, suddenly, without warning, it happened.

The February 27, 1997, issue of *Nature* reported it in a mundanely titled article, "Viable Offspring Derived from Fetal and Adult Mammalian Cells." **An adult mammal had been cloned!** "Dolly," as the sheep came to be known, was introduced to a world awash with incredulity. Scottish embryologist Ian Wilmut and his colleagues had taken a mammary gland cell from a six-year-old Scottish Finn Dorset ewe and, via a process known as "nuclear transfer," succeeded in placing the genetic material from that cell into a hollowed-out egg cell from a Scottish Blackface sheep. That zygote—which then contained the full complement of 54 chromosomes (as if it had been fertilized by a sperm cell)—was placed into the uterus of a second Scottish Blackface sheep that served as a surrogate mother. A few months later, Dolly was born.

Scientists around the world gasped—first in complete disbelief, and then in "utter" awe. The "news" part of the story was not merely that a mammal had been cloned; that had been accomplished in the past. The news was that a mammal had been cloned from an **adult** cell—something that even scientists like James Watson and Francis Crick (who were awarded the 1962 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for their elucidation of the molecular structure of DNA) had gone on record as stating was very likely impossible. Dr. Wilmut and his team at the Roslin Institute outside of Edinburgh, Scotland, had shown that it **was possible**. But, as the old adage suggests, "that was then; this is now." It turns out that the successful cloning of Dolly was only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Shortly after the details of the procedure used to produce Dolly were published, scientists began to report one success story after another using the same procedure (or ones similar to it) to clone additional mammals from adult cells, including mice,[7] cattle,[8] goats,[9] rhesus monkeys,[10] cats,[11] and pigs.[12]

Sheep, mice, cattle, goats, monkeys, cats, and pigs are all mammals. Remember the definition of a mammal from your high school biology textbook? Mammals are animals that:

1. Are warm-blooded;
2. Have an insulating body covering of hair (or fur, wool, etc.);
3. Suckle their young; and
4. Possess a four-chambered heart.[13] From a biological classification viewpoint, is a

> human a mammal? Yes. Then surely the next question becomes obvious: If scientists have successfully cloned sheep, mice, cattle, goats, monkeys, and pigs (all of which are mammals), can they then clone humans—who likewise are mammals? And more important, if they **can**, **will** they?

As frightening as the thought may be to many within the general populace, the simple fact is that scientists worldwide already are working on producing human clones—a fact that hardly should be surprising. Imagine the fame and fortune that await the first scientist who can announce to the world, "**I** cloned the first **human**!"

"SCIENCE FICTION" OR REALITY?

And so, the race is on. Shortly after Dolly was cloned, Richard Seed (who is not even a life scientist, but instead holds a Ph.D. in physics) proclaimed publicly that he was going to establish a laboratory in Chicago, Illinois, whose sole purpose was to clone humans. [Federal regulations enacted shortly after Dolly's cloning specifically prohibit the cloning of humans in America in laboratories receiving government funds. Dr. Seed has repeatedly stated that he neither will seek nor accept any such funding; therefore, in his view, the law's prohibitions would not apply to his efforts.]

To complicate matters, reports are beginning to surface almost daily about other scientific groups that either are attempting to take cloning one step farther

or that already have done so—with varying degrees of success. Consider, for example, Clonaid, a Bahamas-based company that was established in 1997 by Claude Vorilhon, a colorful French race-car driver and former journalist (now known as "Rael the prophet," head of a sect known as "the Raelians"). Under the direction of French scientist Brigitte Boisselier, Ph.D., Clonaid announced early in 2001 that it was moving forward with plans to clone the very first human before the end of the year. On March 25, 2001, Dr. Boisellier testified under oath before the Subcommittee of Oversights and Investigations of the United States Congress about the company's intention to clone a human (specifically, a 10-month-old baby boy that had died as the result of a tragic mishap at a hospital). She also discussed the progress that Clonaid was making, and its formal response to critics of human cloning.[14] On Clonaid's official Web site, Dr. Boisellier is quoted as saying: "Our first goal at Clonaid is to develop a safe and reliable way of cloning a human being. Who, today, would be scandalized by the idea of bringing back to life a 10-month-old child who died accidentally? The technology allows it, the parents desire it, and I don't see any ethical problems with it."[15] According to published reports, more than 50 prospective surrogate mothers already have been chosen to carry cloned fetuses, including Dr. Boisellier's 22-year-old daughter, Marina Cocolios. And, Clonaid admits to having established a secret laboratory in the U.S. for the purpose of cloning humans.[16] Cost, according to Clonaid's Web site, is $200,000.

But things have gotten even spookier since the technology that made Dolly possible arrived on the

scene. In the May 22, 1998 issue of *Science*, scientists at a Worcester, Massachusetts, company, Advanced Cell Technology, reported that they had created a "transgenic" (across species lines) **bovine/human hybrid** embryo that consisted of a **human** somatic cell's nucleus inside a **cow's** egg. The researchers actually took a cell from Dr. Jose Cibelli, the lead scientist in the study, removed its nuclear-based genetic material, and placed it into a cow's egg from which the nucleus had been removed. Once inside the bovine egg, the contents of the human cell activated and the egg began to divide normally until it had reached the 32-cell stage, at which time it was destroyed.[17] One year later, *New Scientist* published a report about a Japanese researcher from Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, Setsuo Iwasaki, who removed the chromosomes from 27 cows' eggs and implanted the eggs with nuclei from human somatic cells. His stated goal was to isolate embryonic stem cells, which would have meant culturing the hybrid embryos for a minimum of five days until they formed a hollow ball known as a blastocyst. But, Iwasaki reported, most of the embryos did not develop, and none went through more than three cycles of division.[18]

But the news does not stop at human/cow hybrids. According to the March 13, 2001 issue of the *New Zealand Herald*, Australian scientists at a Melbourne company, Stem Cell Sciences, reportedly produced a cloned human embryo in 1999 by combining an empty **pig** egg with a **human** somatic cell.[19] [Similar experiments were carried out by an American company, BioTransplant. In both cases, the resulting human cloned embryo was allowed to divide

to a 32-cell stage before being destroyed.] Apparently, Australia has been home to somewhat secretive human cloning experiments for several years. Based on the fact that approximately 1% of the DNA in the human/pig hybrid would have been donated by the pig cells' mitochondria (the "energy factories" of the cell, which contain their own extranuclear DNA), the Australian government has vehemently rejected the idea that such a hybrid could be referred to legitimately as a "human" clone, and therefore has denied most emphatically that **human** cloning has taken place in "the land down under" (a matter of semantics, to be sure). And so, laboratories around the world have come to realize that an organism containing 99% human genes and 1% animal genes allows them to claim, "technically," that they are not cloning humans. This technicality, then, allows their research to continue, even though many countries worldwide (including 29 in Europe alone) have adopted a ban on non-therapeutic human cloning. In an editorial in the July 19, 2001 issue of *Nature* titled "The Meaning of Life," the editor commented on this "technicality" concerning embryonic stem [ES] cells when he wrote:

> Advanced Cell Technology (ACT) of Worcester, Massachusetts says it is trying to generate human embryos by cloning, and then harvest ES [embryonic stem—BH] cells from them. The company hopes to sidestep moral objections, as fertilization is not involved. Indeed, the chair of ACT's ethical advisory board argues that an embryo created in this way is not a bona

> fide embryo, and suggests the term "ovumsum." The procedure that ACT is experimenting with, known as therapeutic cloning, might one day prove useful in generating ES cells that are genetically matched to patients requiring tissue grafts. **But to suggest that it does not involve the creation of embryos is misleading.**[20]

Misleading indeed! When even the editors of major science journals recognize that some of this research is "misleading" (read that as "morally objectionable"), surely it is time to reassess the slippery slope on which science finds itself. If it becomes possible to create a hybrid "cross" between a human and an animal, then such technology could be used to grow "things" that possess human characteristics, yet that are not considered "fully human." These "almost-but-not-quite-human" creatures then could be employed as "workhorses" to carry out tasks that humans no longer wish to perform—like picking cotton, working in harsh factory conditions, doing dull, repetitive jobs, etc. With current patenting laws allowing scientists exclusive rights to newly created life forms, researchers, backed by any number of deep-pocketed financiers, could be well on their way not just to fame, but to fortune as well.

CLONING CAUSUALTIES

One of the most important milestones in the cloning controversy was reported in the May 27, 1999 issue of *Nature,* which discussed Dr. Wilmut's examination of Dolly's chromosomes. Wilmut and his

coworkers studied the length of the chromosome ends (telomeres) from Dolly and two other sheep produced by the same process used to clone her. It generally has been accepted scientifically that telomere deterioration is a reliable indication of a reduction in life span; the more rapid and serious the telomere deterioration, the shorter the expected life span. Wilmut and his team reported a marked deterioration in Dolly's telomeres compared to those from non-cloned animals, and even suggested that "the most likely explanation" for the deterioration observed in these animals "reflects that of the transferred nucleus. Full restoration of telomere length did not occur because **these animals were produced without germline involvement.**"[21]

In other words, since Dolly was cloned from the mammary gland cell of a six-year-old sheep, in essence her telomeres already were six years old and therefore deteriorated more rapidly than those of non-cloned animals. The scientists involved in this research stressed that "it remains to be seen whether a critical length will be reached during the animal's lifetime." That is to say, at present it is impossible to state with certainty whether the telomere deterioration will cause Dolly to die prematurely. However, these same scientists admitted that "[t]elomere-based models [...] predict that the nuclear-transfer-derived animal 6LL3 [Dolly's numerical designation in the scientists' study] might well reach a critical telomere length sooner than age-matched controls."[22] Thus, cloned creatures may have markedly reduced life spans compared to those produced via normal, sexual reproduction. If these data are confirmed, they will have serious implications for human cloning.

On March 9, 2001, three cattle (Martie, Natalie, and Emily) cloned by scientists at California State University at Chico appeared to have been born healthy, but on day 12 Natalie died, and on day 15 Emily succumbed as well—both from abrupt immune system failure. Martie was reported to be failing rapidly. Project director Cindy Daley said that things "looked normal" until that Wednesday evening when she went to check on, and feed, the animals.[23] While not widely reported in the news media, such events are becoming quite common in regard to cloned animals, and serve to demonstrate the potential dangers of human cloning. Many cloned animals have experienced obvious mutations, while others have died shortly after birth, even though outwardly they appeared to be quite normal.[24] As one scientist, Rebecca Krisher, assistant professor of animal reproduction at Purdue University, put it: "Almost all of these animals, if born on a farm without a vet hospital, probably would not survive." In studies performed on cloned cattle by Cyagra, a Kansas company that studies commercial aspects of cloning livestock, "the company has about a 6 percent birth rate; of those calves, about half die soon after they are born."[25]

The foundation upon which cloning had perched began crumbling with the publication of an unsettling report that appeared in the July 6, 2001 issue of *Science*. The article documented the fact that while cloned animals may **appear** to be normal, and may even **behave** in a somewhat normal fashion, the truth is that sometimes these animals are far from normal. The report went on to announce that scientists have uncovered the first evidence that

"normal-looking" clones can harbor serious genetic abnormalities, which would explain why many animals live only a few days after their birth. For scientists interested in pursuing cloning as an alternate method of reproduction, the news from researchers at the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research and the University of Hawaii represents a veritable bomb detonated on their very doorsteps. The first statement in a paper titled "Epigenetic Instability in ES Cells and Cloned Mice" by David Humphreys and colleagues reads as follows: **"Cloning by nuclear transfer is an inefficient process in which most clones die before birth and survivors often display growth abnormalities."**[26] This is not exactly the image of cloning that federally funded researchers wanted the public at large to see.

CLONING—MIRACLE OF LIFE, OR DEATH SENTENCE?

How, exactly, does cloning work? Cloning procedures currently involve the removal of an egg's nucleus (which contains the genetic "blueprints" of the cell) in order to replace it with the nucleus from either an adult somatic (body) cell that has been "stressed" (via chemicals, radiation, nutrient deprivation, etc.) or an embryonic stem cell. Under normal conditions, cells go through a process known as "differentiation," during which the majority of the DNA within the cell is deactivated—except for a small portion that instructs the cell regarding its future destiny. For example, once a cell differentiates, it is destined to become only a muscle cell, a neuron, a red blood cell, a fingernail cell, etc. Most scientists, of course, have no real desire to clone an entire laboratory of fingernail cells.

What they would like to be able to do is to clone **entire organisms**. But in order to do that, they must locate newly dividing cells (e.g., stem cells) that have not yet differentiated, or they must stress older, fully formed cells that already have differentiated in order to force them to return to an undifferentiated state. In cloning, the goal is to "reset" the developmental clock of the implanted nucleus, the result being the production of a new organism that is genetically identical to the cell from which the genetic material was derived originally.

There can be little doubt that it is only a matter of time until someone, somewhere, attempts to add humans to the list of creatures that already have been cloned. Scientists like Zavos and Antinori are being "egged on" by those who are anxious to see—regardless of the cost in human lives—exactly what might happen when scientists attempt to clone humans. As *Skeptic* editor Michael Shermer lamented:

> The mass hysteria and moral panic surrounding cloning is nothing more than the historically common rejection of new technologies, coupled with the additional angst produced when medical advances fly too close to religion's sun [...]. So that is what it really comes down to: the fear that science is unduly infringing on religion's turf.
>
> Why not lift the ban on all research into cloning—including humans—and see what happens? Let's run the social

> experiment and analyze the data [...]. In the borderlands between science and pseudoscience, the best method to determine which fuzzy category a claim belongs is to test it. Why not do that here?[27]

Why not? Perhaps Shermer would understand "why not" if he immersed himself in some of the latest results emerging from the laboratories of the scientists who actually are involved in the process of cloning animals on a day-to-day basis. For example, in a study reported in the July 6, 2001 issue of *Science*, researchers found that the techniques themselves were not the cause of the problems they were discovering in their cloned animals. Instead, the difficulties arose from the fact that the actual donor cells (i.e., embryonic stem cells) appeared to be extremely unstable in culture. During their growth and division phases, these special cells began losing important segments of DNA that instruct particular genes to "turn on" or "turn off." While the effects of these deletions were not visible outwardly, tests in which gene expression was measured showed an entirely different story. In discussing their results, David Humphreys and his colleagues wrote: "Our results indicate that even apparently healthy cloned animals can have gene expression abnormalities that are not severe enough to impede development to birth but that may cause subtle physiological abnormalities which could be difficult to detect."[28]

This report confirmed what many already suspected—that reproductive cloning not only is

inefficient, but also may be extremely unsafe. In an article titled "Don't Clone Humans!" in the March 30, 2001 issue of *Science*, Rudolf Jaenisch (one of the authors of the Humphreys study on cloned mice), and Ian Wilmut (who cloned Dolly), wrote:

> Animal cloning is inefficient and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Cloning results in gestational or neonatal developmental failures. At best, a few percent of the nuclear transfer embryos survive to birth and, of those, many die within the perinatal period. There is no reason to believe that the outcomes of attempted human cloning will be any different.... Newborn clones often display respiratory distress and circulatory problems, the most common causes of neonatal death. Even apparently healthy survivors may suffer from immune dysfunction, or kidney or brain malformation, which can contribute to death later.[29]

In an August 20/August 27, 2001 special double issue of *U.S. News and World Report,* the magazine's well-known editor at large, David Gergen, wrote under the title of "Trouble in Paradise":

> It took 277 embryos to make one Dolly, they point out, and that was for a simple sheep. Think how many more will be required to make a human and how many deformed fetuses may result. Will

> we see mass abortions? Miscarriages? Human suffering? Even a monster in a laboratory? [...]. [I]t is troubling enough that Dolly grazes nearby. If we now turn loose her human cousins, how can we possibly keep nature's balance?[30]

In this controversy, "keeping nature's balance" apparently is on the minds of a lot of people—scientists and non-scientists alike. In the same issue of *U.S. News* in which Gergen's article appeared, the editors also chimed in with an editorial of their own titled "Send in the Clones?," in which they wrote:

> **Stem-cell research, cloning, and genetic engineering**—the new frontiers of science—**are creating a landscape of slippery slopes** where politics, religion, science, and hope collide. The pace of discovery is so rapid that we can't even resolve one ethical debate before another rears its head....
>
> So far, **mainstream scientists have opposed reproductive cloning because it's just not safe**. Sudden abortions, stillbirths, and gross birth defects are among the seemingly unexplainable and initially undetectable problems that arise.[31]

The famed *Star Trek* mantra—"to boldly go where no one has gone before"—has taken on an entirely new meaning in light of current reproductive

technology. As Pierre Baldi admitted: "Before human clones are produced, we should ask ourselves whether it is ethical for human beings to precisely determine the genome of another human being."[32] Determining (actually "**pre**determining" would be a more accurate term) the genome of another human being is indeed no small matter. *Newsweek's* Woodward observed: "Perhaps the message of Dolly is that society should reconsider its casual slide toward assuming mastery over human life. Do we really want to play God?"[33]

IS HUMAN CLONING ETHICAL?

The specter of numerous laboratories around the country filled with maimed, malformed, malingering human embryos that grow into "abnormal children and adults" is not exactly the image of cloning that most people envision when they think of cloning. Yet according to those researchers who are on the cutting edge of the technology, that may be exactly what we will see if we tread on this slippery slope in our attempts to "play God."

In an article summarizing the August 2001 National Academy of Sciences Conference on Cloning in Washington, D.C. for *Time* magazine, Michael Lemonick discussed some of the potential consequences of "playing God" via reproductive cloning.

> After all, research into animal cloning has already shown that **for every apparent success** like Dolly the sheep, **there are hundreds of failures,**

> **including many badly deformed creatures that were usually miscarried.**[34]

We must realize that once the genie is out of the bottle, we will not be able to put it back. Science never goes backwards. **Never**! Medical ethicist Leon Kass of the University of Chicago (the physician selected by President George W. Bush on August 9, 2001 to head the President's Council on Stem-Cell Research) observed: "We Americans have lived by...the technological imperative—**if it can be done, it must be done**...."[35] Do we honestly believe that we can "clone now, but remedy the consequences later"—and somehow do it with impunity? Or, as Kass put it: "Here we surely should not be willing to risk everything in the naïve hope that, should things go wrong, we can later set them right."[36] Evolutionist and Nobel laureate George Wald of Harvard decried the fact that

> DNA technology faces our society with problems unprecedented not only in the history of science, but of life on the Earth. It places in human hands the capacity to redesign living organisms [...]. It is all too big and is happening too fast. So this, the central problem, remains almost unconsidered. **It presents probably the largest ethical problem that science has ever had to face.** Our morality up to now has been to go ahead without restriction to learn all that we can about nature.

> Restructuring nature was not part of the bargain. For going ahead in this direction may be not only unwise, but dangerous.[37]

Any way you slice it, human reproductive cloning is not only unwise and dangerous, but patently unethical as well. Ask any knowledgeable ethicist, Christian or otherwise, and he or she will confirm that two important principles come into play in experimentation on human beings.

IS THE EXPERIMENT TO THE SUBJECT'S BENEFIT?

The first principle is that basic medical ethics requires the experiment be to the subject's benefit. Even avid cloning proponent Lee Silver was forced to admit:

> A basic principle of medical ethics is that doctors should not perform any procedure on human subjects if the risk of harm is greater than the benefit that might be achieved. In the case of cloning, this principle would oblige physicians to refrain from practicing the technology unless they were sure that the risk of birth defects was no greater than that associated with naturally conceived children.[38]

Is the risk greater? In the chapter he authored on "Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the

Ethical Issues Pro and Con" for the book, *Clones and Clones*, Dan Brock answered that question in a very clear fashion: "**There is no doubt that attempts to clone a human being at the present time would carry unacceptable risks to the clone.**"[39] How true! As things stand now, laboratory procedures for cloning humans scarcely would benefit the cloned embryos. Ian Wilmut and his colleagues attempted 277 fusions between donor cells and unfertilized eggs. Only 29 of those fused cells became embryos and were introduced into (13) ewes. Of those 29, only one became pregnant and gave birth to Dolly. What if the same failure rate held true for the cloning of humans? Or, for the sake of argument, suppose that somehow the failure rate could be cut in half (in other words, out of 29 human embryos, "only" 15 died during the process)? Would that then be ethically and morally acceptable? It would not!

HAS THE SUBJECT GIVEN "INFORMED CONSENT"?

There is a second equally important medical principle involved in the potential cloning of people. In any experiment performed on a human, the subject must know the risks beforehand and give "informed consent." The sad fact that some researchers within the scientific/medical community today do not adhere to the ethical standard of informed consent is no justification for **not** obeying the law, however. Two wrongs do not make a right.

In the case of human cloning, the tiny embryo being produced (and that more often than not is likely to die) could not provide informed consent, even if the

researchers involved in the experiments actually decided to obey the law. As Kass noted:

> ...[A]ny attempt to clone a human being would constitute an unethical experiment upon the resulting child-to-be. As the animal experiments (frog and sheep) indicate, there are grave risks of mishaps and deformities. Moreover, because of what cloning means, **one cannot presume a future cloned child's consent to be a clone, even a healthy one**. Thus, ethically speaking we cannot even get to know whether or not human cloning is feasible.[40]

Dr. Kass' point is well made. Even if we could perfect the technology (a big "if," to be sure!), that still would not alleviate the problem of informed consent.

At every turn, then, the problem of the ethics of cloning rears its head. Little wonder Rob DeSalle and David Lindley admitted: "We hardly dare to think of the ethical difficulties such achievements would bring in their wake."[41] And yet we **must** think on these matters! Pierre Baldi correctly observed:

> Many bioethics texts share the same conservative punchline: we ought to be extremely careful and proceed very slowly with biotechnology, because we must preserve our notion of humanity and of who we are.[42]

As Gina Kolata pointed out in her book, *Clone:* "If we really want to stop human cloning, it might be argued that **any** forays in this direction are tentative steps down a slippery slope."[43] That "slippery slope" has been the topic of much discussion since Dolly's arrival. Roger Gosden observed: "Probably no subject in medical science receives more critical attention from both government and the press than reproductive biology and genetics."[44] And with good reason!

CONCLUSION

The potential legalization of the wanton destruction of human embryos represents a Pandora's box of evils about to be thrust upon society. Medical ethicist Paul Ramsey has suggested that we cannot even develop the kinds of reproductive technologies being discussed here "without conducting unethical experiments upon the unborn who must be the mishaps (the dead and retarded ones) through whom we learn how."[45]

If a person shoots an eagle—the symbol of our country—the American judicial system will throw him in prison and toss away the key. That same system will stop a multi-million dollar dam in the state of Tennessee to save an inch-long snail-darter fish, or fly a former President of the United States to the northwest sector of America to discuss the fate of a spotted owl. Yet should some scientist intentionally destroy a human child in its most defenseless, embryonic stage, such an act not only is viewed as desirable and beneficial, but simultaneously is countenanced as legal. The Proverbs writer stated:

"There are six things which Jehovah hateth; Yea, seven which are an abomination unto Him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And **hands that shed innocent blood**" (6:16-17, emp. added). What blood could be more innocent than that of a tiny infant—regardless of whether it is in an embryonic *in vitro* state or a prenatal *in vivo* stage?

Faithful Christians must oppose such atrocities in a forthright (yet, of course, non-violent) manner. It is not an option for Christians to choose whether or not to care for those who cannot care for themselves; God's Word contains specific commands regarding such actions on our part (Leviticus 19:32; James 1:27; Isaiah 1:23; Romans 15:1). Ignoring those commands, and remaining apathetic to the horrors around us—potential or real—invariably produces evil fruits. It is sad indeed to think that we have come to such a point in America's history. Yet here we are—at a time when scientists have stated publicly that they are willing to destroy human embryos in ever-increasing numbers in order to achieve their stated goals.

Anytime someone hands us a brand-new "out of the box" technology, we always should remember to ask: What are the implications of this technology? For example, do we want people to be able to select the sex of their children beforehand? Do we want homosexual couples "producing" children? And do we want to use science to further women's liberation. We have always heard that old Cockney saying, "It takes a man to get the girl." Not anymore. With cloning, males literally will not be needed any longer. What about creating large numbers of clones for statistical

studies—or as spare parts? What about those people who desire immortality (at least in body, if not in soul)? And last, do we really want dead and dying human embryos filling up laboratories around the country?

In the end, is cloning all it is cracked up to be? If attempts at cloning humans are successful, would a clone be an exact duplicate of the original? A clone would be an exact **genetic** duplicate of the original—the word "genetic" providing a critical distinction. Merely possessing identical genes does not guarantee identical people. Ask anyone with identical twins. In fact, twins would be more alike than clones for the simple reason that the twins would have shared the same environment, upbringing, etc. Humans are more than merely a "bag of genes." Each of us is the end product of many different external forces that influence us from cradle to grave. Our personalities and attitudes are formed by parents, friends, teachers, daily routines, societal interactions, and many other factors that affect us during our lifetimes.

If scientists succeed in cloning humans, will the clones possess a soul? Much of the debate occurring today (especially in religious circles) centers on this question. In addressing what seemed at the time the unlikely possibility of the cloning of a human, Duane Gish and Clifford Wilson asked: "Would a clone be truly human? The answer is that, indeed, he would be human, for its life came from human life even though in a manner different than is usually the case" (1981, p. 174). In addition, they noted, the cloned human "is already alive, responsible to God for his actions,

needing to preserve his own body against sickness, to see that he is properly fed, and all the rest. Each clone would have its own individual responsibility, its own soul" (p. 172).

I concur with such an assessment. In James 2:26, James made this observation: "The body apart from the spirit is dead." The point, of course, is that when the spirit departs the body, death results. But there is an obvious, and important, corollary to that statement. If the body is alive, it must be the case that the spirit is present. This is a biblical principle that cannot, and must not, be ignored—especially in light of the present controversy. The simple fact of the matter is that if scientists succeed in cloning living humans, those clones would possess a soul. But only God can instill a soul. It is He Who "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). It is only "in Him" that "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). The issue is not whether man is intelligent enough to clone a human, but whether or not—should that eventually happen—God will instill the lifeless creature in the laboratory with a soul. This is a question no one but God can answer.

Cloning is an overt attempt to circumvent God's law regarding human reproduction. In 1 Timothy 5:14, the inspired apostle Paul told the younger women to "marry, bear children, and rule the household." Notice the divinely provided order involved. Marriage precedes the bearing of children. With cloning, marriage becomes irrelevant and obsolete. Any action that strikes at the heart of Jehovah's divine plan and purpose for the home must be avoided and opposed.

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WORLD MISSIONS: REKINDLING THE FIRE

ROGER SHEPHERD



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Have you ever rekindled a fire on a cold winter morning? This author can remember doing this in the old farmhouse where he was reared. The fire was not completely burned out, but was destined to die without some rekindling. Missions have not completely died out among the church, but may die without a rekindling! The church must go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation with "diligence" (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 12:11). The word "diligence" is closely connected to "fervent" in this passage to denote the idea of boiling with red hot enthusiasm for the work of the Lord. The word "lagging" denotes slothful, lazy, indolent, or sluggish.

It is the Greek word **nothros**, which means "a lazy and careless workman" (Bauer 549). This kind of zeal and passion for lost souls is contagious. It is the rekindling needed in missions. The hearts of Christians must be on fire with enthusiasm for world missions. Let us rekindle the fire!

The local church must revive world missions! The prophet Habakkuk wrote: "Lord, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember mercy."[1] In missions we have a great need for revival. The sons of Korah wrote: "Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalm 85:6). God is calling His people back to revival in His work! World missions in the church must be revived. We must rekindle the fire!

The mission field is the world. Jesus Christ wrote: "the field is the world" (Matt. 13:38). He commissioned the disciples to spread the gospel throughout the world as they went to Jerusalem to establish the church. Luke wrote: "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The church must continue the work of missions started by the apostles in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the smallest part of the world (Luke 24:45-53).

Missions among the churches of Christ are an awesome task. We have a massive world population. There are over six billion plus people in our world.

The world continues to increase in population by about three people per second. How many are lost eternally? How many are saved if Jesus Christ came today to judge the world (John 8:21, 24; 12:48)? Indeed, frightening questions! These souls must be introduced to the salvation that is found only in Christ (Acts 4:12). They will be lost in hell forever unless reach them with the gospel. It is true that we cannot reach all of them, but we can make a difference in someone's eternal destiny. For example, a little boy was walking on the beach one day throwing starfish back into the water that had floated to the shore in a massive number. An older pessimistic gentleman walked up and said, "Son you must realize that you cannot possibly save all these millions of starfish?" The little boy thought for a while on this very important matter. Finally, he reached down slowly and picked up one more starfish throwing it into the ocean and said, "Yes sir, I realize that I cannot save all of these fish, but I made a difference in that one's life!" The church may not save all the lost in the world, but she can make a difference in the population of heaven by preaching to the people she meets daily!

The aim of our lesson is to revive interest in world missions starting where we presently live. The lesson will define some terms normally used in missions. It will identify several things from the Bible that must be revived to accomplish the task of evangelizing the world. The church must have a revived mission force of people going to the field. Last, the question, "What will missions do for you?" will be answered. The Bible quotations in this writing are from the New American Standard Update unless otherwise stated.

SOME DEFINITIONS USED IN MISSIONS

In our text one will find the term "**revive.**" It literally means "to refresh, awaken, restore, or to return to consciousness." In missions we need to wake up out of spiritual sleep. In the Hebrew it means "to bring back to life." It is where we get the term "revival." In missions we need a revival! In order to accomplish this we need a restoration of what the Bible teaches on the mission of the church. World missions give life to the church. World evangelism is the action and the power of the church. A happy, excited, and growing church is a mission minded church!

What is the **mission** of the church? The mission of the church is to seek and save the lost in all the world beginning in her local city. This is her purpose for existing (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:8-11). Have we lost our focus on world missions? Does the church where you worship on a regular basis know her purpose given by Christ? This author has experienced in some local congregations that members fail to realize that people are lost. I once worked in a local church where a sister got really upset when I was not in the church office when she called on a particular Wednesday. It being Wednesday we met that evening for mid-week Bible study. She, in an almost yelling tone, said, "Where have you been all day?" I explained that I had completed four home Bible studies with the lost that day. She replied in a careless attitude, "Oh, I did not know anyone was lost!" That is our major problem in the church today! Christians must know and care that

people are lost eternally in sin (Rom. 6:23; Mark 6:34). How about your attitude? Where is your focus?

The story was told of a missionary telling one about the salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ. The person asked, "Who is this Christ?" The missionary asked, "Have you not heard that Christ died for you? (Rom. 5:8)." The reply was, "I did not know that Christ had even been sick." This story represents a sad, but realistic truth in the world today. The world does not know Christ, the Savior of the world (Matt. 1:21). It is true, even in the worship services of the church, there are many who do not know that Christ died for their sins and others who fail to realize that He is the Great Physician for lost souls (Matt. 9:1-13). Christians must not only know that Christ died for the lost, but care personally for lost people like God (1 Peter 5:7). This author personally talked with a man once while on a campaign for Christ who was badly burned out on drugs. He said, "It seems that no one cares in the world anymore. I would love to just have someone to care for me." The world is in need of missionaries who truly care that the sinner is lost and Jesus is the answer to his problem. Have we lost our focus?

In a missionary meeting some young people were discussing the text, "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). One suggestion after another was made as to the meaning of "salt" in this verse. "Salt imparts a desirable flavor," one said. "Salt preserves from decay," suggested another. Then at last a Chinese Christian girl spoke out of an experience that none of the others had. She said, "Salt makes you

thirsty," and there was a sudden hush in the room. Everyone was thinking, "Have I ever made anyone thirsty for the Lord Jesus Christ?" Is this our focus in the church concerning world missions? Do we think deeply about helping souls that are thirsty for righteousness? (Matt. 5:6). We must be about our Father's business of saving souls that are thirsty for righteousness. It must be our focus.

The churches that are experiencing the most growth have a **mission statement**. The mission statement rediscovers the purpose for the church, which has already been stated as preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ (the gospel) in the entire world (Eph. 3:8-11). Jesus Christ helps us define the mission statement in Luke's Gospel. First, it must be according to the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Second, an effective mission statement must be put in writing to serve as a reminder to the disciples (Luke 24:44, 46). Third, the mission statement that is effective is simple, clearly and specifically stated just as given by Christ (Luke 24:47). Fourth, a good mission statement is easily remembered by every Christian. Who could not memorize the mission statement in Luke 24:47 in five minutes and remember it the rest of their lives? Yes, only the lazy and indifferent Christian! Fifth, to be effective in the mission field the church must have a clear statement of focus. Jesus motivated His disciples to preach the message of salvation to "all nations" (Luke 24:47). Sixth, the mission statement that motivates the church must call for action, participation, and results! Christ reminded the disciples that they were being sent forth as witnesses into the world to make disciples (Luke 24:48-49). The church must rekindle the purpose given her by the

Lord. The church without a purpose travels a dead end street every time! Many churches aim at nothing and hit the target dead center every time! We must define our purpose to rekindle missions.

One is amazed as he enters into the American business places and discovers their mission or purpose for existing. This author once visited a Long John Silver's restaurant owned by a Christian friend. A plaque that gave their mission statement was noticed on the wall. It was stated in the following words:

> **MISSION**: sell fish
> **PROMISE**: great tasting fish
> **USE FOR OUR GUESTS**: to help keep our promise – You are valuable to us.
> **GOAL**: "We want to be America's best quick-service restaurant chain."

I immediately said, "WOW! What a statement!" Then feelings of failure went through my body because the local churches that I had worked with did not have a written mission statement, promise, need for people, or goals. The church must know her mission or purpose for existing (Matt. 28:19-20). She must keep her promise or commitment to God (Acts 20:17-32). It is a must for a good mission program for the church to know the needs of the people in her community (Acts 10:33). We must be goal-oriented people: How many souls can we reach this year with the message of Jesus Christ? (Rom. 1:14-17). Are we doing a better job selling fish than selling the gospel to the lost?

What is the meaning of the word **missions**? The clear definition of missions is the going forth to herald the gospel of Jesus Christ where it is not known, and to produce new Christians who are then assembled into responsible local congregations for the purpose of the worship of God and His service (1 Cor. 3:4-15). Mission refers to the total biblical assignment of the church of Jesus Christ in proclaiming the gospel of Christ to gospel-destitute areas (Peters 11-12). The mission program of the church must do two things by definition. First, the evangelistic task of the church is to communicate the gospel of Christ so simply that the lost can either accept salvation in Christ to be saved in heaven or reject Christ to be forever lost in hell. Second, the saved must be incorporated into local congregations that will, in turn, be evangelistic.

The word mission does not appear in the Bible. Its equivalent does appear on the inspired pages. The word "evangelist" appears in the Bible concerning the work of a preacher of the gospel (2 Tim. 4:5). The Greek word **euangelistes** literally refers to one who brings glad tidings of good things and heralds the salvation, which is found only in Jesus Christ.[2] He is a preacher of the gospel in gospel-destitute areas such as Philip, thus, involved in missions (Acts 21:8). The word evangelist denotes a messenger of good, a preacher of the gospel, which makes clear the distinctiveness of the function of the churches; to proclaim glad tidings. Missionaries are "evangelists" as being essentially preachers of the gospel (Vine 208). The root word for *evangelites* is **evangelitzo**, which refers to the one who receives the message (Isa. 61:1; Rom. 1:15) and preaches the gospel in

lands beyond him (2 Cor. 10:16) (Bauer 317). Therefore, a missionary who is true to God's mission is a preacher and teacher of the good news of Christ and a herald of salvation in a land beyond the local church. He is an evangelist, which is the work Paul exhorted Timothy to do in the world (2 Tim. 4:5). The local preacher who truly is committed to God will participate as a leader in the mission program of the local church (2 Cor. 4:1-7).

What is the **field** for the missionary? Jesus said, "The field is the world" (Matt. 13:38). But how does one define the word "field" in this text? The word **agros** literally means a plot of ground used mainly for agriculture which Jesus used parables to illustrate the growth of the kingdom (Matt. 13:24, 27, 31, 38). It also denotes the country as opposed to a city or village (Mark 16:12).[3] The plural form of this word appears in Mark 5:14 to mean farms, country-seats, and neighboring hamlets or small villages.[4] Jesus is using this word in Matthew 13:38 to teach that the gospel must be preached in every city, country-seat, neighboring small village throughout the world. He believed in world evangelism. He taught the disciples to preach the gospel to every creature in the world (Mark 16:15). This agrees with the context because the last instructions for evangelism given to the disciples before the establishment of the church were to witness in "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

There are three important areas of missions. First, there are home based missions. Missionaries at home must go into the community beyond them and teach the gospel to the lost (Mark 1:38, 45; Acts 5:42;

8:4). Missions start at home. One who will not evangelize at home will also neglect missions in the foreign fields! Second, there are stateside missions. This is part of the mission program of the local congregation where men are sent out to plant churches in the United States in gospel-destitute areas (1 Cor. 3:6-9). We have different cultures in America and the missionary must be trained to meet the needs of these lost souls. Third, there are foreign missions. One must keep in mind that missionaries to foreign fields must adapt to cross-cultural and national boundaries. He must be prepared in this area of work. In this respect the missionary to foreign countries must possess some additional qualifications than local preachers at home.

SOME THINGS TO REVIVE

The sons of Korah said, "Revive us again" (Psalm 85:60). Do you remember singing that old revival song? A few years ago it seemed to revive the church. The church must be revived again! What is revival for? There are some important things to revive or bring to life again if the church is successful in rekindling missions.

Recognition **of God** must be revived. One must realize that he has total dependence upon God (Acts 17:28). God is man's Creator (Gen. 1:1, 26-27). He made the world and everything therein, which He controls completely (Acts 17:24-27; Col. 1:17). In the creation man recognizes His divine nature and power, thus, being motivated to live and work under His authority (Rom. 1:17-25). Abraham was truly blessed by knowing the God who sent him into a foreign land

to call the people back to God (Gen. 12:1-4; 17:1-7). A covenant agreement governed the relationship of Abraham and God. Abraham agreed to carry out the conditions of the covenant. Christians today will carry out the mission of the covenant they have with God when they get serious about their relationship with Him! God was recognized as the "I AM" or self-existing deity when Moses was commissioned to go to Egypt to release the people of God from slavery (Ex. 3:10-15).

The prophets who spoke for God in the Old Testament had a special recognition for Him. Samuel learned of God and responded to His mission with the attitude, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Sam. 3:7-21). The knowledge and glory of God caused Isaiah to respond to the great commission (Isa. 6). Jeremiah knew God and responded to His call and commission (Jer. 1:4-19). Habakkuk knew God's nature (3:3-6), wrath (3:8), salvation (3:13), and strength (3:19) and responded to the great commission. In all of these examples one can readily see that God is One who sends His people into the mission field. The people of God responded as a result of knowing, loving, and respecting the authority of God (Acts 10:34-35)!

There must be a revival of self-denial and submission to God to rekindle world missions. Christians will go and send others when God has full rule in their lives (Matt. 6:33). The devil will flee the church when the church resists him completely (Jas. 4:7-8). Jesus prayed as He was participating in the mission given Him, "not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). God will hear and respond to those

who submit to His authority (2 Chron. 7:14). Those who DO the will of God will be saved (Matt. 7:21-29). God said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Therefore, we must go!

Do you know God and the salvation that is only in Jesus Christ? (John 17:3; Acts 4:12). Do you know what God commands to be saved? If so, then you know enough to teach the lost! Do you know what God commands of one to stay saved or be faithful until death? (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). If so, you know enough to restore the erring child of God (Gal. 6:1). Do you know God's commission to save the world? Think about it!

A revival of **trust in God's word** will rekindle missions. The writer of Psalms put his trust in God and His word; therefore, he was not afraid to do God's work among worldly enemies (Ps. 56:4). God has spoken to man through "the fathers," "the prophets," and now in "His Son," Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-4). We must listen to Christ (Matt. 17:1-8). Christ gave us a mission to preach to every creature throughout the world (Mark 16:15-16). His word must be accepted and carried out or man will give an account of his disobedience in the judgment! (Eccl. 12:13-14; John 12:48). Christ is not asking us to do something that He failed to do (Heb. 5:8-9). He was obedient to the Father in all things!

Rekindling missions involves a revival of **religious convictions**. Joshua wrote: "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (24:15). He and his household chose to serve God. Elijah renewed Israel's convictions to God by saying, "How

long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Jesus Christ said, "You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt. 6:24). Conviction about God and His word will evangelize the world. The church must turn from the gods of the world to fulfill the great commission. We must turn loose of our wealth and opinions of other gods to serve the "living and true God" in the mission field! (1 Thess. 1:9-10). The church must be convinced that the gospel will save the lost (Rom. 1:14-17).

The church needs a revival to **save the lost**. Christians must make their aim to reach out to a world lost in sin (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). This was the purpose that brought Christ into the world (Luke 19:10). It was His reason to live (John 4:34-35). Christ was born to be the Savior of the world (Matt. 1:21). He died to save the lost (Rom. 5:8). He resurrected to give the gospel its saving power (2 Tim. 1:6-11). Timothy was instructed to "kindle afresh the gift of God" in him in order to testify of Christ through the gospel. The word "kindle" denotes to "keep in full flame in regard to a fire capable of dying out through neglect."[5] Miraculous gifts were given to preachers in the first century to confirm preaching the gospel to the lost (Mark 16:20). Gospel preaching cannot be neglected. Today, God is depending on preachers and teachers in the church to spread the gospel to the lost in the world! (1 Tim. 4:14-16).

What is a prospect? A prospect for evangelism is someone who is not right now experiencing the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ and faithfully serving Him in the church looking forward to a crown

of life in heaven (John 8:21; Rev. 2:10). This definition includes both those who have never obeyed the gospel and the erring child of God. Jesus Christ teaches by example to go out into the community and teach the lost how to be saved (Luke 19:1-10; John 3:1-5). He also teaches the necessity of bringing the erring back to safety (Matt. 18:12-14; James 5:19-20). Interest in this work must be revived, thus, rekindled to grow a healthy church!

The church is in contact with many good prospects in the world beginning in her local neighborhood. The story was told of a man named El Hor Fad who lived in a little house on a few beautiful acres of land. He became interested and very ambitious in looking for diamonds. His whole life became "wrapped up" in locating diamonds! One day he decided to sell his little humble home and travel to the uttermost parts of the earth to search for diamonds. After the man sold his property the new owner one day saw something on the ground glittering in the sun. When analyzed, it was found to be diamonds! In fact, it was soon discovered that the property contained literally "acres of diamonds." They were there under El Hor Fad's feet all the time, but he went elsewhere to find diamonds. We must not be guilty of overlooking precious souls who may live next door. Christ commissioned the apostles to go into all the world beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). The church must evangelize the world beginning in her neighborhood!

There are 99 people who die somewhere in the world every minute. How many will die lost without any knowledge of the Savior? (1 Tim. 2:3-7). There

are over six billion souls in the world today that will spend eternity in heaven or hell. In reality there are 14,000 people born every hour. There are 6,000 people who die every hour. Therefore, every hour we wait to evangelize the world we fall behind 8,000 people! Preaching the gospel is urgent! (2 Tim. 4:1).

REVIVE A PEOPLE FOR MISSIONS

It is with confidence that the sons of Korah wrote: "Restore **us**, O God of our salvation, And cause Your indignation toward us to cease. Will You not Yourself revive **us** again, that Your people may rejoice in You?" (Psalm 85:4, 6). God can bring us back to life in His work. We must return to the mission of God as His people. The Lord has always had a remnant of people to fulfill His mission in both Old and New Testaments. Sometimes He had to restore them to His work. The church must restore world evangelism.

The word missionary describes the character of the men and women who prepare themselves for the divine task of world evangelism. The Lord only needs a few dedicated sincere men and women with the proper motivation to go into the mission field (2 Cor. 5:14). He needs those who have the character traits of God and the leadership and qualifications of men of God in Bible history (Eph. 5:1-5). The Lord has always won many battles with a few committed motivated people. For example, Noah was a righteous man who built an ark after God commanded and saved eight people (Gen. 6-7). Moses led thousands of God's people to victory out of Egypt through the Red Sea (Ex. 14:13). Joshua and Caleb

were fearless and courageous men on a mission to deliver God's people to Canaan (Num. 14; Joshua 1). David, King of Israel, killed his ten thousands to lead the people of God to victory. Gideon was allowed only 300 faithful and bold men to redeem God's people. Jesus Christ chose only 12 men to be apostles and to plant the church in Jerusalem which has saved millions of souls (Matt. 10:1-5; Acts 1:8). Paul with co-workers such as Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Timothy, and Titus planted many evangelistic churches (Acts 11:21-26; Titus 1:5).

What will you do for the Lord to fulfill the great commission? God is not looking for just anyone, He is seeking faithful and committed people with a world vision to seek and save the lost, just ordinary people like you and me! He used ordinary men like Abraham, Moses, and David who were shepherds to lead His people out of bondage. He used hard working men like Peter, James, John, and Andrew who were fishermen (Mark 1:14-28) to spread the good news everywhere in the district of Galilee. He used Matthew who was a tax collector (Matt. 9:9-13; 10:3) as an apostle and writer of the gospel. He used Paul, a successful man in the tent making business to be a great missionary (Acts 9:22). These men had good character. He can also use you! Do you have the character to do mission work?

Christians do have a special character to do this extraordinary work for God (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9-10). They are God's special people called to do a marvelous work for Him in the mission fields. Christian character is the one ingredient needed for effective mission work. What are those Christian

characteristics needed for missionaries? The following is only a small list of these traits:

1. Paul was a Christian before preaching to the lost (Acts 9:16-18; 22:11-30).
2. One must believe in the power of God's word to change lives (Isa. 55:11).
3. One must be an ordinary person with an extraordinary vision and understanding of God's mission (Isa. 6:8; Acts 20:20).
4. We must be ready (willing) to go wherever there are lost souls to evangelize (Rom. 1:14-17).
5. A missionary must be prayerful everyday (John 17; 1 Thess. 5:17).
6. He must be a good student of the word of God and material related to missions (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:2, 15). Yale University has 120,000 volumes on missions. Therefore, the material is available.
7. A missionary must be able to suffer hardship at all times (2 Tim. 2:2-5).
8. One must have love and compassion for the lost like Jesus (Mark 6:34).
9. He must be able to work with God and others to accomplish the mission (2 Cor. 6:1-2).
10. One must never, never, never be a quitter (1 Cor. 16:13).

WHAT WILL MISSIONS DO FOR YOU?

What is in the mission program for you? This question, "What is in it for me?" is asked by people considering jobs, buying life insurance, and one

hundred other things that affect their lives. It is a good question that deserves a Bible answer. Serving God in missions will bless your life beyond measure. You cannot afford to say "no" to missions, especially after you carefully examine the following list of blessings:

1. Missions will increase your faith in God (James 2:18, 24, 26).
2. It will cause you to depend upon the providence of God (Matt. 6:25f; Mark 16:20).
3. Mission work will increase your patience (2 Peter 1:6). Things in the mission field never work out as you want them to or think they should. You must wait on God!
4. It will increase your prayer life tremendously (Rom. 12:12).
5. One will be blessed with humility by condescending to men of low estate (Rom. 12:16).
6. You will have great enthusiasm as you see the great need and urgency for preaching the gospel (Rom. 12:11).
7. There is an unspeakable joy in teaching and saving the lost (Luke 15:7).
8. Mission work will usually relieve the stress of every day struggles in life (Rom. 5:1).
9. God will increase your opportunities and talents (Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Cor. 16:8-9). A man once said, "Talent is as talent does!"
10. Attitude power will be greatly increased in a positive way as one learns contentment and dependence upon God (Matt. 19:26; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:13).

CONCLUSION

A revival of missions is needed in the church. A spiritual revival is a great challenge. We must rekindle the fire of world evangelism. The mission of the Lord has always been right there in the Bible. It must be brought to life once again. We have the awesome task of going into fields where the gospel is not known and plant churches (1 Cor.3:6-9). It is very mush needed in an age when we are losing congregations and missionaries! Will you respond to the call of God (2 Thess 2:14). The Lord needs a few good missionaries!

It is very rewarding to work with God in the mission field. It is the prayer of this author that you will carefully choose your field of work. You must be about the Father's business (Luke 2:49). Remember, Jesus will go with you to help you grow and be blessed without measure (Acts 18:9-10). You will increase like He did as a result of being in the Father's business (Luke 2:50-52). You will cheat yourself of many spiritual blessings on earth and in heaven if you fail to go into the mission field (Eph. 1:3). This study is designed to help you to choose the field ripe unto harvest for you to go work for God (John 4:35). Remember, Jesus said, "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (John 4:36). You cannot have a work anywhere more rewarding!

ENDNOTES

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THE PSALMS AS THEY RELATE TO LIFE

TIM FORLINES



Tim Forlines was born in Charleston, WV. He is a graduate of Bluefield State College and ETSPM. For the past ten years, he has preached for the Claxton church of Christ in Powell, TN. Since 1992, he has been an adjunct instructor for ETSPM. Tim and his wife, Kathy, have three daughters, Ashlea, Janie, and Marlee.

The book of Psalms is the favorite Old Testament book of many Christians. This comes as no surprise to anyone who has seriously read and contemplated the book. There is no other book in the Old Testament that takes us into the very heart of Israel's religion like the Psalms. There is no other book which shows us the faith, hope, fears, guilt, gratitude, struggles, praise, doubts, desires, frustrations, requests, laments, losses, joys and triumphs of God's people who lived under the previous covenant. Truly, it is the book that contains "the heartfelt theology of Israel."[1]

A BOOK OF DEVOTIONS

The book of Psalms consists, for the most part, of private devotions made public. This is to say that each psalm is written from the standpoint of a single individual and his personal devotions. In each we get a glimpse into the heart of a man as he communes

with God. Without this book we might be left to wonder how individuals related to God in Old Testament times, thus coming away with a faulty view of the Old Covenant. From the Psalms we learn that Israel's religion was vibrant and challenging. We learn that the faithful in Israel viewed God as a personal God who cared about them individually. We learn that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are one and the same.

As a book of devotions, for all its beauty, the book of Psalms is practical. Perhaps the most practical benefit of a study of the book is that it adds to our knowledge of what makes up a rich, vibrant devotional life. Consider some of the elements of devotion as found in the Psalms.

PRAYER

While other books of the Bible record God's words to men, the Psalms contain, more often than not, men's words to God.[2] That being the case, one of the obvious benefits to be gained from the Psalms is a greater appreciation for and understanding of prayer. The prayers of David and other great men have much in them from which we can learn. Notice, for instance, the **faith** that is present in the prayers from the various psalms. Consider, for example, a phrase that exhibits faith in the reality of God and His ability and willingness to relate to men: "hear my prayer," the psalmists often asked (4:1; 39:12; 54:2, etc.)[3]. By saying this, the psalmists displayed faith in a God who could hear, if it was His will to hear, their petitions. We are reminded of the time when King Hezekiah received a threatening letter from Assyria,

and went and "spread it before the Lord" (2 Kings 19:14). He was behaving like a man who really believed God was present to see the letter and hear his prayer. Such was the attitude of the psalmists as they approached God. Of course, the Christian should pray with faith that God will hear his prayer. There is no reason for those who wrote the psalms to have more faith than we, as we live with a completed revelation from God. We have such encouraging statements as that found in Hebrews 4:16, which invites us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." This is based upon the completed and revealed work of our great High Priest, Jesus Christ, which the psalmists and others of their time had in promise, and in types and shadows.

The Psalms show us the **primacy** of prayer. Those whose prayers are recorded in the Psalms certainly did not think of prayer as a last resort, as we suspect many do today. Their attitude was one that placed prayer at the forefront in dealing with the difficulties of life. This attitude of primacy can be seen, first of all, in the urgency with which these men prayed. Consider David's plea in Psalm 12:1 – "Help, Lord [...]. With regard to David's prayer for forgiveness in Psalm 51, it is not difficult to imagine that David prayed this prayer very soon after Nathan confronted him about his sin (cf. 2 Sam. 12). David's attitude about prayer can be discerned from what this psalm reveals about his attitude toward God: "against You, You only, have I sinned [...]"(v. 4). It was not that David had not sinned against various people as well as against God. Rather, he realized that the greatest offense was against God, and we can

assume that he approached God *first* in the matter of forgiveness (Psalm 51 will be considered more closely later in this lesson).

The primacy of prayer is seen in another way in the Psalms. Consider the words of Asaph in Psalm 73. Asaph poured out his heart to God with regard to the discouragement he experienced as he thought of the apparent disparity between God's treatment of the wicked and the righteous (vv. 1ff, 16-17). In verse 15, he relates the following: "if I had said, 'I will speak thus,' Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children." The point is that he was careful not to speak openly about his doubts, for fear of harming the faith of others.[4] He spoke first *to God* about these matters. Imagine the amount of strife and turmoil that would disappear from the body of Christ should each member resolve to exercise this kind of integrity, by taking our doubts and complaints to God first!

Psalm 73 is also a good example of **honesty** in prayer. While Asaph did not speak openly to others about his doubts initially, he did bring them to God in an honest way. This kind of honesty can be seen in other places in the Psalms as well. For instance, David spoke openly to God of his enemies. He did not pretend not to have them (Psa. 5:8, etc.). Nor should we. In fact, we should not make any pretense about anything in prayer to God. Are you tempted? Do not pretend that you are not. Are you burdened by what someone has done to you? Do not pretend to have no problem with that person. Are you doubtful? Do not pretend otherwise. Jesus reminds us that God knows what we need before we ask Him (Matt. 6:8).

Certainly, the principle applies here. God knows what is in our hearts before we reveal it to Him (or seek to hide it from Him, as the case may be). The Psalms teach us to be honest in our prayers to the Father.

Often, in the Psalms, a **higher purpose in prayer** can be seen. What this means is that the psalmists' prayers rose above their own needs and trials, to a desire that God's name be vindicated and glorified. In Psalm 74, when Asaph had prayed for the deliverance of the oppressed, he turned to this higher purpose, beginning in verse 18: "Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O Lord, and that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name." Consider also verses 22-23: "Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily. Do not forget the voice of Your enemies; the tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually." While Asaph was concerned with the plight of his people, he did not neglect to mention the greatest consequence of the actions of the ungodly oppressors, namely, their assault upon the name and character of God. Similarly, the writer of Psalm 119 prayed: "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, Because men do not keep Your law" (v. 136). Other instances abound. Such passages from the Psalms are instructive to us, in that they teach us to pray with a higher purpose than simply asking for God to take care of our needs. Of course, the point is not that we should not pray about personal matters. The Bible teaches us to "let [our] requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). The point is that we should remember that we are part of something greater, and that God's will is supreme. God's interests should be the greater focus in every part of our lives, including

our prayers (cf. Matt. 26:39). Each should examine himself/herself with regard to his/her own prayer life. Is prayer simply a means for asking God for what we want or need, or are we continually aware of the exaltation and vindication of the name of our great God? May our prayers be mature, like those of the psalmists.

PRAISE

One cannot read the Psalms without noting the numerous instances of praise within the book. Many of the individual psalms have praise as their main theme. Psalms 146 through 150, for example, each begins and ends with the phrase, "Praise the Lord." Even though there are various other categories of psalms, addressing different themes, the recurring theme of praise runs throughout.

Here is a challenging point from the Psalms. How much direct praise to God do we include in our personal prayers? All too often, Christians admit to prayers being laden with requests, with little praise for our Heavenly Father who so often grants our requests. Certainly a reading of the various psalms of praise will help us learn why and how to praise the Lord.

Consider Psalm 113, and the reasons given therein for praising God (vv. 4-9). These include the person and inherent goodness, character and ability of God (4-6). Also mentioned are the various things He does for individuals (7-9). Can reasons for praise not be found in these verses, and many others like them? Each Christian has grounds to praise God; not

only general reasons pertaining to His person and power, but also personal reasons pertaining to His care for each individual.

MEDITATION

When thinking of a rich devotional life, prayer and praise readily come to mind. However, there is another component that is just as important -- meditation. The first psalm describes the truly happy man, first in negative and then in positive terms. He avoids sin in all forms and situations (v. 1), and he delights in the law of the Lord (v. 2). Verse 2 goes on to say that "in [God's] law he meditates day and night." The word "meditate" here means to "keep pondering." The basic meaning of the Hebrew word connotes a "low sound, characteristic of the moaning of a dove (Isa 38:14; 59:11) or the growling of a lion over its prey (Isa 31:4)."[5] It is not difficult to imagine the connection between the constant sounds these animals make, and the constant working of the mind over a thought. The word is used in the Psalms of meditating upon God (Psa. 63:6), His works (Psa. 77:12; 143:5), and His word (1:2). An interesting connection exists between the word "meditate" in 1:2 and "plot" or "imagine" in 2:1.[6] Being from the same word, we get a picture of how the wicked of the world "meditate" over their wickedness. Certainly, the godly person should seek to meditate upon God and His word as much as the worldly plot their worldliness. The verse being considered says "day and night." Christians might wonder why it is they often lack the strength to face the challenges and difficulties of this

life. Perhaps one reason is the neglect of the principle of meditation. Psalm 1 further describes the happy man as one who is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper" (v. 3, cf. Josh. 1:8). Of course, one can only meditate upon God's word to the extent he has read, studied and internalized it (cf. Psa. 119:11).

A BOOK FOR FAITH

One sure benefit of studying the Psalms is that, like all of God's word (cf. Rom. 10:17), they build faith in the Christian. Those who penned them were obviously men who possessed great faith in God. In what is perhaps David's most well known psalm, the twenty-third, he describes God as the loving Shepherd, and thus expresses his faith in that Shepherd. The direct consequence of knowing that "the Lord is my shepherd" (v. 1), is the truth that "I shall not want." This is an expression of faith. A further expression of the kind of faith David had will surely challenge the faith of the reader when its implications are understood. That is in verse 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Despite a common assumption, the "shadow of death" is not necessarily a reference to death itself, though it can include death. It is a word that refers to "all dark and bitter experiences,"[7] and is used to express the idea of a period of profound darkness. All Christians face such times. The interesting thing about the mention of darkness and danger is its relationship to one part of

the previous verse: "He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (v. 3). These "paths of righteousness" are surely the right paths that, by following in them, the godly person will bring glory to the Shepherd. The implication is that the "valley of the shadow of death" is also one of the right paths through which the sheep are sometimes led. To follow God through times of danger and darkness takes faith. David had this kind of faith, and in writing of it, has encouraged us to have the same.

In Psalm 73, Asaph's faith is seen as he emerges from a struggle of doubt. Writing "after the fact," he relates to us the difficulty he has faced in dealing with the apparent disparity in the way God deals with the righteous and the unrighteous (vv. 2-12). This problem was so great in his mind that it nearly harmed his faith (2, 13). The psalm goes on to describe how he learned from God's perspective that the wicked were headed for a fall, though they might appear to be prospering for the present (17-20).

Asaph emerged from this struggle with greater faith (vv. 21-26). One interesting thing to note is that the information Asaph received did not answer his implied question as to why the wicked prospered and the righteous suffered. Asaph was content to trust God to make sense of it all. There are some people who feel as if they can only follow God if He answers every question and settles every issue now. It is far better to have the kind of faith Asaph came to have.

Another way in which the Psalms build faith is through the prophecies contained therein. A number of prophetic statements concerning the Christ were

given through David. Consider a few of the instances of Messianic prophecy in the Psalms, and how they help to build faith.

Christ is first mentioned in the book in Psalm 2. Against the turmoil and rebellion of the kings of the earth we see the calm confidence of our King (vv. 1-6). It is comforting to know that, while on earth chaos and violence abound, in heaven our King reigns supreme. In fact, this psalm leaves no chance for evil men to triumph – they are given a choice to either submit to the divine Son or perish. This is the kind of confidence that should inspire our faith in a world of turmoil.

Psalm 16 is another of the Messianic psalms. It is interesting that most of what is said in the psalm could be accounted for in the life of David and his personal relationship with God. However, what David writes in verse 10 could only pertain to someone other than Himself: "for You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." This verse is mentioned again in the sermon on Pentecost in Acts 2, and the explanation of its significance is given (vv. 25-31). Of particular interest is the fact that David could not have been speaking of himself in these terms (v. 29). His soul was left in Sheol (Hades, the realm of the dead), and his body did undergo corruption, a fact of which all who were present at Pentecost were well aware. They were also aware that the tomb of Jesus was empty and His body could not be accounted for. It has been observed that the Christian movement could have been stopped dead in its tracks if someone could have produced His body, or evidence that it remained.

The fact is, they knew such could not be done, and over 3,000 that day were honest enough to admit it. Certainly, one thing that solidified their consideration of the evidence was the knowledge that David had prophesied of these events nearly one thousand years earlier.

Another passage that was mentioned in Acts 2 was Psalm 110:1 – "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (cf. Acts 2:34-35). What Peter says about this verse proves that it was written by David about Christ, rather than by someone else or about David. In fact "my Lord," must be a reference to Christ because David had no earthly superior. The psalm itself sets forth the nature of the reign and work of our Savior as a king with absolute power ("rule in the midst of your enemies," v. 2b) and as our great High Priest ("forever, according to the order of Melchizedek," v. 4). This chapter of the Bible should help us appreciate having a King who is not earthly but heavenly, One whose kingdom truly is "not of this world."

There are other Messianic prophecies in the Psalms. These three have been mentioned, not only to note the particular aspects of our Lord's character and work found therein, but to show how our faith is enriched by these and other Messianic portions of the book. There is hardly a greater proof for the validity of the word of God, particularly with regard to what it says about Jesus Christ, than fulfilled prophecy. Each time we read these portions of the book of Psalms, and other instances of fulfilled prophecy, our hearts can be strengthened with the faith that He really did

and does live, and that the Bible's claims about Him are true. We can be reminded of those things which the Holy Spirit saw fit to announce centuries ahead of time with regard to the nature of Christ's work.

A BOOK OF MEANING

Many people are confused about the meaning of life. People still question whether or not their lives can have any real purpose or meaning. While we expect these issues to be discussed in the wisdom books (particularly Ecclesiastes), they are addressed in the Psalms as well. Consider Psalm 8 where David praises God for His majesty, and then asks, "what is man, that You are mindful of Him?" (vv. 1-4) The thought is then elaborated upon with a grand description of what God has done for man, and the exalted place in creation which man occupies (vv. 5-8). It is clear that man is the most important feature of God's creation. The earth was made for man (cf. Isa. 45:18), and the rest of creation was placed under him. Men are important to God! In fact, when this psalm is studied in light of its mention in Hebrews 2:5-9, the importance of man can be seen in a new light, considering what God was willing to do even for fallen man: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone" (v. 9). On this subject, a quote from Neil Lightfoot's discussion of the Hebrews passage is helpful:

> God, mindful of man from the beginning, gave him a high place. He bestowed on

> him glory and honor and made him lord of creation (Gen. 1:26-28). All things were put under his feet. But man rebelled and lost his universal dominion. Man originally was given dominion. He is still destined to achieve it. But this dominion can only be realized, as the author goes on to say, through the ideal or representative man, Jesus Christ[8]

Those who feel as if their lives have no real value should read and meditate upon Psalm 8.

Psalm 90 is the oldest identifiable psalm. Written by Moses, it deals with the frailty of man in light of the eternal nature of God. As a prayer to "teach us to number our days" (v. 12), on the surface it seems to present a dismal outlook for man, especially considering the previous verses, beginning at v. 3. However, the psalm ends with this prayer:

> Return, O LORD! How long? And have compassion on Your servants. Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days! Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us, And the years in which we have seen evil. Let Your work appear to Your servants, And Your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands (vv. 13-17).

The last part of that prayer, "establish the work of our hands for us [...]," gives pause for reflection on the life of Moses. A casual observation of his life, apart from what we know about the spiritual greatness of the man, might yield a portrait of a frustrating life, with an anticlimactic ending. However, we do not think of Moses' life as a life of failure! We know him as one, the work of whose hands was indeed established. It is likely that Moses, during his lifetime, never realized the ultimate purpose for which his life would come to be known. Perhaps he hardly suspected that his life would have as great a meaning as it has had to millions, who have recognized him as one of the greatest leaders of God's people in all of history. Interestingly, it is technically incorrect to say that Moses never set foot in Canaan. One look at Matthew 17:1-5 will show that he stood atop the Mount of Transfiguration along with Jesus, Elijah and three of Jesus' disciples. One can hardly imagine a greater tribute to Moses than this. Psalm 90, with its sobering reflections upon the brevity of life, also provides a hint of the great life for which "Moses the man of God" would be remembered. Similarly, as the Christian faces the frustrations of life, he can be assured that his life has meaning, even beyond what he might presently imagine.

A BOOK FOR SINNERS

While no brief study of the Psalms can begin to explore the riches of the book, it is hardly appropriate to close without directing some attention to the "penitential" psalms. These are psalms which contain prayers for forgiveness or reflections upon being

forgiven. Since "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), and since even as Christians we are not without sin (1 John 1:8, 10), no Christian should overlook these portions of the Psalter.

Psalm 51 is probably the best known of these prayers. It was written by David, after a period of sin in his life which included adultery, deception and murder (cf. 2 Sam. 11). There is not a more meaningful prayer for personal forgiveness in all of the Bible. There are several points from the psalm that would make our own prayers for forgiveness more meaningful.

Note first of all, the sense of personal responsibility David felt for his sin. In the first three verses, for instance, first-person pronouns abound. David was keenly aware that he was responsible for these sins. Contrary to this, adherents to Calvinism seek to find support for their doctrine of inherited sin in verse 5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Aside from numerous other considerations about the meaning of this verse is the simple fact of the context in which it is found. This verse comes in the context of a prayer for forgiveness for sins David *committed*, not sins he *inherited*. This is one of several instances of figurative poetic language in the psalm. We are well advised to take personal responsibility for our sins, as David did; it is one of the keys to seeking God's forgiveness.

Rather than blame anyone else, including God, David based his plea for forgiveness on God's "lovingkindness" and "tender mercies" (v. 1). Even in a time when the revelation of God's grace was

incomplete, David realized that his forgiveness could only come from God's abundant mercy. Only the grace of God can "blot out [...] transgressions," and "wash" and "cleanse" from sin (vv. 1-2).

David realized that the source of sin in his life was the heart (v. 6). It was in this regard that he prayed for a clean heart (v. 10). When praying for forgiveness, the circumstances surrounding his sin were not a consideration; he knew that the sins began in his heart, which needed purifying.

The way David reflected upon the effects of his sin in his life is interesting. In verse 8, he prays: "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice." To deny sin, rather than confess it, will cause much anxiety and misery in one's life. David had now experienced this firsthand, as further evidenced by what he wrote in another psalm: "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer" (Psa. 32:3-4). The relief of confession was also expressed in 32:5 – "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

Psalm 51 ends in a way which has led some commentators to conclude that the last two verses must have been a later addition to the psalm (vv. 18-19). Specifically, the mention of "building the walls of Jerusalem" is thought to place these verses after the exile of the Jews to Babylon. However, considering the use of figurative language throughout this psalm

(as throughout Hebrew poetry in general), there is no reason to regard these verses as not being original to the psalm. Consider, then, the significance of this final portion of David's prayer. David must surely have realized that his sin did not affect him alone. Being the king of Israel, his iniquities had an effect upon the whole nation, as represented by its chief city. It would be good in our own prayers for personal forgiveness to remember that our sins have an impact upon those around us, and ask for God's help to "build the walls" which have been torn down by our sin.

CONCLUSION

Of course, much more can be said about the Psalms than present space or the capabilities of the present writer allow. It is hoped that the things mentioned in this lecture are helpful to the reader in arousing a greater interest in the book of Psalms, especially with regard to their practical value to the Christian life.

From its opening words, "Blessed is the man," to its closing words, "Praise the Lord!," the relationship between the man and his Lord is given expression in a way that is unique to this great book. May each Christian life be enriched by its thoughtful study and application.

ENDNOTES

[1]Edwin S. Jones, Class Notes, East Tennessee School of Preaching, 1987.

[2]Lesson outline, "Practical Perceptions from the Psalms," by David Pharr.

[3]Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

[4]Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150 – A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms*. InterVarsity Press, 1975, pg. 216

[5]R. Laird Harris, et. al., eds. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Volume 1*. Moody Press, 1980, pg. 205.

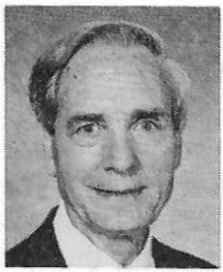
[6]Derek Kidner, *An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms*. InterVarsity Press, 1973, pg. 48.

[7]H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*. Baker Book House, 1988, pg. 213.

[8]Neil R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews*. Baker Book House, 1985, pg. 74.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

CHARLES BROWN



Charles Brown was born in Henderson County, TN. He and Jane (Pierce) have three children: Steven, Tim, and Karen Green, and eight grandchildren. Brother Brown attended FHC (AA), DLC (BA), and Memphis State College (MA). He preached his first sermon in October, 1950, and has done local work in TN, NJ, VA, and OH. Mission trips to Ghana and India have been made. He has spoken almost 4,000 times on the radio. He has appeared on numerous church and college lectureships. Teaching has been done at FHC and OVC, and at ETSPM since 1991, where he is also Dean of Admissions

INTRODUCTION

While the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, has a new and special meaning for the Christian because of the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 28), every day should be spent in living the Christian life. Although the Lord's supper was reserved only for the Lord's day (I Cor. 16:1; 11:20; Acts 20:7), every day was a day of prayer (Matt. 6:11), cross bearing (Lk. 9:23), Bible reading (Acts 17:11), caring for the needy (Acts 6:1), and evangelism (Acts 2:47), to cite just a few examples of first century daily Christian living.

Life under the Law of Moses required the weekly observance of the Sabbath day (Ex. 20:8-11),

the annual observance of the Day of Atonement (Ex. 30:10), the seventh year observance of rest for the land (Lev. 25:4), and the fiftieth year observance of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-17). In contrast, there were laws regulating the food they ate (Lev. 11) and the clothing they wore (Lev. 19:19). Every bite of food they ate and every stitch of clothing they wore on every day of their lives were reminders to live each day as Israelites, separated from the people of the world to serve and glorify Jehovah God.

THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

Today, God's people compose spiritual Israel, not fleshly Israel (Rom 9:4ff), and we are under the new covenant, not the old (Rom. 11:27). The new covenant governs the "Christian" life just as the old governed the "Jewish" life. The word "Christian" appears only three times in the New Testament and each reference reveals something of importance about its identify. The Christian is a disciple, a follower of Christ (Acts 11:26); one who has been convinced and convicted by the logical presentation of the gospel message (Matt. 26:28); and a Christian is one who willingly suffers for Christ (I Peter 4:15). In addition, he is a baptized believer (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3, 4; Gal. 3:26, 27). As a saved person, he has been added to the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). He is one who has been washed, sanctified, and justified (I Cor. 6:11) and is in Christ where all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3). His spiritual birth (John 3:3, 5; I Peter 2:2) makes him a child in the spiritual family of God (Rom. 8:16, 17). The Christian life is a life lived by faith (Gal. 2:20; 2

Cor. 5:7); a life lived for Christ (Phil. 1:21); a life of joy, thanksgiving, and praise.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

Jesus sent out seventy disciples imbued with miraculous powers (Luke 10:12; cf. Mt. 10:1, 8; Mk. 16:17, 18). These miraculous works were done in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. He had said before ascending back to the Father, "all power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mt. 28:18). Just as the miracles of Christ caused men to believe in Christ (Acts 2:22; Heb. 2:3, 4), so did the miracles of the seventy. There was great excitement among them as they returned to Jesus.

> And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name, and he said unto them, and I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power [authority] to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven (Lk. 10:17-20).

THE BOOK OF LIFE

Moses knew about that heavenly listing of names, referring to it as "thy [God's book]" (Ex. 32:32). God called it "my book" in the following verse

(v.33). Paul called it "the book of life" (Phil. 4:3) and Revelation 21:27 calls it "the Lamb's book of life." God enters the names of the righteous in this book (Ex. 32:32; Phil. 4:3). Because of unfaithfulness, names may be removed, or blotted out of His book (Ex. 32:32, 33; Rev. 3:5; 22:19). The book of life will be opened at the judgment (Rev. 10:12) and only those will be ushered into heaven whose names "are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). All others will be "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

Therefore, following his baptism by Philip, the Ethiopian "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39), because his name was written in the book of life. The joy of this knowledge is so beautifully expressed in this much loved hymn:

My name is in the Book of Life,
O bless the name of Jesus!
I rise above all doubt and strife
And read my title clear.

While others climb thro' worldly strife,
To carve a name of honor,
High up in heaven's Book of Life,
My name is written there.

I know, I know my name is there, is there;
I know, I know my name is written there.

D. S. Warner

The Ethiopian was filled with joy because in baptism the blood of Christ had washed away his sins and he was washed, sanctified, and justified; and he

was added to the Lord's church (Acts 22:16; 2:38; I Peter 1:18, 19; Acts 2:47; I Cor. 6:11). From my youth, my favorite song following baptisms has been, "O, Happy Day":

O happy day that fixed my choice
On thee my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its rapture all abroad!

Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.
He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live rejoicing every day;
Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.

Philip Doddridge

The Eunuch was in Christ where all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3). He was a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, a child of the King, and had in his heart the hope of Heaven. Hope is the anchor of the soul (Heb. 6:19). He traveled to Jerusalem without Christ, but returned home with Christ in his heart. He was in Christ and Christ was in him. He traveled to Jerusalem in spiritual darkness; he returned home in "Heavenly Sunlight." Therefore, he could have sung:

Sunlight, sunlight, all along my way
Since my savior found me, and took away my sins,
I have had the sunlight of his love within.

J. W. Van De Venter

THE JOY OF SERVING THE LORD

"Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Had the Ethiopian known the much loved song that children sing so well, "I have a joy, joy, joy deep in my heart," it might well have been in his heart and on his lips as he traveled for some one thousand miles back to his home.

Arising from the waters of baptism to walk in a new life results in a newly discovered joy, gratitude, and praise. "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from your heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18). When only one of the ten cleansed lepers returned to Jesus to say thanks, Jesus inquired about the other nine who had been blessed. Ingratitude was a step of the Gentiles leading to their leaving God (Rom. 1:21).

Also, the joy found in Christ should result in an outpouring of praise and worship of God. A failure to praise and glorify God was another step of the Gentiles in their departure from God (Rom. 1:21). The Psalmist said it well in these words:

> Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands [....]. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth

[faithfulness] endureth to all generations (Psa. 100:1, 4, 5).

Every day for the Christian has the potential to be a day of indescribable joy just like the day of baptism. For if we walk in the light and "confess our sins" His blood cleanses us day-by-day (I Jn. 1:7, 9). Every day of the Christian life may be a day of joy, gratitude, and praise. The Thessalonians were admonished by Paul to keep on rejoicing, to keep on praying, and to keep on being grateful (I Thess. 5:16-18). In the words of a much-loved hymn: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below."

THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

In similar parables found in Luke chapters eleven and eighteen, Jesus taught "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). Daniel, as a slave, was forbidden to pray to the true God, yet he prayed openly three times daily (Dan. 6:10). Our Lord left not only teachings on prayer, but he lived a life of prayer. His example of prayer was followed by the first century Christians (Acts 2:42, 4:31; 10:9; 16:25; etc.).

The need to talk with God daily in prayer is paralled by the need of the Christian to listen to God talk to him through the Scriptures, the word of God. The righteous man is one who meditates upon God's word by night and day (Psa. 1:2). He is one who places great value on His word:

> More to be desired are they [scriptures] than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb (Psa. 19:10).
>
> Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee;
> Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psa. 119:11, 105).

Our physical bodies need food and drink on a daily basis; our spiritual bodies need spiritual food and drink daily. God's word is spiritual meat, milk, and water.

THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

The Christ-like life is a transformed life (Rom. 12:2). God *formed* us (I Tim. 2:13) unstained by sin and in a state of holiness (Matt. 18, 19); sin *deforms* us (Psa. 51); the world seeks to *conform* us; and Christ wants to *transform* us (Rom 12:2). The Greek word translated transform is the same word that gives us the English word "metamorphosis." Webster gives this definition of metamorphosis: "A mocked and more or less abrupt developmental change in the form or structure of an animal (as a butterfly or a frog) occurring subsequent to birth or hatching."

The Christian life results from inward changes; the worldly life results from outward conformity. Every acceptable act of worship and service to God must be from the heart (I Cor. 13:1-3; Col. 3:16; etc.). Salvation depends upon an obedient faith from the heart (Heb. 11:6; Mk. 16:15, 16; Rom. 6:17). Then,

our hearts, minds, are to be made like the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). From the context of Philippians 2:5-8, it seems clear that the key word of the mind of Christ is *humility* for "He humbled himself" (v. 8). In verses six, seven, and eight we find three results of humility in the life of Christ. First, humility caused Christ to be "submissive" to the Father. He willingly submitted to the divine will by giving up his equality with the Father in Heaven and coming to the earth (v. 6; John 1:1; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Second, the humility of Christ caused Him to become a "servant" of man and God (v. 7). He stated often that His will was to do the Father's will (Jn. 6:38). "Even so the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Mt. 20:28). By washing the feet of His disciples in John chapter thirteen, Jesus gave the marvelous example of service to others. Third, from verse eight we learn that the humility of Christ caused Him to "suffer" the pain and shame of the cross. Thus, humility was seen in His submission, service, and suffering.

Regarding the divine plans for the children of God, Paul wrote, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). Because Moses was in the presence of God on the mountain his face glowed (Ex. 34:29); because Peter and John had been with Christ they were bold (Acts 4:13); and when we spend time with Christ and His word men will detect changes in our lives produced by Christ.

The transformed mind of the Christian results in a life produced, sustained, and led by the Holy Spirit of God through the word of God.

> For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom 8:6-11).

A LIFE OF SERVICE

The Christian life is one of service to God (Rom. 12:1). We are to be living sacrifices in contrast with the dead animal sacrifices under the old covenant. Having been sanctified by the blood of Christ we are to serve the living God. A holy people called out to serve a holy God. This is our reasonable, or spiritual, service. Jesus said to Satan, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Mt. 4:10). "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). In words often stated, "We must bear the cross if we want to wear the crown." Christ has called us to work in the

vineyard, not to be spectators who are entertained. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). At the judgment we want to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: Thou hast been faithful over a few things, and I will make thee ruler over many things: enter then in to the joy of the Lord" (Mt. 25:21). God has not promised us a health and wealth gospel so longed for my many, but he has called us to service and trials.

The Christian life is one of commitment to the cause of Christ regardless of the consequences. "Be thou faithful unto death [even if it means death], and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Loyalty to Christ must be like that of Joshua (24:15), Job (2:9, 10), and Peter (John 6:68). He who seeks a worthy cause to make a commitment to cannot find a higher or nobler cause than the cause of Christ.

THE STRENGTH OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Christ-like life depends upon God, not upon self, for strength. Paul declares that we should "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). The power is supplied by the almighty, all powerful, God, for whom nothing is impossible (Gen. 18:10). The apostle Paul learned well the true source of spiritual strength when he was the recipient of God's grace. God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul learned the lesson well for he stated, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in

distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Just think upon this, the weaker we feel the stronger Christ can make us!

THE MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The mission of the Christian life should be like that of Christ: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Christ challenges us in the great commission to "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" and "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15). When the first century Christians were driven from Jerusalem following the death of Stephen, it says, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). These were not apostles; the apostles remained in Jerusalem (8:1). These were not evangelists as Philip, nor were they necessarily inspired prophets or teachers. They were just ordinary folks, often referred to as the salt of the earth. The kind someone said God must have loved for he made so many of us. Church historians are in unanimous agreement that Acts 8:4 contains the most important explanation for the tremendous first-century church growth. Read what some have said.

> The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or major part of their occupation but men and women who earned their livelihood some purely secular names and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in

> this natural fashion (Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*).
>
> Christianity, once established, was its own best missionary. It grew naturally from within. It attracted peoples by its very presence. It was a light shining in the darkness and illuminating the darkness. While there were no professional missionaries devoting their whole life to this specific work, every congregation was a missionary society and every Christian believer was a missionary, inflamed with the love of Christ to convert his fellow men (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*).

From these historical statements we find the major growth of the early church is attributed to the lives and words of ordinary Christians. Non-Christians were attracted to them as lights "shining in the darkness." Each Christian was a missionary and each church a missionary society!

While preaching in Red Bank, New Jersey, in the late 1950's, Sargent Nick Ensminger was stationed at nearby Fort Monmouth. One day Nick's wife saw a distraught looking shopper and approached her stating that she knew something that could give her great joy. A Bible study was arranged and she was baptized. Her family lived in Red Bank, and they began meeting with the Red Bank church of Christ one- by- one until we were able to teach and baptize six family members. It all started with a single

comment made by a Christian woman to a stranger in the base commissary.

CONCLUSION

Christians in the Jerusalem church were said to have "favour with all the people (Acts 2:476). Servants are admonished to show "good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:10). Whether in the home, at work, at play, at school, in the church, or in the community, Christians should strive to adorn the gospel of Christ. Christians are advertisements for the faith. There is no greater endorsement of the faith than the daily life of a true Christian.

DEACONS AS SPECIAL SERVANTS

ROBERT R. TAYLOR, JR.



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INTRODUCTION

It is always a joy supreme to come to Karns for this lectureship as I have done for some twenty-five years stretching back to 1977. I think I have only missed two lectureships since then. Genuine gratitude is expressed to James Meadows, the school, the elders and the entire Karns congregation for the invitation to speak again this year and to pen a chapter for the lectureship volume.

Our English term derives from the Greek word **diakonos**, which is used both generally and specifically or in a special sense. Service permeates both usages. Christ is a **diakonos** in Romans 15:8

and Galatians 2:17. Paul and Apollos are diakonoi--the plural--in I Corinthians 3:5. The Colossian preacher, Epaphras, is a diakonos in Colossians 1: 7. Even a civil ruler is a **diakonos** in, Romans 13:4. Waiters at feasts were **diakonoi** as per John 2:5-9 and Matthew 22:13. These are general usages of the term.

The specific or special sense of the term occurs in Philippians 1:1 and in I Timothy 3:8-13. It is in this latter sense that our current study will center and major. But first some preliminaries need to be noticed.

CLEARING UP SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

There is the misuse among denominational organizations. Among the Baptists we have **the** pastor or preacher, and the Board of Deacons. In Philippians 1:1 Paul did not address **the** pastor and the Board of Deacons. In I Timothy 3:1-8 Paul did not give qualifications for **the** pastor and then the Board of Deacons as possessors of congregational authority. In the former passage he addressed the bishops (note the **"s"** at the end of the word) and the deacons (note also another **"s"** at the end of this word). He did not make the latter group into an authoritative board to direct congregational activities. In the latter passage he did not speak of **the** pastor and then the Board of Deacons in verses 8-10,12-13. These modern practices are digressive from the type of church of organization set forth in the New Testament. It reminds me of a discussion I once had with a prominent Methodist preacher of Martin, Tennessee. He asked me what type of organization churches of

Christ had. I told him just what they had in the New Testament and that we have the same – elders to oversee, deacons to serve and all as members to work together. He was very skeptical and asked, Will that work?" Pattern authority means but little to such people whether it be over the name to wear, the plan of pardon to hear and heed, the manner of worship or the Biblical brand of organization.

But all misuses are not external to us. Too many, **far** too many, exist among us also. Have you not heard a brother pray, "Lord, bless our elders and deacons as **they** oversee the congregation here?" Such prayer directors need further instruction! Elders oversee deacons who are **under** them and thus are **among the overseen**! It has been a practice among some of our congregations to have elders and deacons act equally on every decision facing the congregation and abide by what the majority decides. Since in most places deacons outnumber the elders they could sway every decision by standing united. One or two of the elders disagree. In this case the deacons and a majority of elders actually oversee a congregation. There is no way this can be right!

In some places deacons are considered junior elders or co-elders. The Bible knows nothing about junior elders, co-elders or senior elders. A man is either an elder or he is not an elder, period!

Some contend that elders are over the spiritual and deacons are over the physical. Were this true, we would have two sets of overseers not just one! Elders are over **all** the work of the church **all** the time. Deacons are over the work of the church as overseers

none of the time.

Some have contended that deacons are deacons only when they are performing some religious service and when done **they cease** being deacons. One or two of the deacons may be appointed to take care of grass cutting from spring to late fall. If this is all they are appointed to do, as per this contention, their work as deacons would be suspended from late fall to early spring unless they were given other tasks. A deacon may be appointed to take charge of a benevolent case with a needy family. By this contention his services as a deacon would conclude when the needy family was on its own requiring no further congregational assistance. This, too, is a misconception of the role and work of deacons.

I once knew of a congregation who had three elders and **no** deacons though they had a number of men who could have qualified as deacons. When one of the elders was asked about this deficiency in their congregational organization, he replied rather briskly, "We do not need deacons here!" Since when did the Lord leave it up to elders to decide **against** what He has **included** in the divine blueprint for the church? Does this not fall into the same category of the congregation who has men qualified to serve as elders but most of the members are anti-elders and they meet every attempt of installing elders with the pungent objection, "We are doing very well here minus elders and hence do not need them period; they would just upset our peaceful congregation where everybody has an equal say."

For a number of years I received a bulletin from a congregation that listed on the back page the elders – a plurality – and just **one** deacon. I had done meeting work there and knew almost for a surety that they had more than one man in the congregation who could have served in this role and thus made it a plurality such as Philippi had in Paul's day. Paul did not address the Philippian epistle to the saints, the bishops and **the**_deacon. Philippi had a plurality of bishops and also a plurality of deacons.

Furthermore, it is not a mark of congregational wisdom to have deacons appointed and yet never give them any specific works to do. In far too many places today preachers are doing the work of elders, except in hiring, firing and what his salary will be, elders are doing the work of deacons and deacons are unsure what they are to be doing as special servants. Efficient shepherds will not allow this to happen.

ELDERS AND DEACONS ARE JOINED TOGETHER

They are linked together in Philippians 1:1 wherein we read,

> Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons [...].

It is not bishops **minus** deacons; it is not deacons **minus** elders. It is bishops **and** deacons. What God joins together man should not put asunder is of wider comprehension than just in marital matters

(Matt. 19:6). Belief and baptism are joined together (Mark 16:16). Repentance and baptism are joined together (Acts 2:38). Giving and generosity are lovingly linked in II Corinthians 8-9. The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day are joined together in Acts 20:7. So are elders and deacons.

They are joined together in I Timothy 3:1-13. Elders, their qualifications and work, are mentioned in verse 1-7. Deacons, their qualifications and work, are mentioned in verses 8-10,12-13.

This will answer the question often asked, "If no men can qualify as elders, would it not be all right to have just deacons?" And just who will oversee them? Will it not be a constant temptation for such men to operate as though they were full-fledged elders and for the congregation to allow them so to act? This practice is full of potential dangers and I am surprised that some have advocated it. It ought to be avoided period.

THE PAULINE PASSAGE

> Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless...Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to

> themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:8-10,12-13).

Just as in the case of eldership qualifications where we have both positives and negatives, so we have both with deacons but not as many as in the former segment (3:1-7). I shall discuss them both with negatives first and then the positives.

NEGATIVE NORMS

Deacons must not be double tongued. The double tongued man talks out of both sides of his fickle mouth. He says one thing and means another. He talks one way to one group and the exact opposite to an opposing group. He is like the political partisan who was asked a very controversial question demanding a very controversial answer. With skilled political savvy he answered, "I have friends on both sides of that issue and I always stay loyal to my friends!" His evasive answer exhibited which side he would take when with one group and another side when with the opposing group. It is quite obvious why one of this flippant disposition would be a misfit in the worthy and honorable work of a deacon. Character and reputation touch the verbal department as well as one's habits and actions.

Deacons must not be given to much wine. A man once told me, "I would rather be a deacon as an elder because elders are not to drink any and deacons can drink as long as an excess is avoided." Is this handling aright Paul's teaching on wine consumption in I Timothy 3:3 and 3:8: A decisive **no** is

my instant response. The colorful J. D. Tant was once asked if he thought it all right to drink a little. He responded, in essence, "Oh yes, I think it is all right to drink a little, curse a little, lie a little, kill a little, commit a little adultery and steal a little!" In keen logic this is what we call reducing something to an absolute absurdity and this the plain-spoken Tant did to perfection. Paul is not advocating alcoholic consumption with **any** degree of approval; instead he is forbidding any and all addiction to the "waters of eternal destruction." The late and lamented Guy N. Woods wrote so well on this very point,

> The use of any kind of alcoholic beverage, by those who would influence others for good, is prohibited. It is idle to argue otherwise. "Social drinkers" may think they are regarded for their liberal action by people of the world, but such is not true. Even worldly people know that such conduct is incompatible with Christianity, and they feel little respect for the RELIGION of those who drink with them.[1]

Brother Woods gave these as his scholarly and splendid comments on I Timothy 3:8. With him I concur completely.

Social drinkers are fond of this verse as well as 1 Tim. 5:23. They contend that one is not to go to an **excess** of liquor consumption or partake of it in over much amounts. In I Peter 4:4 the apostle wrote of "the same excess of rioting." Would a **little** rioting be permissible as long as excess is avoided? If not, why

not? In Ecclesiastes 7:17 Solomon wrote, "Be not over much wicked [...]" Would a little wickedness be permitted as long as one stopped short of the over much bit? If this passage permits moderate drinking, would it also permit moderate **addiction**? And if moderate is the intended norm, would a **moderate** amount of lasciviousness or fornication be allowed as long as one did not become a frequent addict to such? Would a one night fling be all right if done only once every year or perhaps twice a year?

Consumers of alcoholic beverages, in **any** amounts, lose their total power to influence others for good. We do not need drinking deacons; we do not need inebriated elders; we do not need preachers who will put the bottle to their lips; we do not need any members who pursue such perilous practices as imbibing deadly alcoholic beverages. Even worldly people know there is no compatibility between piety and alcoholic consumption in any amounts. Whiskey, wine and beer on the one hand and Christianity on the other hand are like liquor consumption and automobile or boat driving – they do not mix but are a lethal combination. Elders, deacons, preachers and all members should be teetotalers period!

Deacons are not to be greedy of filthy lucre. Just as in the case of elders they must not be men characterized by dishonesty or dishonorable gains. Dishonesty does not enhance a deacon in the Lord's church by any stretch of the imagination. The seven in Acts 6 were special servants and were to be men of honest report. Dishonest gain does not add up to Christian character or a sterling reputation for a surety!

POSITIVE PRECEPTS

Deacons must be grave. They must be men who take their work seriously – not approach it in a flippant, childish or lighthearted way. They must be dignified, honorable and respectable. This does not mean to be soured on the world, morose, who never experience any sense of humor, who is stern and unbending with his opinion, who is a long-faced grouch or a perpetual pessimist. In bold and beautiful contrast deacons must show what joyful and radiant Christianity has done for them and can do for others.

Deacons must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Paul was fond of using this expression – the mystery of the faith. It was a mystery prior to its revelation but understandable after its revelation. Paul wrote,

> How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit... (Eph. 3: 3-5).

The faith here refers to the gospel. Deacons must know, believe, obey and defend the gospel or God's scheme of human redemption. It is to be held in a pure conscience. It is not enough for a deacon to have "book" knowledge of the gospel. He must couple

that knowledge with a pure practice of its stately statutes and precious precepts. This apostolic admonition means the same for deacons as "Holding fast the faithful word" does for elders (Tit. 1:9). When preachers preach and practice the Word, when elders hold fast the faithful Word as they have been taught and when deacons hold the mystery of the faith in a good conscience, congregations are in good hands with its preachers, elders and deacons. Every member should be of like mind. If we had had such in every congregation the last thirty years, we would not be facing wholesale apostasy, as is presently the case throughout our brotherhood. Will any astute member deny such? If so, on what grounds?

Deacons are to be time-tested or previously proved. Like elders they are not to be novices or newborn Christians. Lukewarm men should not get the nod for deacons in efforts to get them to be more fervent in spirit. Men who are unfaithful toward the worship periods should not be made deacons with the hope they will become more regular in attendance. Men who are careless in their dress, speech and decorum are not potential deacons. In a northern congregation some years ago a new preacher had just moved and almost immediately decided he would appoint elders and deacons. He did not know the membership at all. One of the elders he appointed had an unbelieving wife. One of the deacons he appointed had a fornicating wife and whose home soon would break up never to be restored. He had no business whatever in acting so unwisely and irrationally. Older members should have stopped him but did not. Before becoming deacons men must be stable, steadfast, pious and be set for the truth of the

gospel. Untested men do not enhance a local congregation at all when they are appointed to an important work.

Deacons must be blameless. This does not mean sinless perfection. But it does mean one who is upright, of good character and of sterling reputation.

Deacons must be husbands of one wife. He must not be a bachelor. A bachelor does not have one wife, which a deacon must have. He must not be a polygamist. He must be a man not living in adultery. He could not be effective as a deacon if his home is in shambles such as the unwisely appointed deacon had in a northern state some years back and to which allusion has already been made. His wife should be a devout Christian who loves his work as a deacon. She should love the Lord and His church. She will enhance his work as a deacon or be a millstone around his neck at all times.

What a powerful influence within the congregation when the preacher and his wife have made a success of marriage, when all elders and their wives have had happy, holy and harmonious homes and when every deacon and his wife have stable and secure marriages. They set an excellent model for all husbands and wives in the congregation as well as throughout a watching community. They are in perfect positions to counsel with those who are just getting married or may experience some early difficulties in making marital adjustments. They show the youth of the congregation what to look for in a mate and the proper making of marriage preparation. They show what marriage insurance will do for homes in the very

unstable and troublesome times in which we live. They excellently and eloquently exhibit the home as God would have it to be and stay.

Deacons must rule their children and their own houses well. Men minus children cannot meet this qualification. Does one child qualify a man to serve? Child and children are used interchangeably in Sacred Scripture. Train up a child in Proverbs 22:6 is inclusive of parents with more than one child. Sarah gave suck to children in Genesis 21: 7 and yet bore Abraham but one child – the son Isaac. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" in Eph. 6:1 is inclusive of households where there is but one child as well as families with more than one child.

Nothing is stated about his having faithful or believing children as with elders in Titus 1:6. Thus a man could serve as a deacon whose children are yet too young to have obeyed the gospel. Hence, we conclude that younger men with smaller children who are obedient and respectful to parental authority can serve in this work. Older men can also, but younger men are not excluded if they qualify. Youthful vigor can be of great aid in many of the duties elders request their doing.

Ruling their houses well would suggest a wife who is submissive to the Saviour and obedient to her husband as Paul inculcates in Ephesians 5:22ff. The proposed and appointed deacon in the northern city did not have his defiant and immoral wife under his control. That type of man would be a misfit as a deacon and he was the short time he served.

REWARDS FOR DOING THIS WORK WELL

Deacons, like elders and preachers, can do their work well and be blessed beautifully and bountifully or can fail miserably and be punished for failure in the same. Paul has the former in mind in verse 13 for deacons. Men who enter this worthy and wonderful work and do it well will reap a reward. "A good degree" seems to have a spiritual advancement in mind according to the Greek construction. Whether the seven in Acts 6 were deacons in an official sense or for a very temporary and specific work has long been argued with pros and cons on both side presented. Yet, we know they were special servants for that needed work. Among the seven we have two who went on to major in evangelistic efficiency – Stephen and Philip. The former preached for a very short time and the latter did for many years. Both are remembered far better for their evangelistic roles than that they were once table servers in the Jerusalem congregation.

Many great elders today were once faithful deacons. Most of our current eldership at Ripley once served as deacons in this congregation. They did well in that role and in the eldership role currently have even a wider sphere of service and leadership. Many able preachers today once served as deacons while younger. Now their influence is far wider as they preach in many places the unsearchable riches of Christ and His gospel.

Men who serve and serve well as deacons develop that brilliant boldness and courage of conviction, which prompt their speaking out more and

more in proclaiming truth and defending it when under attack. Stephen and Philip did and they have had an impressive number of spiritual descendants in the intervening centuries.

Whatever our area of action or sphere of service may be, we need to be bold in propagating truth and defending it when it is assailed and assaulted by Calvary's enemies (Phil. 1:8,17; 3:18-19). All of this, quite obviously, must be done in holy harmony with God's will and wishes as expressed by Holy Writ.

DUTIES OF DEACONS BOTH NEGATIVELY AND POSITIVELY

Their duty is not to become co-elders or junior elders. Their duty is not to circumvent the elders. Their duty is not to ride herd on the preacher and decide whether he stays or leaves. Their duty is not to oversee the congregation of which they are members. Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr., was once in a gospel meeting for a very troubled congregation. After listening to some of the problems he asked tersely, "Who is running this congregation – the deacons?" In that case a millionaire deacon, who gave $35.00 per week, called the shots and threatened to leave if the preacher stayed. The preacher left and he stayed. The elders would not buck this domineering deacon and his equally domineering wife. Again, the duty of deacons is not to be passive and sit on the sidelines of inactivity.

Their duty is to be special servants to elders. They may be given charge of the building and

grounds and their upkeep. One may take the job of treasurer. One may head the visitation program. One or more may be asked to work closely with the youth of the congregation. One or more may work with weak and delinquent members. One may research various calls for congregational benevolence, which is an ever-present problem. Deacons may keep tabs on membership attendance and who is missing on a regular basis. For many years one of our deacons, who is a school principle and well educated, has been our Educational Director and orders material for classes and sees that all classes Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights are staffed. Another may keep classrooms supplied with effective teaching tools. These are some of the many works our Ripley deacons have done through the almost thirty years I have labored with this fine congregation. They work well under our elders and have **never** ridden herd on my work as preacher. They know, and so do I, that the elders are over my work as a preacher – not the deacons. All the almost thirty years I have been at Ripley we have had hard-working and ever busy deacons doing what our efficient elders have assigned. They have done and continue to do many things that other congregations insist their preachers and wives must do if they stay. Such has allowed me to do the real work of an evangelist in study, preaching, lecturing, writing and doing my own visitation and personal work with people. Preachers, as a rule, have their hands full without doing what deacons and a membership should be doing under a prudent eldership.

CONCLUSION

Fortunate indeed is any congregation who has a sound preacher, an efficient and qualified eldership, a group of dedicated deacons who are unafraid of work and a membership who has a mind to be united and at work for the Lord. Special servants, the deacons, are vastly important in congregational efficiency. We salute all our dedicated deacons who are making a difference in congregational success. May their tribe increase.

ENDNOTE

[1]Guy N. Woods, *Adult Gospel Quarterly,* Summer Quarter (Nashville, Gospel Advocate Company, 1970), p. 18.

ELDERS AS LEADERS

DAVID R. PHARR



David Pharr was born in Wilkesboro, NC. He attended FHC, Rio Grande College, and Southern Christian University. He and Peggy (Bunker) have four children; two sons are preachers. David has done local work in WV, OH, SC, and TN. He served as Director of ETSPM from 1988-1995 and is presently at Rock Hill, SC church, where he had previously served for 25 years. He holds several gospel meetings each year and speaks on several lecture programs. He is a former editor of *Carolina Christian*, current editor of *Carolina Messenger*, regular writer for *Spiritual Sword*, as well as articles for other publications. He has authored six books, including a correspondence course, *Getting to Know Jesus*.

It has been said that "What is everybody's business is nobody's business." Things do not get done unless someone takes the lead. No congregation can happily fulfill its mission without the right kind of leadership. The tragedy is that when there are not good leaders, there will inevitably be bad ones. A brother once made this point by saying, "Every pack has a lead dog!" Somebody is going to lead. It may be in the wrong direction, but there will be leadership. When there is a leadership crisis, the blame may be assigned to lack of qualified men. Or it may be because unqualified men have usurped the position. Sometimes the problem is that the elders are trying to lead in scriptural and effective ways, but are hindered by members who obstruct and resist.

Before going into some things regarding elders as leaders, I want to comment briefly on this matter of members who are a hindrance rather than a help. I am not talking only about those who are lukewarm and are unwilling to participate. They are a problem, of course, and always a challenge. Instead, our concern is with those who are active, but who have their own agenda and who really feel that they should be in charge. The world is in a time of upheaval and discontent. An iconoclastic spirit seeks to undermine many of the institutions and standards of the society. Numerous reports of suspicion and antagonism make us uncomfortable and uncertain about civil government. Traditions that have to some degree held society together are being abandoned. We are thinking of more than just the enormity of moral decline. Even among morally decent folk there seems to be widespread dissatisfaction with almost everything. Whether in reference to government, school, civic activities or the church, there is resentment of authority. It is an American "right" to speak against the president, the congress, the governor, etc. In the affairs of the world this may not be altogether bad, because some dissent is healthy. When, however, the virus of discontent infects the church and the scripturally appointed leadership must suffer backbiting and factional politics, the result will be a crippled leadership and either a dying or apostate church. All would do well to remember the caution of 1 Timothy 5:19. "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."

It is a sin to be "unruly" (1 Thess. 5:14).[1] Hebrews 13:17 is forceful on this point. "Obey them

that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." Elders rejoice in the joy that comes from work well done, when the church grows in faith and number. Grief comes with having to deal with sin. Grief comes from the nitpicking and backbiting that come from people who are disgruntled or have their own purposes. The best of elders are aware of their shortcomings, yet they grieve through many sleepless nights because of unjust and unhelpful criticism, as well as resistance to the good they are seeking to accomplish.

I was once given an assignment on what a congregation owes its elders. Several points came to mind, all of which would have a scriptural basis. I decided to develop just one point: that what the congregation owes to its elders is to **trust** them. This does not mean going along if elders pursue an evil path (See Acts 20:28-30.) Neither does it mean blind cooperation without an open door to the elders for suggestions and constructive criticism. But it does mean that the leadership often must consider factors that may not be known to others, sometimes things that involve personal confidences, and sometimes goals that look beyond the immediate. Elders must not be "lords over God's heritage" (I Pet. 5:3), but if the Lord had intended all matters of the church to be decided by a Greek city style of democracy, he would not have ordered that overseers be appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

LEADERSHIP AUTHORITY

The point is that we might have better leaders if we had better followers. Having said that, however, our attention is directed especially to some of the biblically mandated qualifications and responsibilities for congregational leadership. The eldership is not a political position. Requisites outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 limit the position to men who by character and experience will be the best leaders. Being such, the elders are supposed to lead. In the first place, that is implied in their designation as "overseers" (bishops). This oversight must always be exercised within the boundaries of biblical principles. But in the many decisions that must be made in regard to matters that are neutral and optional, authority has been vested in the properly ordained elders. It is sometimes argued that they only lead by teaching and example, but this position fails to consider what the Bible actually says. Certainly teaching and example are vital duties. But the Bible also speaks of their having "the rule over you" and members are instructed to "obey" and "submit" (Heb. 13:17). They have "oversight" authority (1 Pet. 5:2).

An example of such oversight is implied in the case of the funds which were sent to help with the famine needs of Judea. They collected money at Antioch "and sent it to the elders [in Judea] by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:29-30). The money delivered to Judea was entrusted to the oversight of the elders. Here is an interesting point about that. The Jerusalem church was already adjusted to having deacons to look after the "business" of charitable distributions (Acts 6:1ff). It

would seem reasonable that such appointed "servants" would be employed in the administration of the famine funds (and I would think they did become involved), but the primary responsibility for determining the use of the funds was with the elders, who might give assignments to others.

Further, that the administration overseen by elders covers more than their teaching ministry is evident from 1 Timothy 5:17. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Some work **especially** in teaching. They are to be given "double honor." The implication is that there are other elders whose work is not primarily focused on teaching.

PASTORS

In considering elders as leaders, we will give attention to their role as "pastors." Our translation uses "pastors" in one place for the same word that is elsewhere "shepherds" (Eph. 4:11). Maybe we sometimes give so much of our attention to the fact that the preacher is not the "pastor" that we overlook the tremendous implications in that fact that the elders, the overseers, **are** pastors, shepherds. Their oversight is over "the flock" (Acts 20:28). Our King James Version has that the overseers are "to feed the flock," but a better reading is that they are to "shepherd" the church.[2] This is the emphasis in 1 Pet. 5:2-3, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you [...] being examples to the flock" (NKJV). You will note that Peter sees a need to urge elders to take the lead willingly. Further, "not for filthy lucre" shows that self-interest should not be factored into decisions.

Instead everything should be in the eager ("ready") attitude ("mind") of one who serves.

A church asked me to give a lesson on qualifications for elders other than the points found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The church had completed a long study of those two passages and felt it might be helpful to consider some other qualities that should be found in an elder. Of course, one could take the various passages that define the duties and from them infer various points about the qualifications necessary to fulfill those duties. I decided, however, to give a lesson from Matthew 20:20-28. James and John, with their mother, wanted the chief positions in the kingdom "one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." When the others learned of this request, "they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." Jesus saw that the same selfish ambition infected them all. His rebuke defined the kind of servant leadership he expects in the church.

> But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:25-28).

Many are the problems that have plagued churches because men have had wrong ambitions. The Bible speaks of men who desire the work of overseeing (1 Timothy 3:1). It is a noble ambition to want to be an elder when that ambition is an ambition to serve. We have known of men who were "running for elder," that is, politicking in the church to get to be one. When the desire is to be the "boss," or to "have it my way," only harm can result. The way to leadership in Christ's church is in developing the spiritual traits that makes one effective in service. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

SHEPHERDS FAITHFUL VS. UNFAITHFUL

There are several terms that apply to the same office. We tend to favor the terms "elder" or "bishop," whereas the Lord often chose to use "shepherd" (pastor). This is evident in Old Testament designations of leaders and is how the Lord defined his own service (John 10) as well as the service of the leaders of a congregation.

Moses was a great leader, a shepherd of Israel, and he recognized how vital it was that a proper leader be chosen to replace him. A man was needed "which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:17). The one chosen was Joshua, but our point is that

Moses knew how necessary it was that there be a shepherd to lead. Notice too that this leadership was a stewardship. Moses acknowledged that it was "the congregation of the Lord." The same emphasis is in Acts 20:28 where elders are to shepherd the church which belongs to Christ, because he is the one who purchased it with his own blood.

Another great Old Testament example was David. He knew the heart and work of a shepherd, as we find so beautifully demonstrated in the twenty-third Psalm. Let us look at another place in the Psalms, however, to see how David was a great king because he was a faithful shepherd.

> He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the **integrity of his heart**; and guided them by the **skillfulness of his hands** (Psa. 78:70-72) [emphasis added, D. R. P.].

The king had been educated as a shepherd. God "took him from the sheep folds." He was a ruler over Israel, but like a shepherd he fed the people with integrity and skill. Leaders in the church must have integrity of heart. This is a shepherd's heart, a heart that puts the welfare of the sheep first. Leaders must also have leadership skills.

Other Old Testament sections reveal the tragedy of unfaithful shepherds. "Moreover it is

required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Shepherds must give account. This is what Hebrews 13:17 says about elders, that they must give account. The thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel has stinging condemnation for the unfaithful ruling shepherds of Israel.

> And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them (Ezek. 34:1-4).

They misunderstood the nature of their work. The late Franklin Camp summarized their failure as neglected duty, neglect of the sick and the weak, and neglect of the lost. He wrote, "Leadership is far more than demanding than that a thing be done. . . . Leadership is leading through proper avenues and in the right direction."[3]

SCRIPTURAL LEADERSHIP

Defining the essentials of pastoral leadership ought to involve everything the Bible teaches and might be outlined or expressed in other ways, but here are some practical points based on Bible principles.

In the first place, for men to be good leaders they must first of all be followers. The obvious point is that they must follow Christ. The centurion in Matthew 8:9 had authority over others, but he recognized that he himself was "under authority." The principle is that elders have authority, but they are also under authority. They cannot go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). This ought not to be disputed, but we have heard it argued that the elders might have authority to negate certain biblical restrictions. For example, it has been argued that elders can authorize women to preach and that women assuming that role are not usurping authority over men because the elders authorized it. Such elders would be usurping the authority of the Lord (1 Timothy 2:8-15).

Effective leaders must **know** the members. Jesus said the Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name (John 10:3). The great principle of 1 Cor. 8 and Romans 14 is that liberty must not trample the weak. Policies that may be scripturally acceptable may not always be practically effective. Not "being lords over God's heritage" requires measuring the feelings and capacities of the people. Knowing members requires listening to them. In various things there will be members who are better informed and who have wise

judgment. It is not surrendering authority to weigh suggestions and criticisms.

Shepherding involves **feeding** the sheep. This is the King James translation in Acts 20:28. This certainly includes teaching – teaching done by the elders themselves and teaching they arrange for others to do. One practical help in this is the use of a full-time preacher. With the advantage of training and ability, he assists them in the never ending and always vital work of educating and exhorting. The great church at Ephesus in its early years had elders. They also had a located preacher in Timothy. The arrangement is scriptural and when elders and preachers work together, it is an arrangement that is practical and profitable.

The shepherds must **guard** the flock. "Grievous wolves" lurk about. Elders should be prepared in both knowledge and disposition to "exhort and convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). It is significant that verse 10 gives elders the duty of stopping the mouths of false teachers. The liberal attitude is to give every heretic a hearing. Paul says to stop their mouths. Effective guardians must be informed. Elders should be aware of current issues, as well as the preachers, professors and papers that are causing problems. This includes the radicals to the right as well as the liberals to the left.

Pastors have a duty to **watch** for souls (Heb. 13:17). Account will have to be given for those who fall away. This brings to mind the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15. If the Good Shepherd is willing to seek and to save the one sheep, should not the

pastors of the local flock make like efforts for any who go astray? Watching always requires discipline. To watch is not merely to observe. Sometimes it may require corrective discipline, which can mean rebuking and even withdrawing of fellowship (2 Thess. 3:6, 14f).

Ministry to the personal needs of individuals is also involved. An example of this is in James 5:14-15. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." This probably involved anointing oil as a part of miraculous healing, which we assume was a gift given to some elders in the apostolic age. Such use of oil is named in Mark 6:13 in connection with healing miracles. I can imagine no ritual use of oil that would be of benefit today. The point, however, is that elders – then and now – should go to those with particular needs and pray with and for them. We have to keep in mind, though, that the member was told to "call for" (invite) the elders to come.

Elders must be **communicators**. Many problems have arisen because the people were not informed. Certainly some matters, such as people's personal problems, must be kept confidential, but members should not be expected to blindly follow policies without understanding them. They need to know what and why. If policies are to succeed, there must be cooperation and for there to be cooperation there must be information. In some cases even the preacher is left in the dark. How can he encourage

the brethren's support if he is not clear on what needs to be supported? Someone told of a preacher, unhappy over such a situation, who said, "If I am expected to carry the ball, I think I should at least be in the huddle."

Scriptural leaders will lead with **direction** – always with a **destination** in view. We fear that sometimes a flock is only being led around in circles! A congregation can hardly rise any higher than its leadership. It must be admitted that sometimes congregations are simply "keeping house for the Lord." There is no goal, no meaningful aims for either spiritual or numerical growth. I have never been too excited about announcing goals just for the sake of announcing goals. But a congregation needs more than just "more of the same." We do not know much about the details, but the church at Ephesus was about to be deleted from the list of Christ's churches because it had left its "first love" and was no longer involved in its "first works" (Rev. 2:1ff). At one time they had a strong eldership (Acts 20:17ff). What happened? It was not false teachers because they had been guarded against such (Rev. 2:2). Elders who lead with direction will plan for progress.

Successful leaders will **delegate** both duties and authority to others. Giving authority to others in order to expedite the work is not surrendering oversight. I read about a church that would not allow the janitor to order tissue paper without a meeting of the elders. The apostles quickly recognized that they could not micro-manage the charitable works of the church (Acts 6:1ff). Well-meaning elders have sometimes reduced the position of deacons to mere

names on stationary. Elders need to know that women sometimes have more sense about some things than they do. They need to recognize that guarding the flock is not primarily guarding the treasury. The delegation of duties expedites the work and encourages those who are involved.

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

It is understood that important decisions involving the congregation are to be made by the elders working in agreement, not by an elder acting alone. There should, of course, be sufficient confidence among the elders that one elder presented with an immediate need for action might proceed on his own. An example of this might be an emergency benevolence need. It might not be practical or reasonable to await a meeting with all the elders in order to make a decision. (We realize that deacons might have this responsibility, but it sometimes falls to an elder.) The point is that while there may be exceptions, generally elders confer with one another and make decisions as a group, as the eldership.

There is, however, a part of leading which by its nature is more personal and individual. Qualifications include ability to teach and proper example. The nurturing of individual members may demand the personal attention of a single elder. In many cases, it would be hardly possible for the elders as a group to give the personal encouragement and guidance needed in individual cases. Some members need a personal mentor, one who understands the background and special needs, one who, as a

shepherd, provides by compassion and example the guidance essential in that particular case.

Often what is called counseling has become the duty of the preacher, or in some cases a counseling specialist. This is not always bad. Preachers who have a solid foundation in the Scriptures certainly can give Bible answers. Brothers and sisters who are trained in scripturally based counseling methods may be needed for working through some problems. In moral and spiritual matters, however, it would be expected that an elder, or elders, might be the logical advisor(s).

In a congregation of even moderate size, one of the ever present challenges elders face is how to really get to know the people. All who have children know how different they can be. They will have different temperaments and different interests. In rearing them we learn that one is not motivated the same as another. The challenge to elders is to learn the people. This takes personal contact and quality time. It is unlikely that any one elder can provide this for every member. What he can and should do is to discover those sheep that might especially benefit by his attention and volunteer himself as their personal pastor.

CONCLUSION

It is not easy being an elder. It is regrettable that some otherwise good men are unwilling to prepare themselves or are unwilling to accept the responsibility because it is demanding and too often seemingly thankless work. So much is needed that

one may be tempted to think the task is impossible. Let us remember what Paul said to the Ephesian elders. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

What must be remembered is that there are some decisions for our lives that must be made looking beyond the immediate. Paul said, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). The reward for the faithful pastors' labors is named in 1 Pet. 5:4. "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

ENDNOTES

[1]All quotations are from the KJV unless otherwise indicated.

[2]"To shepherd," McCord's, also NKJV, NASB; "Be Shepherds," NIV.

[3]Franklin Camp, *Principles and Perils of Leadership,* (Birmingham: Roberts & Son, Inc.), pp. 52ff.

PREACHERS AS MINISTERS OF THE WORD

BILL NICKS



Bill Nicks was born in Nashville, TN. He is married to the former Gerry Petty, now in their 59th year. They have three children, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. He attended FHC (AA), Memphis State (BS), and ACC (MA). He has done local work in TN, TX, and MI; has taught at MI Christian College, Brown Trail School of Preaching, and ETSPM. He served as Missionary in Residence at FHU for one year. He and his family have served as missionaries in Nigeria (8 years), Liberia (4 years), Abaco and Eleuthera in the Bahamas (1 year), and Trinidad (7 years). He has made periodic trips to Nigeria and Liberia. He is presently working with a newly established congregation in Palm City, FL, and works regularly as Jail Minister at the Martin County jail, Stuart, FL. As of July 2002, thirty men and women have been baptized in this jail.

The word "minister" is from the Greek *diakonos*, which is also translated by the words, "servant" and, when applied to an official position in the church, "deacon." (1 Tim. 4:6; John 2:5, 9; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). All Christians are ministers because all are servants of God.

Jesus made a distinction in Matt. 20:20-28 between "minister" (*diakonos*) and "slave" or "bondservant" *(doulos)*. The mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John) solicited Jesus to allow

her sons to sit one on His right hand and one on His left in His kingdom. Jesus replied, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, we are able. He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink: but to sit at my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of My Father." Seeing that the ten were indignant concerning James and John, Jesus called the disciples unto him and said,

> Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great one exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your bondservant *[doulos]*: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto [*diakoneo]*, but to minister [*diakoneo]*, and to give his life a ransom for many." The important lesson we learn from this account is that God's servants are not to vie for preeminence in the kingdom, but to seek to humbly perform the most menial tasks. Paul explained this principle in Phillipians 2:2, calling it in verse 5 "the mind of Christ." He commanded that "ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself, not looking each of

you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

SOME SPECIAL MINISTRIES

Paul lists five special ministries in Eph. 4:11: "And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." He was describing the characteristics of the apostolic age when, through the laying on of the hands of the apostles, certain ones were endowed with miraculous powers, as recorded in 1 Cor. 12. He made it plain that such powers were temporary, "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The gifts were essential to the building up of the body while inspired men were writing the New Testament. When the message was completed, those things that were "in part," that is, the miraculous gifts, were to "cease" (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Since apostles and prophets were offices pertaining especially to miraculous gifts, the other ministries: evangelists, pastors (elders), and teachers still remain as special ministries in the church, not requiring miraculous gifts, but only ordinary gifts. Paul gave Timothy and Titus special instructions regarding these ongoing ministries.

Elders: These men were to be chosen by the church because they were willing to function in that "good work," and also because they were not novices, that is, old enough and experienced enough in the word and in the church to keep from pride that would lead them to "fall into the condemnation of the devil."

He also is to have other qualities such as "apt [able] to teach," "not covetous" and "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (1 Tim. 3:107; Tit. 1:5-11). Other words used for elders are presbyters, bishops, overseers, pastors, and shepherds. Always there is a plurality in each local church (Acts 14:23).

Deacons: This special class of men is "to hold the faith in a pure conscience" and to be proved and chosen if blameless. They are also to be husbands of one wife and rule their children and houses well (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Stephen and Philip evidently held this office in the early church and later became evangelists (Acts 6, 7, and 8). They serve under the oversight of the elders (overseers). In Acts 6, their ministry (*diakonia*) was to "serve tables." Their function is especially with the church's benevolence program.

Evangelists: (*euangelistas)* this special class of men is especially instructed in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. They are to "ware the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience" (1 Tim. 1:18f). They are to teach men to "pray in every place, holding up holy hands" and that "women adorn themselves in modest apparel," the kind "which becometh women professing godliness with all subjection [...] But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness" (1 Tim. 2:8-12). They are also to learn and teach "how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). They are to realize that we live in the "later times" during which some "give heed to

seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their conscience as with a hot iron, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:1-3). For that reason, the "good minister of Christ Jesus" will "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). He knows the time has come when "they will not endure sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3f). Therefore, he will "hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

As to his character, he will "fan the flame" of enthusiasm in him (2 Tim. 1:6). He will "be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord [...] but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8). As a "good soldier of Christ Jesus," he will not "entangle himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3f). He will gain respect from men by "handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). As one "that nameth the name of the Lord," he will "depart from unrighteousness" in order that he may "be a vessel of honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:19-21). He will "flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22). He will be "gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in

meekness correcting them that oppose themselves" that "God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). He will

> speak the things which befit the sound doctrine: that aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience: that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor[...] that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:1-5). He will also encourage the younger men "to be sober-minded: in all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Tit. 2:6-8). He will teach all to "be in subjection to rulers, to authorities," whether these are parents, teachers, elders, preachers, or policemen and governors (Tit. 3:1). He will get his "high," not from drugs or alcohol, but from "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He (God) poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Savior (Tit. 3:6).

Teachers: This class includes both men and women, the latter of which has a great responsibility for teaching other women and children (Tit. 2:3-5; Acts 18:26). All teachers are to be diligent students in order to "commit thou to faithful men (and women), who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

WHAT MAKES THE PREACHING OF THE WORD A SPECIAL MINISTRY FOR PREACHERS?

God always uses human instrumentality to make His will known to man. The angel of the Lord told Philip to go to the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza in order to contact the Ethiopian eunuch. Then the Spirit of the Lord commanded him to "go near, and join thyself to his chariot." That is all Philip needed to "preach Jesus" to him from the text he was reading in Isaiah 53, which the eunuch did not understand (Acts 8:26-38). The result was an honest man with a good heart was converted to the Lord by being instructed by a fellow human being in the way of the Lord, and then obeying it when he learned the truth. In the same manner, Cornelius was told to "send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house" (Acts 11:14). Why did not the angel or the Spirit tell the eunuch instead of sending Philip? Why did not the angel tell Cornelius what to do to be saved? Paul answers these questions in 2 Cor. 4:7. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves." When Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, he told him to "enter into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts

9:6). Then he instructed Ananias to go to him and tell him the plan of God for all men. The praying, believing, penitent Saul was told by Ananias, "Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:12-16).

Because the gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), therefore, the gospel must be proclaimed by men in order that the power may be applied to sinful men. Jesus left this charge to his apostles and also to us, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15f). Paul commanded Timothy to "preach the word," not something kin to the word, but the word in all its truth and all its power and its glory (2 Tim. 4:2). He said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). The curse of God rests on those who tamper with the gospel to pervert it in any way (Gal. 1:6-9).

The scriptures regarding preaching imply a special ministry.

1. To preach, or proclaim the glad tidings, or gospel (*euangelidzo*)[1] (Luke 4:18; Acts 13:32; Rom. 10:15; Gal. 1:6-9).
2. To herald, proclaim as a herald (*kerusso*) (Matt. 24:14, "preached" in ASV, KJV and NKJV; Mark 16:16, "preach"; Luke 4:18; 1 Pet. 3:19; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 13:24.
3. To proclaim (ASV, preach in KJV, NKJV) (*katangello*) (1 Cor. 9:14).

4. To preach (KJV, NKJV), publish abroad (ASV), *(diangello)* (Luke 9:60).
5. To speak (ASV), preach (KJV, NKJV), (*laleo*) Mark 2:2.
6. To discourse (ASV), preach (KJV, NKJV), (*dialegomai*), Acts 20:7.
7. The proclamation, preaching (KJV, ASV), message (NKJV) (*kerugma*) (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:4; 15:14).
8. The word (2 Tim. 4:2), the preaching (1 Cor. 1:18), the message (NKJV) (*logos).*

SOME CHARACTERSTICS OF A GOOD MINISTER OF THE WORD

First of all, he should be a man of character, sound in morals. Great emphasis is placed on this in the New Testament. He must be "pure in heart" (Matt. 5:8) for if not, the whole man is "defiled" (Matt. 15:18-20). His heart is "cleansed by faith" (Acts 15:9), his life is changed by repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), and his relationship to God is changed when he is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26, 27). His soul has been purified by "obedience to the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22) and then he has been "added to the church" by the Lord (Acts 2:47) because he "obeyed from the heart that form of teaching, whereunto he was delivered and made free from sin" (Rom. 6:17, 18). He is now a man of God to take God's word to the lost and to edify the saved. Tom Holland said:

> A superficial response to the gospel call is not sufficient to make a true son of God; there must be obedience from the heart to the form of doctrine. A man who

> plans to serve Christ must first be converted to Christ.[2]

Batsell Barrett Baxter quoted Henry Ward Beecher as saying:

> I say, first, the preacher ought to be a man who is fruitful in moral ideas, has a genius for them, as distinguished from every other kind. He must live by faith, the sense of the infinite and the invisible; the sense of something else besides what we see with the physical eyes, the sense of God, of eternity, and of heaven.[3]

The Yale Lectures approached the subject. They were: (1) piety, or spiritual grasp of that which he preached; (2) general righteousness of life; and (3) his demonstrating or exemplifying the type of life which he would have others attain.[4] He then quotes James Stalker as saying:

> I should like to be allowed to say to you, gentlemen, with all the earnestness of which I am capable, that the prime qualification for a minister is that he be himself a religious man – that, before he begins to make God known, he should first himself know God...It is not because our arguments for religion are not strong enough that we fail to convince, but because the argument is wanting which never fails to tell; and this is religion itself. People everywhere can

appreciate this, and nothing can supply the lack of it. The hearers may not know why their minister, with all his gifts, does not make a religious impression on them; but it is because he is not himself a spiritual power.[5]

Baxter quotes from Robert F. Horton on the same subject:

I conceive [...] the real preacher of the Word as one who is before all other things occupied in keeping clean the vessel, which is to deliver and distribute the things of God, "purging himself from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." His chief concern is not to prepare sermons, but to prepare himself to deliver sermons.[6]

Broadus has this to say regarding the eloquence of preachers:

Eloquence is a serious thing. You cannot say that a discourse, or a paragraph is very amusing and very eloquent. The speaker who is to deserve this high name must have moral earnestness. He may sometimes indulge, where it is appropriate, in the light play of delicate humor, or give forth sparks of wit, but these must be entirely incidental, and subordinate to a thorough seriousness and earnestness.[7]

The above statement of Broadus is no doubt what Paul was speaking about when he said, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). The character of the preacher is of prime importance in the building up of the church. C. E. Jefferson says:

> Sermons are bullets. How far they go does not depend upon the text or upon the structure of the sermon, but upon the manhood of the preacher. The building of the preacher becomes, then, a matter of tremendous moment to everyone interested in the building of the church.[8]

A preacher must always give God the glory for any work he may do in His ministry. Paul sets that example over and over again in his work as an apostle and minister of the gospel of Christ. When returning from his first missionary journey, he reported to the sending church at Antioch in Syria by rehearsing "all things that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). In speaking of the agricultural metaphor Paul used in 1 Cor. 3:5-7, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase," O.P. Baird said:

> The lesson Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand is needed now in carrying out the Lord's mission. People are sometimes honored more than God.

> When undertaking to spread the gospel in the world, one must never forget that the power to save is in God through Christ and people are simply the messengers of the good news.[9]

This is the hallmark of a gospel preacher's character. He does not take credit to himself for what he does, but gives it to God.

Second in importance, in my view, is the preacher's love for the truth. The true gospel preacher will be so wedded to the Scripture that he will believe intensely in its inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and that it is all-sufficient to accomplish what God intended. In sharpening this view, Philip Slate comments:

> If one takes seriously the principle of "limiting the ground of religious authority to the Bible," that would place one in a position of maximum effectiveness in relating the message of Scripture to the various cultures of the world. If Scripture is rightly understood (exegesis) and applied according to sound principles (hermeneutics), the outcome should logically be "just Christians." ...this principle appears to have a negative as well as a positive application, viz., that one must not bind as essential to fellowship with God or man what cannot be shown to be a permanent feature of the Christian system. This was the view held by Zwingli as over against Luther and Calvin who felt items to be

> permitted if not explicitly forbidden. Most "Scripture only" advocates among missionaries evidently have not thought through the implications of this position.[10]

There are several reasons given in the Bible as to why Jesus came to the earth. He came to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), "to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), and to be "approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you [...] him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:22-24). But the reason most permanent for our sake that He came to earth was to reveal the mind of God in a book called "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. 4:13). This body of knowledge, completed in 96 A.D., said Paul, would enable us to attain a "full grown man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro [...] with every wind of doctrine [...] but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:14, 15). Jesus said to Philip that he came to "show us the Father" and that we are to believe that "he is in the Father, and the Father in me; the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me doeth his works" (John 14:8-10). Thus, regarding the word he inspired his apostles to say is truth. "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). It is this

body of knowledge to which the man of God must be devoted. He must "seek" the truth (Matt. 7:7), "come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4), "speak the truth" (John 8:32), "rejoice in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6), "be ministers of God [...] in the word of truth" (2 Cor. 6:4, 7) let "the truth of Christ" be "in me" (2 Cor. 11:10), "do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor. 13:8), and "love God (and His truth) with all your heart, soul, strength and mind" (Matt. 22:37; Psa. 119:97) and "on his law meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:2). His field is the body of truth that deals with religious, spiritual, and moral truth. Although his spirit must be basically positive, due to the prevalence of sin and error, there are times he must have the courage to "reprove, rebuke and exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2).

In discussing whether preachers have largely resigned from their role of pointing out sin to their members, Dr. Karl Menninger makes this appropriate comment:

> If the moribund term "sin" with its full implications is ever revived, we will all have to have a voice in it. But the clergy (sic) will have reasserted an authority for leadership in the moral field which they have let slip from their hands. It is their special prerogative to study sin – or whatever they call it – to identify it, to define it, to warn us about it, and to spur measures for combating and rectifying it. Have they been diverted or discouraged from their task? Have they succumbed to the feeling that law and science and

> technology have proved morality and moral leadership irrelevant?[11]

In commenting on the importance of the word as opposed to glorifying the messenger of the word, P.T. Forsyth says, "The church does not live by its preachers, but by its Word...We have no business to worship the elements, which means, in this case, to idolize the preacher...To be ready to accept any kind of message from a magnetic man is to lose the gospel in mere impressionism."[12]

Another desirable quality in a gospel preacher is enthusiasm. Even Timothy, with inspired gifts from the apostle Paul, could not perform well unless he could "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). As Jeremiah of old, he must have "in his heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones" which Jeremiah said he was "weary with forbearing and I cannot contain" (Jer. 20:9). This burning fire was described by the late Ira North as being "powerful as dynamite and as contagious as the measles. It is what makes water run up hill." How can a preacher encourage others to have enthusiasm for the work of the Lord if he shows none?

A quality held by all great servants of God is courage of conviction. It will take courage to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2), and to deal with specific sins such as those mentioned in Gal. 5:19-21 and 1 Cor. 6:9-11. Tom Holland comments:

> The preacher must, above all, seek to please Christ and work for the spiritual welfare of men, not for social approval. It is not an act of courage for a preacher to take "pulpit advantage" and say things about a person that the preacher would be afraid to say to that person in a face-to-face confrontation. If he has a personal conflict with someone he should "go and tell him the fault between the two" of them (Matt. 18:15).[13]

Perhaps one of the most attractive qualities in a preacher is a disposition of compassion, that pathos of feeling and empathy for all who are in the sin predicament. One can sense whether he has a genuine love for souls and a desire to save a soul from sin. Jesus had "compassion for a scattered and distressed" multitude (Matt. 9:36). Paul expressed this feeling toward people with whom he worked: "But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:7, 8). "Compassion is not a violation of courage; it is rather a leavening influence that keeps courage from becoming harshness."[14]

The preacher must be of an industrious nature. He will need to be a self-starter. The brethren are supporting him to do a work, and he must enjoy his work to the extent of giving hours to study and meditation, as well as visiting those needing help. If he is truly "transformed by the renewing of his mind"

(Rom. 12:2), he will be "not slothful in diligence," but "fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). He will become knowledgeable by his studious habits and able to "be ready always to give answer (*apologia*, defense) to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Some negative qualities are: (1) not greedy of money (1 Tim. 6:9-11, 17-19; Phil. 2:19-22; Acts 20:33f); (2) not irritable or irascible (Phil. 3:1; 4:4f; 2 Tim. 2:24f). He must be "gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves"; (3) he must not be eremitic. Webster defines an "eremite" as a "hermit or recluse." The gospel preacher is a "people person" and shows that he loves to interact with others in the greatest work in the world, with the greatest people in the world, the people "for God's own possession, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14).

The writer has been preaching the gospel both at home and abroad for sixty years. He has never regretted the decision to devote his life to the greatest work in the world, that of saving souls.

ENDNOTES

[1] "The Analytical Greek Lexicon" (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons).

[2] "Preaching Principles and Practice," Tom Holland (Brentwood, TN: Holland Publications, 1974), p. 32.

[3] "Heart of the Yale Lectures," Batsell Barrett Baxter. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947), p. 28.

[4] Ibid., p. 31.

[5] Ibid., p. 31.

[6] Ibid., p. 34.

[7] "Preparation and Delivery of Sermons," John A. Broadus. (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1905), p. 6.

[8] Op. cit., Baxter, p. 23.

[9] "Perspectives of Worldwide Evangelization," edited by Philip Slate, s.v., "Mission and Motive in Metaphors of Paul," by O.P. Baird, p. 11 (Searcy, AR: Resources Publications, 1988).

[10] Ibid., s.v. "The Use of Scripture in Indigenization," Philip Slate, pp. 28, 29.

[11] "Whatever Became of Sin?" Karl Menninger. (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1973), pp. 192, 193.

[12] Op. cit., Baxter, p. 26.

[13] Op. cit., Holland, pp. 35, 36.

[14] Op. cit., Holland, p. 36.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

Words fail us in expressing our appreciation at the invitation to appear on this lectureship extended by brother James Meadows and the elders of the Karns Church of Christ. We have long appreciated the great work done at ETSPM and have been privileged to support students in their studies here where I preach in Pacific, Missouri.

The subject assigned to us is "The Second Coming of Christ," one of the greatest doctrines taught in the Word of God. It has been well said that the theme of the Bible is: "Jesus is coming" [the Old Testament], "Jesus is here" [the Gospels], and "Jesus is coming again" [the rest of the New Testament].

Thus, it can be rightly said that two-thirds of the New Testament is devoted to our subject today! That should underscore its importance in our minds. The books of Acts through Revelation are meant to prepare Christians for the second coming of Christ.

Sadly, it is also one of the most abused and misunderstood doctrines of the Bible and such has been the case from practically the beginning of the church. The Thessalonian church evidently misunderstood Paul's teachings on the second coming in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, thus necessitating the epistle of 2 Thess., the apostle devoted entirely to this doctrine. Therein, Paul said, "*Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come*" (2 Thess. 2:1-2).[1]

From the second century onward, the Lord's church has been plagued with the false doctrine of premillennialism. Though its influence has ebbed at various times across the centuries, it's popularity is currently at an all-time high. This is due chiefly to two factors: (a) the millennial mania that swept the religious world as we approached Y2K; and (b) a series of novels entitled "The Left Behind Series" by evangelical authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins which have popularized premillennialism. There have been ten books printed in this series so far (twelve are planned) and every one of them has been a number one bestseller. The adult series alone has sold over 30,000,000 copies. When you combine this with the companion series of novels for children, the movies,

comic books, and other merchandise produced in connection with it, you can easily see how popular premillennialism has become (not to mention how lucrative for Jenkins and LaHaye). Space does not permit a review of "The Left Behind Series" here, but the interested reader should log onto www.pacificcoc.org for a response to the first nine books written by this author.

What is premillennialism? It is a false theory that purports to teach what will happen leading up to the final return of Christ to this earth to establish the kingdom of God for a thousand years. It is a dangerous doctrine that denies the kingdom of heaven (in the form of the church) is a present reality; denies that Jesus is now reigning as king on David's throne; makes liars of the Old Testament prophets, as well as John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and His apostles and prophets; denigrates the church of our Lord; confuses people with sensationalistic propaganda regarding Armaggedon, the Antichrist, the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, and the millennial reign of Christ; and makes a mockery of Bible prophecy, particularly the book of Revelation. We will be refuting various aspects of this heresy as we set forth what the Bible *really* teaches about the second coming of Christ. Brethren, we may as well get ready now to fight premillennialism again in the church during the first half of the 21st century just as we had to in the first half of the 20th century, given the determined effort of the change-agents to drag us into fellowship with the denominations and the increasing exposure of brethren to this heresy through avenues like "The Left Behind Series."

Let us now examine the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* of our Lord's return.

WHO IS COMING BACK?

The answer to our first question is self-evident, of course, and that answer is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Of course, some deny that Jesus is personally coming back. This number includes atheists, agnostics, modernists, liberals, Jews, Muslims, and other non-Christian religions. Sadly, it also includes those who consider themselves religious conservatives, but have been duped by the false doctrine of realized eschatology. Also known as the A.D. 70 theory, this heresy teaches that all Bible prophecy related to the second coming of Christ (a.k.a. eschatology) has been fulfilled (or realized) at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. These false teachers contend that the second coming of Jesus occurred in A.D. 70 and thus He will not be coming back personally at any time in the future.[2]

But in contrast to this, the New Testament plainly prophecies the personal second advent of Jesus Christ in many places. For space's sake, consider just a few of these:

- But as the days of Noah were, **so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.** For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the

flood came and took them all away, **so also will the coming of the Son of Man be** (Matt. 24:37-39).

- [S]ince it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us **when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels**, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:6-8).
- Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "**Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints** [...]" (Jude 14).
- And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him **He will appear a second time**, apart from sin, for salvation (Heb. 9:27-28).[3]

WHEN IS JESUS COMING BACK?

In spite of crystal clear Scriptural warnings to the contrary, it has always been a source of great amazement to me that there have been those, usually infected with premillennialism, who have tried across the centuries to predict the date of the second coming of Christ. Sadly, their numbers are legion, as are those who have been deceived by them. Consider just a few examples:[4]

- A second century heretical cult called the Montanists predicted that the second coming would occur in the second century.
- Mass hysteria broke out in Europe in 999 A.D. as thousands expected the millennial reign of Christ to begin in 1000 A.D.
- Catholic "Father" Martinek Hauska predicted that Jesus would return in 1420.
- "Mother" Ann Lee, founder of the Shakers, declared that *she* was the returned Christ in 1830!
- Baptist preacher William Miller made two false predictions about the second coming. First, he claimed Jesus would return between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When history proved him wrong, he recalculated and set the date for October 22, 1844. He was wrong again, admitted his error, and got out of the date-setting business. Unfortunately, one of his disciples, Ellen G. White, picked up the pieces of the Millerite movement and formed it into the Seventh Day Adventists.[5]
- Joseph Smith, Jr., the founder of Mormonism, predicted in 1835 that the coming of the Lord would occur within 56 years. Later, in Smith's presence and with his approval, Smith's father predicted his son would continue in the priesthood until Christ returned. But he was murdered in 1844 and the second coming did not occur.[6]
- Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, predicted that the Lord would return in October 1874. When that failed, he predicted "the Rapture" would occur

in 1910 and Armageddon and the second coming would be in 1914.

- Russell's successor as president of the Watchtower Society, Judge Joseph Rutherford, predicted the resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in 1925 which would begin "the earthly phase of the kingdom" over which they would rule. They even bought a house for them to live in! Not surprisingly, the patriarchs never moved in, but Rutherford did! Rutherford's 1920 book, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, in which the above "prophecy" can be found, was so titled because it predicted the imminent establishment of the Lord's earthly millennial kingdom during which there would be no death. The title alone is an eloquent refutation of its own claims!
- Even these failures did not discourage the Jehovah's Witnesses. They have also predicted that Armaggedon and the thousand-year reign of Christ would begin in 1942 and then in 1975.
- The sensationalistic Pentecostal preacher William Branham predicted that the millennium would begin in 1977.
- Like "Mother" Ann Lee before him, David Koresh, leader of the Branch Dividians, declared himself to be the second coming of Christ before the cult destroyed itself after the tragic confrontation in Waco, TX with the FBI in 1993.
- The Korean Hyoo-gyo movement took out a full-page ad in the October 20, 1991 issue of *USA Today* to proclaim "RAPTURE,

OCTOBER 28, 1992, JESUS IS COMING IN THE AIR."[7]

- Edgar Whisenant wrote *Eighty-eight Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be In 1988* and sold 4.5 million copies of it world-wide. When 1988 came and went with no rapture, Whisenant simply revised his dates and published another book, *The Final Shout: Rapture Report 1989*. He has reprinted this book every year since, simply changing the dates for the Lord's second advent.
- Harold Camping's best-seller *1994?* set the date for the great tribulation between May 21, 1988-September 6, 1994; he then set the second coming sometime between September 15-27, 1994.[8]
- Third Wave Pentecostal preacherette Marilyn Agee has set several dates for the end, including May 31, 1998; June 7, 14, 21, 1998; September 20, 1998; May 21-22, 1999; May 30, 1999; and June 20, 1999. Her most recent prediction is September 12, 2007.[9]

Why is all of this date-setting (and we have barely scratched the surface with the above examples) so surprising and disheartening? For the simple reason that it is a bold-faced contradiction of many verses which plainly state that **no one knows** when Jesus is coming back. Christ Himself settled this matter once and for all when He said, "*But of that day and hour **no one knows**, neither the angels, nor the Son, but only the Father*" (Mark 13:32; cf. Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7). Despite the Lord's unequivocal declaration that "no one knows" when He will return except God the Father, false teachers like Whisenant,

Camping, Agee, and others say, "We know!" Is it not astonishing how these date-setters and other premillennialists will diligently search the Lord's predictions in Matthew 24-25 for "the signs of the times" of His second coming when He Himself said He did not know when it would be?

To emphasize the unexpectedness of our Savior's return, the New Testament repeatedly compares it to "*a thief in the night*" (Matt. 24:42-44; Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15). Just as the coming of the thief is unannounced and unexpected, even so will be the second coming of Christ. Jesus explained the meaning of His own illustration when He said:

> Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Matt. 24:42-44).

Just as one cannot predict the coming of the thief, one cannot predict when Jesus will come back. All one can do is be prepared for it. Hence, our Lord commanded us to live lives of faithfulness and obedience so that we might be saved eternally when He comes again "*to receive you to Myself*" (John 14:3). To His unfaithful, unprepared servants, Christ issued this somber warning: "*the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for*

him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"(Matt. 24:50-51).

How do these date-setters try to "get around" these plain passages of God's word? They usually employ one of three tactics. First, premillennialists generally divide the second advent of Christ into two parts: (a) the Rapture, which is a secret, invisible coming of the Lord wherein He will mysteriously "snatch away" the church, both the living and the dead, to be with him in heaven (they often call this "the blessed hope" of Titus 2:13)[10]; (b) the second coming, wherein Christ will set up his 1000-year kingdom on the earth (often called by them "the glorious appearing," of Titus 2:13). Between these two phases of the second advent will be the reign of the Antichrist and the tribulation, culminating in the battle of Armageddon.[11]

Many premillennialists insist that what we cannot know "the day and hour" of is "the glorious appearing," but that we *can* know the date of the Rapture. This "argument" will not convince many thinking people. After all, one only has to add seven years (the length of the tribulation according to most premillennialists) to the date of the Rapture (whenever that happens) to know *exactly* when "the glorious appearing" of Christ will be. That simple calculation makes a liar out of the Son of God who said "no one knows" when the second coming will be!

Second, other premillennialists teach that while we cannot know "the day and hour" of the second

advent, Jesus did not say we could not know the week, month or year. Thus, many date-setters give only the month or the year of the second coming. Such Scripture-twisting nonsense is refuted by the apostle Paul in 1 Thess. 5:1-2: "*But concerning* ***the times and the seasons****, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*" The reason the Thessalonian brethren needed no further instruction concerning "the times and the seasons" of "the day of the Lord" was because there was nothing further Paul could teach them! That day would come "as a thief in the night," unannounced and unexpected. That is all any of us can know about it, namely, that "the times and the seasons" as well "the day and hour" of the second coming are known only to the Father.

A third class of date-setters could be better described as date-*suggesters*. They will acknowledge that no one should set specific dates, but will then proceed to strongly suggest that the second coming is right around the corner. They suggest we can know the general time of the second coming. Take Hal Lindsey, a very popular premillennialist whose books have sold millions of copies, for example. In his first bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (written in 1970), Lindsey interpreted the parable of the fig tree in Matt. 24:32-33 to be a prophecy of the rebirth of Israel on May 14, 1948. He then said:

> Jesus said that this would indicate that He was "at the door," ready to return. Then He said, "Truly I say to you, *this generation* will not pass away until all

> these things take place" (Matt. 24:34, NASB).
>
> What generation? Obviously, in context, the generation that would see the signs–chief among them the rebirth of Israel. A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all of these things could take place. Many scholars who have studied Bible prophecy all of their lives believe that this is so (emp. in original).[12]

Simple mathematics will enable one to see that Lindsey was predicting that Jesus would return around 1988. But notice how he qualified his teachings: "**If** this is a correct deduction, then within forty years **or so** of 1948, all of these things **could** take place" (emp. added). Later in the same book, he wrote, "When will the Rapture occur? We don't know. No one knows. But God knows. However, we believe that according to all the signs, we are in the general time of His coming."[13]

Another example is found on the back cover of his book, *The 1980's: Countdown To Armageddon*. In bold-faced, capital letters, we are told, "**WE ARE THE GENERATION THE PROPHETS WERE TALKING ABOUT! WE HAVE WITNESSED BIBLICAL PROPHECIES COME TRUE...WE ARE THE GENERATION THAT WILL SEE THE END TIMES...AND THE RETURN OF JESUS**." But inside the book, Lindsey hedges his bets by saying, "I believe many people will be shocked by what is

happening right now and by what will happen in the very near future. *The decade of the 1980's could very well be the last decade of history as we know it* (emp. in original)"[14] Now his predictions are couched as what "I believe [...] could [...] happen in the very near future."

Other popular premillennial speculators like Tim LaHaye, Jack Van Impe, Harold Camping, Grant Jeffrey, and others, play similar shell games as Lindsey. Discerning readers are not likely to be fooled by such double talk. The difference between a date-*setter* and a date-*suggestor* is one of degree, not kind. Evangelical B. J. Oropeza asked a good question, "Why then do many Christian teachers, knowing that date-setting is unbiblical, flirt with the practice?"[15] 1 Thess. 5:1-2 rebukes these date-suggestors also as it reminds us we cannot know even "*the times or the seasons*" of the second coming.

To sum up, then, the Bible teaches that the "when" of the second coming is unknown and unknowable.

WHERE WILL THE SECOND COMING OCCUR?

As we have already noted, premillennialists believe that when Jesus returns, He will come all the way back down to the earth and establish His millennial kingdom over all mankind. They typically appeal to Zech. 14:4 to argue this: "*And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very*

large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south."

Space does not permit a detailed exegesis of this lengthy and complex chapter of the book of Zechariah. But the following points should be emphasized. Zechariah is an apocalyptic book which employs graphic symbolism and visions to reveal and emphasize certain truths. It is a cardinal error to literalize such passages, but this is what premillennialists do over and over again and their perversion of Zech. 14:4 is a prime example of it. Yet, they are not even consistent in their error. They will insist on taking verse four literally right down to the Mount of Olives actually splitting in two when the Lord's foot touches down on it. Yet very few are willing to literalize verses 16-18 with its mention of horses, camels, donkeys, Egypt, Canaanites (an extinct race) and keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. Such an interpretation would place it in contradiction with the New Testament which declares that the Old Law with its sacrifices and feasts have been fulfilled in Christ, nailed to the cross and taken out of the way, and replaced by the New Covenant (cf. Col. 2:14-17; Gal. 3:19-25; Heb. 8:1-9:14; Heb. 10:1-10).

Furthermore, such a literal interpretation places Zech. 14:4 in conflict with New Testament passages like 1 Thess. 4:16-17: *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (cf. Rev. 1:7). The

apostles Paul and John both taught that believers will rise to meet the Lord in the clouds. There is no Biblical evidence that Jesus Christ will ever set foot on the earth again. Quite the contrary. In 2 Peter 3:10-12, the apostle Peter taught that when "*the day of the Lord*" occurs (which he equated with "*His coming*," [v. 4], "*the day of judgment*" [v. 7], and "*the day of God*" [v. 12]), "*both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" and "the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.*" The second coming of Christ is the last day of human history, the judgment day, the end of the world! There will be nothing left for the Lord to set foot on, much less reign over for a thousand years!

What, then, does Zech. 14:1-4 refer to? We agree with Homer Hailey who wrote:

> The more probable explanation is that the Lord is here pointing to the spiritual Jerusalem as the capital of His spiritual kingdom (cf. Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26) and of the assault upon it by the world. Daniel described such an attack on the saints by the "little horn" of the fourth world power, in which the saints were given into his hand (7:21). In his vision on Patmos, John saw this fulfilled in the persecution of the saints by imperial Rome (Rev. 13:7). This does not exhaust Zechariah's prophecy, for his description is that of the conflict which would come time after time. "The residue," which is used of Jehovah's remnant (Mic. 5:3; Zeph. 2:9), would

never be cut off from spiritual Jerusalem.

This attack by the world on His spiritual citadel affords Jehovah an opportunity to go forth and fight against those nations in defense of His own city and people. "As when he fought in the day of battle" looks back to the time when Jehovah had come to the rescue of His oppressed saints (cf. Hab. 3). As Jehovah had fought for them in ancient times, so would He fight again. The presence of Jehovah is indicated by His standing "in that day," the day in which He fights against the enemy nations, "upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem." The purpose of His standing upon the Mount of Olives is that the Lord may provide a means of salvation for His saints. Half the mountain will remove toward the north and half toward the south. By the great valley the people of the besieged city may flee. "The valley of my mountains" is the valley provided by the two halves of the mountain, the northern and the southern...In their flight Jehovah will come with His holy angels to fight for them. Jehovah stood by His saints as they were scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8); He brought Jerusalem to an end by the Romans (Matt. 24:30-31); He cast the beast, the Roman Empire, and the false prophet, paganism, into the

> lake of fire (Rev. 19:11-21). These are only a few that illustrate the Lord's fulfilling of the prophecy.[16]

Where, then, will the second coming take place? Not on the earth, which will be destroyed, but in the clouds, where we will "*always be with the Lord*" (1 Thess. 4:17) in the heavenly homes our Savior has prepared for us (John 14:1-3).

HOW IS CHRIST COMING BACK?

No sooner had Christ ascended back into heaven than two angels appeared to the apostles and prophesied His second coming. In Acts 1:11, they said, "*Men of Jerusalem, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come* ***in like manner*** *as you saw Him go into heaven.*"

We have emphasized the words "in like manner" above because they are key to understanding the "how" of the second coming of Christ. J. W. McGarvey suggested, "It should be observed that the angels stated not merely that Jesus would *come* again, but that he would come *in like manner* as they had seen him go; that is, visibly and in his glorified humanity. It is a positive announcement of a literal and visible second coming."[17] Wayne Jackson further explains the significance of this phrase:

> The phrase "so in like manner" emphatically affirms Christ's *literal* second coming, together with the *visible*

> manner of it. This is hard evidence for the fact that the second coming of the Lord will not be an *invisible* coming (as in an alleged "rapture"). Nor will it be a mere *providential* coming, such as occurred in A.D. 70 when the Lord "came" in judgment upon Jerusalem (cf. Matthew 24:30), nor yet will it be a *representative* coming, via the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (cf. Matthew 16:28; John 14:18).
>
> [Note: The verbs reflecting vision (9-11) are interesting. As the disciples were "looking" (*blepo*–a look, glance), Jesus disappeared in a cloud; as they were "looking steadfastly" (*atenizo*–an intense look), two angels stood by them. The angels asked why they kept on "looking" (*emblepo*–to look earnestly), because just as they "beheld" (*theaomai*–a deliberate vision which interprets) Jesus go, so He would return.][18]

Thus far in our study of the second coming we have learned that Jesus will return literally, bodily, visibly, and in the clouds. But there are a few more facts revealed in Scripture regarding the manner of His second coming.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is returning *audibly*. In 1 Thess. 4:16, Paul taught, "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.*" Paul also

mentioned "*the last trumpet*" heralding the resurrection in 1 Cor. 15:52. These audible phenomena will announce the return of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to the whole world!

Strangely enough, 1 Thess. 4:17 is the "sugarstick" passage of premillennialists when it comes to the Rapture because it mentions our being "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air. Our English word "rapture" comes from a Latin word meaning "to catch up." Hal Lindsey said of the Rapture, "It will be the living end. The ultimate trip."[19] An odder passage could not have been chosen by premillennialists as a "proof-text" for their imaginary rapture. A simple look at verse sixteen would have saved us all a lot of trouble: "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven* ***with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God****: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.*" 1 Thess. 4:16 has rightly been called the noisiest verse in the Bible! Contrast that with Lindsey's description of the Rapture, "only the Christians see Him–it's a mystery, a secret."[20] There is nothing secret or silent about the return of the Lord described by Paul in these verses![21]

The Bible also teaches that the second coming will be *universally apparent*. Everyone will know about it when it happens. There will be no need to broadcast it on TV, radio, or the Internet. Revelation 1:7 says, "*Behold, He is coming with clouds,* ***and every eye will see Him****, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*" Jesus Himself warned:

> Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. **For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be** (**Matt. 24:23-27**).

Finally, the New Testament teaches that when Jesus returns, He will be accompanied by all the angels of heaven. The Lord taught, "*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory*" (Matt. 25:31; cf. Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 2 Thess. 1:7; Heb. 1:6; Jude 14). Considering that the heavenly host are "*an innumerable company*" (Heb. 12:22) that will indeed be a glorious sight! What a contrast with His first coming into this world! Though angels announced Jesus's first advent, it was but to humble shepherds (Luke 2:8-14), but when He comes again, they will shout it to the whole world! The first time He came, the King of Kings was born a helpless infant to poor parents in a small Jewish village and virtually no one took notice. But the second time He comes, it will be as a mighty King and Judge with the entire host of heaven at His side! No wonder Paul called the second coming (minus the premillennial perversions) "*the blessed hope and **glorious** appearing of our*

great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2:13; cf. Rev. 19:11-21).

But the angels will not be mere window-dressing or an honor guard. In the parables of the dragnet, Christ said, "*So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*" (Matt. 13:49-50; cf. Matt. 13:41-43).

How is Christ coming back? He is coming back literally, visibly, bodily, audibly, universally, and gloriously, accompanied by all the holy angels.

WHY IS CHRIST COMING BACK? *WHAT* WILL HAPPEN?

We have already answered these questions in part earlier in this essay. But let us summarize this information here. Why is Jesus coming back?

1. To raise *all* the dead (1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 20:11-13). Contrary to the multiple resurrections taught by premillennialism (one at the Rapture, another at "the glorious appearing," and that of the wicked dead at the end of the millennium), the New Testament teaches a general resurrection of all the dead at the second coming. Christ taught, "*Do not marvel at this; **for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth**--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of*

condemnation" (John 5:28-29). Likewise, the apostle Paul affirmed, "*there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*" (Acts 24:15). Four times in John 6, our Lord said that the resurrection would occur "*at the last day*" (v. 39, 40, 44, 54), while Paul said it would be heralded by "*the last trumpet*" (1 Cor. 15:52). Christ also taught that the judgment would be on "*the last day*" in John 12:48, thus teaching that the resurrection would occur on the judgment day, which again contradicts premillennialism. Since there are no days after the last day and no trumpets blown after the last trumpet, there certainly cannot be 1000 years of history left after the resurrection!

2. To transform the living. What of those of us who are alive when the Lord comes back? Paul answered that question in 1 Cor. 15:51-53, "*Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*" (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
3. To judge all men. As we have already learned, the angels will divide all people into two camps: the saved and the lost. The saved will be ushered into eternal life in heaven, but the wicked will be cast into hell for an eternity of punishment. The lengthiest descriptions of the judgment day are found in Matt. 25:31-46 and Rev. 20:11-15. Other important passages on

the day of judgment are Matt. 7:13-27; Matt. 10:14-15, Matt. 24:36-25:30, Luke 12:35-48; and 2 Thess. 1:3-10. Space will not allow a discussion of them here, but the reader is urged to study them and ask himself, "Am I ready for that great day?"

4. To deliver the kingdom back to the Father. In 1 Cor. 15:23-24, the apostle Paul taught, "*But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. **Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father**, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.*" When does the resurrection occur? At His coming. Then what happens? The end. The end of what? The end of the kingdom, the end of the Lord's reign, and, according to 2 Pet. 3:10-12, the end of the world. Premillennialism stands 1 Cor. 15:24 on its head by teaching that when Christ comes, that will be the beginning of the kingdom and the beginning of Jesus' reign! But Paul was not a premillennialist for he taught just the opposite. The truth is that the kingdom of God is the church of Christ (Matt. 15:18-19; Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:4, 9) and it will enter the heavenly phase of its existence at His second coming (2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:10-11).
5. To end the world (2 Pet. 3:10-12). Having fulfilled its purpose as "a vale of soul-making" (as the late brother Thomas B. Warren referred to this world), it will be completely destroyed and replaced by "*the new heavens and the new earth*" (Isa. 65:17; Isa. 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). This is a metaphor for the spiritual

realm, our eternal home, heaven itself.

HOW SHOULD WE LIVE IN THE MEANTIME?

Since we cannot know when Christ is coming back, what are we to do in the meantime? As we have already learned, we must live lives of faithfulness and obedience if we are to be saved on the last great day. Faithful does not mean perfect, but it does mean we must try our best every day of our lives to obey the word of God, trusting the blood of Christ to continually cleanse us from all sin as we confess it to God in prayer and repent of the same (1 John 1:7). Peter asked, "*Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God...*" (2 Pet. 3:11-12, ASV). The apostle went on to say we should be "*looking forward to these things*" (2 Pet. 3:14; cf. Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28). But I am afraid that for too many American Christians, materialism has dulled our desire for heaven. We have it too good here. I have actually had brethren say to me they hope the Lord waits awhile longer because they have such a good life here!

Among the final words of the Bible are a prayer of the apostle John, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*" (Rev. 22:20). That was Paul's prayer also (1 Cor. 16:22). Is it yours? Are you ready for the judgment day?

ENDNOTES

[1]Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the NKJV.

[2]While it is true that Jesus came in a symbolic way upon Jerusalem in order to punish it (cf. Matt. 22:7; Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:20-28), this in no way militates against other Bible prophecies which plainly predicts the literal and personal return of Christ.

[3]Interestingly, Hebrews 9:28 is the only verse in the Bible which explicitly attaches the word "second" to the return of Jesus Christ.

[4]Except where otherwise noted, these facts are taken from an excellent book entitled *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return* by B. J. Oropeza (InterVarsity Press: Downer's Grove, IL: 1994).

[5]Walter Martin, *The Kingdom Of The Cults* (Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, MN, 1985), pp. 411-414.

[6]Weldon Langfield, *The Truth About Mormonism: A Former Adherent Analyzes the LDS Faith* (Weldon Langfield Publications: Bakersfield, CA: 1986), 96.

[7]"Hyoo-gyo" is Korean for "Rapture." The leader of this cult (which has spread to America under various names and leaders) is another self-proclaimed, false Messiah named Jang Rim Lee. He was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment by the South Korean government for illegal possession of foreign currency totaling about $4.4 million dollars–money swindled from his gullible followers. 16.

[8]The significance of these September 1994 dates are because they fell on Jewish feast days, i.e., the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, respectively. Overemphasizing the typological importance of these Old Testament holy days is a common error committed by date-setters. This is also due to the premillennial insistence that Israel is still the chosen people of God despite the New Testament's teaching that Christians of all races are now the covenant people of God (cf. Matt. 21:43; Rom. 1:16; Gal. 3:26-29; 1 Pet 2:4-10).

[9]As quoted in Todd Clippard, "When Is Jesus Coming Again?," *The Second Coming of Christ*, 21st Annual St. Louis Area-Wide Lectureship Booklet (St. Louis, MO: n.p., 2001), 5.

[10]Premillennialists have heated debates amongst themselves as to when the Rapture will occur. They divide into three camps: pre-, mid-, and post-tribulationists depending on when they believe the Rapture will occur in relation to the great tribulation. I, on the other hand, am a non-tribulationist since the Bible does not teach premillennialism.

[11]No matter how you parse the theory, premillennialism (at least the dispensational variety) still has *three* literal comings of the Lord, whereas the Bible speaks of only *two* (**Heb. 9:28**). Historic premillennialism, in contrast to dispensationalism, teaches that the rapture and the second coming occur at the same time, after the great tribulation. Both versions are erroneous.

[12]Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan Books: Grand Rapids, MI: 1970), 43.

[13]Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 133.

[14]Hal Lindsey, *The 1980's: Countdown To Armageddon* (Bantam Books: New York, 1981), 8. The title alone shows what a joke his predictions are. Yet for some reason, Lindsey continues to have a lot of credibility in the evangelical world. Secular programs and articles on Bible prophecy will still commonly interview him as an "expert" on the subject.

[15]Oropeza, *op. cit.*, 34. It must be remembered that he is an evangelical and is thus using the word "Christian" in a denominational sense.

[16]Homer Hailey, *A Commentary On The Minor Prophets* (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1972), 395-396.

[17]J. W. McGarvey, *Original Commentary On Acts,* 9th Ed. (Guardian of Truth Foundation: Bowling Green, KY: n.d.), 19.

[18]Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles from Jerusalem to Rome* (Courier Publications: Stockton, CA, 2000), 10, emp. in original.

[19]Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 126. Lindsey's chapter on the Rapture in this book is also called "The Ultimate Trip."

[20]Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 131.

[21]Like the Rapturists, Jehovah's Witnesses also teach an invisible return of Christ. According to their doctrine, Jesus' second "presence" on earth began in 1914. They argue that since only the disciples saw Jesus leave, and he would return "in like manner," only his disciples would see him return. Even if we granted their conclusion, it would not follow that His return was

invisible. But we do not grant their conclusion. Had the Pharisees been present at the ascension, they would have witnessed it just like the apostles did. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that the Lord's second coming will be universally apparent (Matt. 24:23-27; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 1:7).

SUICIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Suicide happens everyday. We know of many people who have had a friend or relative commit suicide. Reports of suicide of a public figure are disturbing. More disturbing is when we hear of Christians attempting and committing suicide. A frightening element is the threat of self-destruction.

It is important that the church have some knowledge of this act that haunts our culture. The

objective of this study is to recognize the suicidal person and to prevent suicide. In this lecture, we will discuss three major areas: suicide facts, the mind of the suicidal person, and suicide prevention and treatment methods.

SUICIDE FACTS

Some very disturbing statistics concerning suicide should heighten our awareness of the problem. The most recent national study on suicide, conducted in 1999, revealed then that suicide was the 11th leading cause of death in the United States. It was the 8th leading cause of death for males and the 19th leading cause of death for females. Suicide is the leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 to 24. Suicide outnumbers homicides five to three. There are more deaths due to suicide than HIV/AIDS. Firearms, the leading method to commit suicide for both men and women, account for 57% of all suicides. After gunshots, the most common suicide methods are hanging, cutting, stabbing, jumping, plastic bag over the head, and drug overdose. There has been a decrease in suicide deaths over the last three years due to an increased awareness of suicide.

The most frequently asked questions about suicide are:

1. **Who is at highest risk for suicide in the United States?** The elderly, particularly older white males, have the highest rate. White males who are 65 and older have a suicide rate six times that of the overall national rate. Studies show that white males

are more deliberate in their suicide intentions; they use more lethal methods; and they are less likely to talk about their plans.

2. **Does depression increase the risk for suicide?** The majority of people who suffer from depression do not commit suicide, but suffering from depression does increase the risk. It is estimated that 60% of people who commit suicide have had a mood disorder.
3. **Can the risk for suicide be inherited?** Major psychiatric illness, including bipolar disorders, major depression, schizophrenia, alcoholism, substance abuse, and certain personality disorders that run in families increase the risk for suicidal behavior. This does not mean that suicidal behavior is inevitable for individuals with this type of family history. It does mean that these individuals should take steps such as seeking evaluation and treatment at the first sign of mental illness to reduce risk.
4. **What should you do if an individual tells you that he is thinking about suicide?** If an individual reveals that he is thinking about suicide, it should be taken seriously. Listening is a critical element. Advise the individual to seek professional help for evaluation and treatment. Do not leave the individual alone. You may even need to take emergency steps to get help.
5. **Why do men commit suicide more often than women?** More than four times as many men as women die by suicide. However, women attempt suicide during

their lives more often than men. There are several explanations for this:

- Completed suicide is associated with aggressive behavior that is more common in men than women.
- Men and women use different suicide methods.

MYTHS ABOUT SUICIDE

1. **Suicide and attempted suicide are in the same class of behavior.** There are different methods to suicide. Gender and age play a role.
2. **People who talk about suicide will not commit suicide.** People who commit suicide often do talk about it or leave signals. However, remember that men 65 and older usually do not talk about it or leave signs.
3. **Suicide is an inherited trait.** Suicide is not inherited. Depression does tend to run in families, but not suicide.
4. **Improvement after a suicidal crisis means suicidal risk is over.** After a suicidal crisis is when suicide alert should be at its highest. It takes energy to carry out suicide. There may be another plan when the person is feeling better.

THE SUICIDAL MIND

There are several common features among those who commit suicide. A study conducted by Mr.

Edwin Shneidman found ten features common to those who commit suicide, which he called the Ten Psychological Commonalities of Suicide.

The first feature is the **main purpose for committing suicide**: that is, to seek a solution. Suicide is never done without purpose. For the suicidal mind, it is a way out of a problem, a bind, a crisis, or an unbearable situation. Shneidman states, "The purpose of suicide is to solve a problem, to see a solution to a problem generating intense suffering."

This is when the church can help by addressing the fact that life is full of pain and disappointments. Jesus is still key to overcoming suffering. Job said, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). Jesus is the High Priest who experienced the pain of life (Heb. 4:15-16). He is our aid (Heb. 2:18): "for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted he is able to succour them that are tempted." Jesus said to his disciples "[...] in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The Christian must see this life as temporal. Paul teaches the Christian how to view life when things are difficult (2 Cor. 4:16-18). "For which cause we faint not." Faint not means lose heart. This is what the person who commits suicide does. Paul continues, "but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Suffering has its place in our lives, but it is to be seen as a light affliction for a short time that marks for us an eternal home where there is no

more death, neither sorrow, nor crying or pain (Rev. 21:4). In 2 Cor: 18, Paul tells us where we need to look. "While we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

A very important point needs to be considered. Remember that 60% of suicides are depressed. Depression and pain must be addressed in order to help those that are thinking about suicide.

The second feature of the psychological commonalities is the **goal of suicide is the cessation of consciousness**. Suicide is best understood as moving toward the complete stopping of one's consciousness and unendurable pain (Shneidman). This is probably the most deceptive thinking of the suicidal mind. Those that commit suicide have not ceased from consciousness. The rich man after dying lifted up his eyes being in torment. Consciousness remains; it does not stop. The consciousness that has peace is a good conscience toward God and His will (1 Pet. 3:21).

The third feature is **psychological pain**. The suicidal mind strives to move away from emotional pain. A key point to remember is that no one commits suicide out of joy. The suicidal mind starts dying inside. "The inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

The fourth feature of the suicidal mind is **fulfilling a human need**. The suicidal person believes the act of suicide has a purpose. There are

many pointless deaths, but every suicidal death reflects some specific unfulfilled need. I recall several of my clients who attempted suicide talked about this unfulfilled need.

The fifth feature is **hopelessness and helplessness**. The Bible addresses this issue. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). Christ is our hope. His resurrection made possible for all men to run to that hope. "[...] who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:18-19).

The sixth feature is the **suicide attempt is escape of aggression**. Suicide is the ultimate act of aggression besides running away, quitting, or leaving. This is also a deception because suicide is not just running away, it is ending a life on this earth. "God is faithful who will not suffer ye to be tempted above that which ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Another feature that is very common in the suicidal person is **communicating his or her intentions**. Suicidal persons, consciously or unconsciously, emit clues of intention, signals of distress, and pleas. Their verbal and behavioral communications are often indirect.

Finally, the last common feature of the suicidal person is the **pattern in suicide is consistent with life-long styles of coping**. We must look to previous episodes of disturbance. That is, how has the suicidal person handled problems in the past? This is one of the key signals of the suicidal person. Psychological pain, unfulfilled needs, hopelessness, escape, communication of intention are consistent life-long styles.

One must be aware of these commonalities to help the suicidal person. All mentally ill people do not commit suicide. Many who do commit suicide can reason and make right choices, but there are always exceptions. It is critical to get to the pain to help the suicidal person cope.

What does the Bible say about suicide? The Bible mentions several cases of suicide: Samson (Judges 16:28-30), Saul (1 Sam. 31:4), Abimelech (Judges 9:50-55), Saul's armour bearer (1 Sam. 31:5), Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), and Judas (Matt. 27:3,4). The Bible does not condone suicide. The Bible talks about life. Jesus is the way, the truth, and life. Suicide has no place in God's purpose for man. Suicide is not a good thing. There is nothing honorable about it.

A frequently asked question is, "Are people who commit suicide forgiven of their sins?" Saul's sins got him into such a predicament that he preferred death to life. He was not forgiven (1 Sam. 31). Judas was responsible for getting himself into such a sinful predicament that he preferred death to life as well. He went to Perdition and was lost (John 17:12, Acts

1:25). Of course, an insane person is not responsible for his actions, providing his sinful life has not resulted in diseases that brought him to a state of insanity. He has not lived in rebellion to God for years, while in his right mind, then suddenly goes insane and commits suicide. He will be held accountable for not obeying the gospel when he could have obeyed it (Meadows).

There are numerous verses that convey our lives are not our own, but the Lord's. "For none of us liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself" (Rom. 12:7-8). We are all accountable to God. In verse 8, "For whether we live, he lives unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." The suicidal person will not escape the judgment. He or she will still have to answer to God. We were created to glorify God and serve Him (1 Cor 6:9-20, Rom 12:1-2, Eph. 5:29). "For no man even yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Job, Chapter 3 lets us know that Job's pain was so that he wished he could die or never be born. His suffering was such that even his wife told him to curse God and die. The Scriptures convey that Job never contemplated suicide, but he realized that his life was a gift from God.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Suicidal ideation is thinking about terminating one's life. Suicidal intent is the intensity of an individual's desire to terminate his life. Suicidal risk is the probability that an individual will make a suicide attempt. The factors involved in determining the risk are the accessibility to lethal weapons and the

presence of protective individuals in the person's environment. Suicidal attempt is the deliberate act by an individual to end his life. Completed suicide is the deliberate suicidal action leading to an individual's death.

Preventing and treating the suicidal person begins with a suicide risk assessment.

1. **Determine the seriousness of the risk**. A rule of thumb is to take every suicidal threat seriously.
2. **Assess the age, gender, and race** of the suicidal person. Understanding who is most at risk is very important.
3. **Maintain a close relationship** with the person. Being around those who are able to give encouragement is important. If resources are low, the risk increases.
4. **Determine what the suicidal person is planning to do**. The plan the person has made is very important.
5. **Evaluate the stress in the person's life**. Has he or she experienced a significant loss, family problems, medical problems or financial problems? If life appears out of control, the risk increases.

WARNING SIGNS

It is also important to know warning signs to prevent suicide.

1. Talks of suicide. Most suicidal persons talk about it.

2. Giving away valuable possessions.
3. Withdrawal is a very clear signal that something is wrong.
4. Loss of interest in things that used to be enjoyable.
5. Preparing a will or making funeral arrangements.
6. Changes in behavior.
7. Problems eating and sleeping.
8. Preoccupation with death and dying.
9. Alcohol and drug use.
10. Previous suicide attempts.
11. Low self-esteem.

Practical steps in helping the suicidal person over the phone include:

1. Establish a relationship. Be genuine; sympathize. It is very important to listen. Let him know that you accept him as an individual.
2. Clarify the problem. This requires asking specific questions. Use the word "what" rather than "why." For example: "What is it that causes you to feel this way?" Reflect on the individual's response.
3. Determine age, gender, job, location, significant other, medical issues, etc.
4. Determine psychiatric background. Remember, the majority of those who commit suicide have psychiatric issues.
5. Determine any situational factors, such as family, job, health, etc.
6. Discuss alternatives and assist the caller to come up with a coping plan.

The four main types of suicidal crisis (as identified by Dr. Edwin Shneidman) are:

1. **Impulsive suicidal behavior**. May follow anger, disappointment or frustration. It may be only a highly temporary crisis but to an impulsive person, it could be dangerous.
2. **Feeling life is no longer worth living**. May result from serious depression. The person does not understand or believe his feeling of worthlessness (of both himself and the world) will eventually go away. He may feel he is seeing life as it really is.
3. **Very serious illness**. Suicide may provide escape from suffering or with the altruistic aim of sparing loved ones the difficulties of caring for the sick person during a long-term illness. It may not even be an actual illness but as long as the belief is present, whether correct or not, the person may turn to suicide.
4. **"Communication" suicide attempts**. May occur when a person does not really wish to die but wants to change the way people act toward him. The attempt may be intended to punish others, win their sympathy or gain attention. There is a risk the person may actually die and therefore should not be ignored.

In *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling* by Howard Clinebell, he presents three forms of help once the suicidal person is beyond the acute suicidal crisis:

1. **Ongoing supportive pastoral care.** This is where the elders and ministers are involved.
2. **Individual counseling or family counseling** to resolve the underlying intrapsychic problems (e.g., pathological guilt) and the interpersonal pathology that led to suicidal behavior.
3. **Help with the spiritual and value problems** at the root of the individual's sense of meaninglessness and despair. At its deepest level, the suicidal person's problem is a theological problem.

CONCLUSION

We have discussed some facts that are important to know about suicide, the most important of which are understanding the suicidal mind and ways we can help the suicidal person. Again, there is nothing honorable about suicide. It is not a way to escape pain or problems. Jesus Christ came to aid us with the trials of life. The suicidal person will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It is my observation that the church needs to be more informed on this subject and be sensitive to people with such pain. When the Phillipian jailer was about to kill himself, Paul said, "Do thyself no harm for we are all here." Paul first saved a life then saved the jailer's soul (Acts 16:28-34). We can help more than any person in this world. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

We will conclude with an excellent quote from *Counseling the Suicidal Person* by Dr. Gary Collins about the attitude we should have toward the suicidal person:

> Suicidal behavior has often been described as a "cry for help." To this cry we, as concerned Christian persons, must respond. Not only does the Christian gospel have resources to offer those who are in a desperate, despairing mood, but who else is there to care? Historically, the church's stand on the sinfulness of suicide has given rise to many injustices through a lack of compassion and concern. Today, more and more ministers are taking an active role in organizing the suicide prevention ministry of the church. With proper training and the provision of effective counseling services both by lay and professional counselors, ministers are able to lead the church into its role of servanthood for broken lives.
>
> The church is uniquely equipped to minister to those contemplating suicide. There is a rich and abundant supply of sensitive and caring people; there is a wide spectrum of groups able to give support – from youth groups to adult Bible classes to singles and older groups. No other social organization has this diversity. Couple these resources with the power of the Holy Spirit and the

ultimate message of Christ's meaning to life, and lives can be significantly changed.

One obstacle remains: unnecessary prejudice in complacent church-going Christians against the suicidal person must be eradicated. We need to create in our churches a vital theology that embodies pastoral and church care for those who "cry out for help." Jesus would not have turned a deaf ear to these cries. Why should we?

ENDNOTES

[1]Clinebell, Howard. *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Abengdon Press, Nashville, TN 1984.

[2]Flatt, Bill. *Personal Counseling Resource Publication*, Searcy, Ar 1991.

[3]Collins, Gary. Counseling the Depressed (Counseling the Suicidal Person). Word Books Publisher, Waco, TX 1987. p. 239

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ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

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In the 16th chapter of Luke, beginning at verse 19ff, we find our text. This is one of the saddest readings in the Bible. It is sad because it talks about a man who lost his soul. The word "lost" is one of the saddest words known to man. The book "The U.S. Indianapolis" was written about the terrible tragedy that happened on July 31, 1945. There were 1,196 American sailors aboard that ship. It was blown up one minute past midnight on a Sunday night. A book was written to tell what an awful thing it is to be lost at sea, in water 7,000 feet deep, 250 miles from the closest island with no one in the world knowing where you are. This book told how those sailors reacted when they realized they were lost. It was not until

noon on Friday that someone located them. By this time, of the 1,196 sailors, only 316 were living. The book impresses one thought upon one's mind. It is a terrible thing to be lost. Actually there is something a thousand times sadder than that, and that is for a man to lose his soul. The reason it is so sad for a man to lose his soul is because it is lost for eternity. Have you ever seriously thought about being lost for eternity?

When a person thinks about the idea of eternal separation from God (that is, spending eternity in hell), it is an awful thought. The thought of hell is so unbearable for some that they deny its reality. Some call it an inhuman, barbarous, and cruel teaching. Nonetheless, scripture teaches that there is such punishment waiting for the sinner.

The word "hell" comes from a description of the "valley of Hinnom" (Neh. 11:30) or the "valley of the sons of Hinnom" (2 Kgs. 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3). It was the trash heap south and west of Jerusalem and consisted of dead carcasses, worms, and fire. It was the site of Baal worship where in the days of Ahaz and Mannasseh the people murdered their children in sacrifice to the pagan deity, Molech. It was, therefore, a place continually avoided by the Jews.

The Bible uses several figures to describe the state of the unrighteous. It is called a place of "*eternal fire*" (Matt. 25:41); "*outer darkness*" where men will "*weep and gnash their teeth*" (Matt. 8:12). It is spoken of as "*eternal punishment*" (Matt. 25:46), "*torment*" (Rev. 14:10-11), "*the bottomless pit*" where one experiences "*the second death*" (Rev. 21:8). It is

a condition where one experiences the wrath of God (Rom. 2:5), and eternal destruction and exclusion from the face of the Lord (2 Thess. 1:9).

We could pile passage upon passage which describes the reality of a punishment that awaits the unrighteous, and we would see a wide variety of images regarding its horror (eg. Matt. 22:13; Mk. 9:44; Rev. 9:2; Lk. 3:17; Matt. 13:42; Jude 13; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 14:10-11). As a place, hell is sometimes literally designated by "hades" and sometimes by "gehenna." As a condition of suffering, it is literally designated by the description "*wrath of God*" in Romans 2:5, *and "second death*" in Revelation 21:8.

It is also interesting to notice what Jesus said about the place of punishment in Luke 16, where He told of the rich man and Lazarus. (I personally would not spend a lot of time arguing whether it is a parable or not because the truth it teaches is the same, regardless of the position one takes. In addition, I would not make a distinction between the waiting place for the unrighteous dead and hell itself. There is no difference between the two except one is limited to time and the other is in eternity). In this account we learn that it is a place of torment where one cries for mercy; where one thirsts; and where there is memory; but there is a gulf that cannot be crossed to return to this life.

One basic characteristic of hell in contrast to heaven is that it is a place where one will experience the total absence of God. That is a condition hard for us to conceive because all humanity experiences benefits of God's presence at this time by virtue of His

benevolent nature. We need to remember that hell was originally created for the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). It was not God's intention that we, who are created in His image, should spend eternity in such company.

THE PUNISHMENT IN HELL

All sin is evil and sufficient to condemn one to hell. In hell God confronts sinful man with the consequences of the character he fashioned for himself while he lived. The misery of hell will be compounded by having to live with one's wicked self eternally.

THE DURATION OR PERIOD OF THE PUNISHMENT

The punishment of the evil will be eternal. It is said to be:

1. "*Everlasting fire*" (Matt. 25:4);
2. "*Eternal condemnation*" (Mark 3:29);
3. "*Everlasting judgment*" (Heb. 6:2);
4. "*Everlasting destruction*" (2 Thess. 1:9);
5. "*The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever*" (Revelation 14:11);
6. "*Everlasting punishment*" (Matt. 25:46).

This destruction shall be from the presence of God. It also shall be an eternal one and will never be restored. To sin against God is not a light matter.

The Greek word "aionois" qualifies life in Romans 6:23, and qualifies "punishment and life" in

Matthew 25:46. If the life is eternal, so is the punishment of the wicked. In the day of judgment the righteous shall inherit eternal life; the wicked shall depart into everlasting fire. The duration of the two states is exactly the same. If the state of punishment has an end, so has the state of life. If life is eternal, so is the punishment everlasting. If the punishment of the wicked has an end, so has the life of the righteous an end. If "aionios" measures the joys of the righteous there, it must also measure the duration of the punishment of the wicked. The wicked cannot be annihilated and yet suffer eternal punishment. Eternal punishment cannot be separated from eternal existence. Annihilation cannot be accepted because the Bible teaches that man is by nature immortal (Matthew 10:28; cf. Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:44; Revelation 14:11; 21:10; 21:8).

HELL IS ETERNAL

The Bible teaches that hell is eternal. In Matt. 25:46 our Lord said, *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."* At Rom. 16:26, Paul described God as the everlasting God. In Heb. 9: 14 we read of the eternal Spirit. We have before us now three passages and four expressions in those three passages, which must be considered. Here they are: "*everlasting punishment*," "*eternal life*," "*everlasting God*," and "*eternal spirit*." The only difference between the words "everlasting" and "eternal" in the English language is a difference in spelling. They mean exactly the same thing. The word translated as "everlasting" or "eternal" in these three passages is a form of the same Greek word. That word in the original language

is "aionios." "Aionios" means eternal, everlasting, without end, never to cease, or indeterminate as to duration.

There is not one single solitary argument a man can make against the Bible doctrine of hell, which cannot be applied with equal force against the Bible doctrine of heaven. For example, if a man takes the position that hell is going to last for only 1000 years, then at the end of that period those who are in heaven will cease to be blessed. How do I know? Because the same word used to modify hell's punishment is also used to qualify the bliss and happiness of heaven. If hell is going to last only 1000 years, then heaven is going to last for only 1000 years. When the wicked cease to be punished in hell, at that same moment God Almighty and the Holy Spirit will go out of existence. The same word used to describe the duration of hell's punishment is also used to describe the duration of God's life and the life of the Holy Spirit. How long, then is the punishment going to last in hell? It's going to last eternally or everlastingly. The punishment will continue forever and ever and ever.

There are people who argue against that position. They say this is too long. They argue that it is not right to take a man who has lived five years in disobedience and punish him forever. If it is wrong to take a man who has been disobedient for five years and condemn him forever, then it is wrong to take a man who has lived five years in obedience and bless him forever? The same argument that is used to get rid of the Bible doctrine of hell can be applied with equal force against the Bible doctrine of heaven.

Those who argue that eternal punishment is too long may not recognize it, but they are taking a slap at every system of justice in the world. How do you determine the heinousness of an act? By the time it takes to perpetrate it or by the act itself? Obviously, by the act itself. When a man says hell is too long, he is overlooking one basic fact. He fails to see sin for all of its ugliness. He fails to see it for what it is. The most horrible thing anyone can do is live in rebellion to God's will. Live five years, five months, or five weeks in stubborn disobedience to God's will, die in that condition, and you'll be punished in hell forever.

There are those who believe that hell's fire is going to burn eternally. They also believe that the punishment is everlasting. However, they misunderstand the meaning of the word "punishment." These people who hold the position that when a man dies he is annihilated or cut off. According to them, the dead cease to exist. They argue that when a man dies he goes back to where Adam was before he was created. Where was Adam before he was created? He was not! If, when we die, we go back to where Adam was before he was created, then we are annihilated. We do cease to exist. Incidentally, when Adam was brought forth, was he resurrected or created? Obviously, he was created. Now, if, when I die, I go back to where Adam was before he was created, how in the world could you talk about my resurrection? You could not discuss my resurrection. You might talk about my being recreated, but you could not discuss my resurrection. The doctrine of annihilation logically denies the resurrection of the dead. Be that as it may, these people say when we die we are just like the proverbial dog, Rover, we are

dead all over. That which is let down into the grave is the whole man. When the Lord comes again there will be a resurrection. Then, all of the wicked are caught up before God to give an account of the deeds done in the body. They are weighed in the balances and found wanting, then they are cast into eternal fire. The materialists claim that the unrighteous are burned up. Hence, when they read the passage concerning the second death, they understand it to be a second physical death. We experience one physical death here. Some will experience another physical death there when they are cast into the fire and burned up. They sometimes use the illustration of a dog. They say when a dog is dead he is absolutely unconscious. He is dead eternally. So, when people are cast into the fire they become like that dog, dead forever. Everlasting punishment, then, means to be dead eternally.

Now I want you to see that argument in all of its force and power. Let us go back to Matthew 25:46 where Jesus said, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*" The word translated "punishment" is from the Greek word "kolasin." Kolasin, in turn, is derived from the verb "koladzo," which means "I chastise" or "I torment." At 1 John 4:18 it is translated "torment." Let us read a few passages in this connection. According to the 16th chapter of Luke, in hell the rich man lifted up his eyes "*being in torments.*" Furthermore, he wanted a drop of water to cool his "tormented" tongue. He also wanted Lazarus sent back to warn his five brethren lest they join him in that place of "torment." Abraham said the rich man was being "tormented" and Lazarus was being "comforted." Four times in Luke 16 the

word "torment" appears. Revelation 20:10 says, "*The devil that deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.*" Revelation 14:11 states: *"The smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever and they have no rest day nor night.*" Six times I have found the word "torment" used to describe the state of the wicked after death. The word "kolasin," found at Matthew 25:46, means "torment" or "chastisement." That is exactly what it means. When there is no consciousness, one cannot be tormented. The import of "everlasting punishment," as found in Matthew 25:46, is everlasting, conscious, suffering torment! Now, that is what hell is!

There are some who do not believe there will be a future punishment of the wicked. They tell us that such is inconsistent with the mercy of God and is too awful to be true. Others say that if there is a hell it cannot be eternal.

Eternal punishment is not a pleasant teaching. No teacher was more loving than our Lord, and yet no one ever spoke more surely and severely about the punishment of the wicked (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23: 15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). It was Christ Himself who surpassed all prophets and apostles in words of warning. In His sermons outer darkness, flames, unquenchable fire, undying worms, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, are peaks of horror. These were the same lips that gave us the Sermon on the Mount and told us of the many mansions in heaven. Our Lord used the strongest

terms and the most forcible language to impress upon us the never-ending punishment of the wicked.

THE NATURE OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT

The Rich Man said, "*I am tormented in this flame*" (Luke 16:24). Men may take "hell" out of their creeds, but they cannot take it out of the Bible, nor destroy its existence. Why do we say that the punishment of the wicked will be eternal? Because the word of God so teaches! The Bible says: "*The chaff (wicked) will be burned with fire unquenchable*" (Luke 3:17); "*The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever*" (Rev. 14:11).

There are those who argue annihilation of the wicked. There is not anything in the Bible to justify the doctrine of annihilation of the wicked. The Sodomites were burnt up; for they and their city were burnt to ashes. Yet, it is said of the Sodomites, "*They are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*" (Jude 7). The only way to conceive how the Sodomites can be suffering the vengeance of eternal fire is on the principle that they were burned without being annihilated!

"*I am tormented in this flame*" (Luke 16:24). God has two ways of dealing with sinners: one is to pardon them when they obey the gospel of Christ, and the other is to give eternal punishment. It has been suggested by materialists, that it is unreasonable to suppose that God would be so cruel as to cause or permit anyone to suffer everlastingly. View the matter in the proper light and nothing is cruel. God would

rather bless than curse; rather pardon than punish. However, if men travel the broad way, and go through the wide gate, which opens into the rich man's hell, where the soul-burning flame continues to devour forever, surely no blame can be pointed at God.

There are different descriptive titles of punishment given in the Bible for the wicked. This punishment is described as: (1) "*Lake of fire that burns with brimstone*" (Revelation 19:20; 20:14; 2 1:8); (2) "*Furnace of fire*" (Matthew 13:42); (3) "*Eternal fire*" (Matthew 15:41). (4) It is described as the "*hell, gehenna, of fire*" (Matthew 5:22). The intensity of future punishment is described as: (1) "*Torment*" (Revelation 14:11; 20:10); (2) "*Sorer than death without mercy*" (Hebrews 10:29); (3) "*Tribulation and anguish*" (Romans 2:8,9).

HELL IS A PLACE OF FIRE

God intends for us to get the idea that there is going to be fire for the wicked. The scriptures speak of a lot of fire. Hell is a place of fire. In Matt. 13:42, it is described *as "a furnace of fire;"* in Matt. 25:41, "*everlasting fire;*" in Mark 9:44-45, *"the fire is not quenched;"* in Rev. 20:10, "*fire and brimstone*;" in Revelation 20:15, "*the lake of fire*;" at Matt. 3:12, "*the baptism in fire*." However, someone asks, "Do you understand these passages to refer to hell?" Read them in context; there's no doubt about it. There will be fire. That is what all of them say.

The Biblical description of hell is God's way of telling us that it is far worse than anything we have ever considered. The nearest thing to it in our

vocabulary is fire. The nearest thing to it in human experience, is that of a burn. Christians are in the greatest work in the world; saving people from hell, which is like a burning fire. Brother Marshall Keeble once said that a man could build the hottest fire possible, remove the lost from hell, place them in the man-made fire and in ten seconds they would freeze to death. That has a note of levity in, but it has a sense of truth. If hell is just one tenth as bad as the description found in God's word that should be enough to convince us of its agony! However, it is worse, just like heaven is far more beautiful and wonderful than any description found in the Bible.

When you think of fire, you think of smoke. That is why, in Revelation 14: 11, the Bible says, "*The smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever.*" This simply completes the figure of fire.

THE PLACE OF PUNISHMENT

The place of the rich man's torment is said to be in hell (Luke 16:24). Materialists insist that the word "hell" in this text means the grave. Such reasoning is false. If you substitute the word "grave" for the word "hell" you would rob it of all rational meaning. There are other passages in which the word "hell" cannot mean the grave. "*Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matt. 10:28). "*You make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*" (Matthew 23:15). "*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell*" (Taruaros) (2 Peter 2:4). "*You generation of vipers how can you escape the*

condemnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33). The rich man's language is, "*I am tormented in this flame.*"

"*And the rich man also died and was buried. And in hell* (hades*) he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.*" The rich man's body was buried, but his soul or spirit went to Hades. Jesus' soul went to Hades. Jesus was not in torment. This shows that there are two parts in Hades (Acts 2:27). The spirit of Christ did not go into the grave. Jesus said to the penitent thief: "*Today you shall be with Me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). Christ and the penitent thief went to paradise, yet they both went to Hades. Hades does not mean the final punishment, for that will be after the resurrection of the dead at the last day (gehenna). Hades is a Greek word, which represents the death-state.

If we throw away the doctrine of future, eternal punishment we would have to likewise throw away the doctrine of future rewards; for both rest upon the same foundation, and are found in the same chapters and verses in the Bible. How can anyone believe the Bible without believing the wicked will be punished after death?

There is a place of torment, a hell, a smoking, fiery, flaming hell into which the ungodly will be cast. There the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. Listen to the words coming from a man in hell: "*I am tormented in this flame.*" "*Send Lazarus to cool my tongue.*" "*Tell my brethren not to come to the place of torment*!"

Why do some people try to believe there is no punishment for the wicked after death? It is because they would rather there were none. It would be better by far to obey the will of God now, than to be tormented in the same flame and in the same hell which caused the rich man to cry for water to cool his tongue.

It is the only place where, if you go you, will never want anyone you love to come. "*I pray therefore, Father, that you would send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them lest they come into this place of torment.*" Hell is not God's will for us. God wishes to save everyone from the awful place by saving him from sin, the cause of punishment.

It is said that God is too good to allow eternal punishment. However, look at the things that have transpired in this life in the administration of our good God! Fire fell on the cities of the plain, and the flood came in wrath. Christ's death for us is without meaning if there is no future, eternal punishment for sin. In plain words this means that Christ died to save us absolutely from nothing; not from hell, for they say there is none; not from punishment, for that is only in this life. This is as absurd as throwing ropes and sending boats to people on dry land who are in no danger of being drowned!

PECULIAR FEATURES OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

The sinner will be forced into a face-to-face situation between himself and God. The Bible

teaches that men are responsible for their sins. *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10).

The punishment of the wicked will be terrible. It is a separation from all that is good. It is death to all that is enjoyable. When Jesus will say, "*Depart from Me, you that work iniquity*" (Matt. 7:23), this is the last time the wicked will see of anything that is good, upright and lovely.

HELL IS A PLACE OF PAIN

Hell is a place of intense pain. At Matt. 25:30, in describing the punishment of the one talent man, the Lord said, "*there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" When individuals undergo great and severe pain, they weep and grit their teeth. They can hardly bear it, and that's what our Lord was saying.

The Bible says there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and outer darkness. Five times in Matthew hell is referred to as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. We have never suffered, nor has any man to the degree that one will suffer in hell. History records that in 1777, when George Washington and his soldiers spent that bitter winter in Valley Forge, some of the soldiers had to have limbs amputated because of frostbite. Relic hunters have recently found pieces of lead with impressions of teeth deeply imprinted therein. An old doctor's diary revealed how these impressions were made. When a soldier's arm or leg had to be amputated, the pain was so severe that

they would tend to grind their teeth almost to powder during the ordeal. To prevent this, the lead was placed between their teeth.

The Bible pictures hell as a place of intense pain, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. You think about grinding and gnashing your teeth forever and ever. That is what hell is like.

NO REST IN HELL

There is no rest in hell. Rev. 14:11 the passage I have used several times, says, *"and they shall have no rest day nor night."* Do you know why? Well, Rev. 20:10 tells us that the wicked are tormented. Rest is wonderful when you are tired, but how horrible to be perpetually exhausted and have no opportunity to rest. Such a place is Hell!

NO RELIEF IN HELL

There is no relief in hell. The rich man wanted a drop of water to cool his tormented tongue but he did not get it. Robert Ingersoll, an infamous skeptic around the turn of the century, said had he been present, he would have given that rich man some water. There is one little item Ingersoll overlooked. The rich man did not have to be there. He could have received ten million gallons of the water of God's salvation in this life, but he neglected his opportunity and finally wound up in torment without water. You can stay out of hell, but if you ever get in, you cannot get out. There will be no relief for you, if you ever go there.

NO SECOND CHANCE

No doubt countless millions of people have lived in this world and sinned away the day of grace thinking that there will be another day of grace in this life. When you have heard your last sermon, you will never have another invitation extended to you. Every individual who goes to hell and who has ever heard a gospel sermon will be able to recall every word of that sermon because he will have all eternity to think about it. In Hebrews 9:27, "F*or it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment*" (Cf. John 5:28). There is no second chance after you live your life here. When you sin away the day of grace and when you have heard your last sermon and your last invitation in this world, you will go to meet your God unprepared.

The rich man did not have another opportunity, and you are not going to have another opportunity either when you sin away that day of grace in this life. He learned there is no second chance.

HE LEARNED GOD MEANT WHAT HE SAID

One of the most difficult things in the world is to get people to believe that God actually means what He says. If we could convince people that God means what he says, it would not be difficult to get people to render obedience unto the gospel.

It has always been difficult to get people to believe that the Lord means what he says, but the rich man would say, "You had better believe it. You better take the Lord at His word."

NO HOPE IN HELL

Hell is a place where there is no hope. Look at Matt. 24:46 again. It says, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*" If an individual just lost his soul for a million years, he would have hope. After he had lived in the torments of hell for 500,000 years, then he could say, "It is half over. I just have 500,000 years more to live in this awful torment." After he had lived in hell for 900,000 years then he could say, "I just have another 100,000 years, and it will all be over." Beyond any doubt he would look forward to that more than anything else he could imagine. Hell would be terrible, but it would not be for eternity. However, the reality is that hell is eternal or everlasting, and no one will ever escape its torments. Eternity has no end. When an individual has lived in eternity for a billion years, he has no less time to live there.

Hell is not going to last for a million years or a billion years, but for an eternity. What would the rich man give today for your opportunity to obey the gospel. He would say that you have all the hope in the world. If he could get a message back to you it would be, "Do not sin away the day of grace. Give your life to Jesus Christ. Do that which you know is right." That is what he would say to you because of the things he learned in hell.

I have never heard anyone pray like the rich man prayed in Hades. "Fa*ther Abraham, have mercy upon me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am*

tormented in this flame." I have never heard a prayer that was sadder than that one. The sad thing about it is that he is still praying, but without hope.

THE SUBJECTS, PARTICIPANTS, OF PUNISHMENT

"*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*" (Rev. 2 1:8).

Others spoken of that will be in hell are:

1. "*The beast and false prophet*" (Rev. 19:20;
2. "*The wicked*" (Rev. 21:8);
3. "*Those who will not obey the gospel*" (1 Pet. 4:17); 2 Thess. 1:7, 8);
4. "*Those in the kingdom who: offend, do iniquity*" (Matt. 13:41);
5. "*Those who do nothing*" (Matt. 25:28-30).

THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT

Various New Testament writers pick up the theme of a final judgment. "*For we will all stand before God's judgment seat [...] So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God*". (Rom. 14:9-12). (Cf. Matt. 12:36; Acts 10:42; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 15; 1 John 4:17).

Harry lived in a cabin on the edge of Spirit Lake, just five miles from Mount St. Helens. When earthquake activity began under the mountain for the

first time in 123 years on March 20, 1980, geologists warned people to leave the area because of an eruption that was surely coming. Harry ignored the warning. Then, on May 18, 1980, a magnitude 5.1 earthquake shook Mount St. Helens. A major eruption of pumice and ash poured out for more than nine hours. Fully 1,300 feet of the mountain's peak collapsed or blew outward in the eruption. Millions of tons of rock, ash, and mud rushed down the mountain at 200 miles per hour. Fifty-six people died, including Harry.

Harry did not have to die, for he had ample warning of what was coming. But there is something in us that says "Maybe they are wrong" or "it won't be as bad as they are saying." His decision to ignore or minimize the warnings led to his death. The decision of many to ignore or minimize the warnings about death, judgment, and eternity will lead to their spiritual deaths. No one will be brought to Judgment who has not been warned it was coming. There will be no injustice on the part of the Judge on that day.

Judgment before Jesus Christ in the last day is not for the purpose of determining guilt or innocence, condemnation, or salvation. That issue has been settled already in one's lifetime, and each person's fate is sealed at death (Heb. 9:27).

The Rich Man and Lazarus each had long ago made his choice as a Jew under the Law of Moses about living in harmony with God's kingdom purposes or in defiance of them. The one had lived as a pious man, though he had suffered from a terrible illness and had been treated with contempt by many who

saw his horrible condition, including the Rich Man on whose property he had been known to beg.

The Rich Man had paid precious little attention to Moses and the prophets, and he had apparently been notable for his lack of compassion toward the poor and suffering. When they died, their eternal destinies were fixed, known, and entered (Luke 16:22-23).

With Jesus as Judge, He knows those who are His own and confesses their names before the Father (Matt. 10:32). People of every generation, language, and race will come before him in two great masses – sheep and goats, saved and lost, believers and unbelievers (Matt. 25:31ff). There will not be any surprises at the Judgment about salvation. Those who have put their trust in Christ for salvation live and die in confidence; those who reject him will learn once and for all what the Bible has taught them. Salvation is the result of a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He has been exalted to the right hand of God and will someday return as the Judge of the Living and the Dead (Acts 10:42). "T*herefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"*(Rom. 8:1).

CONCLUSION

May the warning the rich man wanted to give his five brothers be taken by us, that we do not come into the place of torment! To say there will not be any eternal punishment for the wicked is to slander the God of the Bible and to ignore His divine truth!

May the rich man's misfortune be a timely warning to us, and cause us to work for heaven!

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CREMATION

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It only takes a few hours for a 1400 to 2100 degrees Fahrenheit fire to consume a body. All that remains are less than ten pounds of ashes and bone fragments, which are then ground into fine granules. The total time elapsed: three to five hours.

Such a sterile way of talking about some*thing* that was once alive, loved, and loved back, seems an infinity away from the warmth of the personality that once vitalized those fine granules. What are we to think of such an act? Where are we to place it within our Christian ethic?

Paul, writing to the Corinthians, told them "not to exceed what is written"[1], (1 Cor. 4:6). As we discuss cremation, or any other question in life, we must consider the Bible. What decisions we come to only have significance in their relation to "what is

While God promises us the pardon for the spiritual penalty of our sins, we all must deal with the physical consequences of sin. The most obvious consequence of the punishment of Adam and Eve was the separation from the tree of life. Without that tree, everyone will die. Therefore, death becomes important because it is the transition from what we know to what we do not know. But, when we die we leave a corpse behind for those who are still alive. How then are we supposed to address the corpse in a way that is in keeping with God's will?

Unfortunately, the Bible does not specifically answer the question. We must instead look to the narratives and teachings of the Bible and see if there are some principles that we can follow.

The first reference to a burial is that of Sarah in Genesis 23. Abraham, wanting to bury Sarah, bargained with the sons of Heth to purchase a piece of land in Hebron (Gen. 23:4,17-20). Jewish commentators have pointed to this as the beginning of the Jewish custom of burying their dead[4]. From example, the Jews move to the command to bury, during the same day, the corpse that is hung upon a tree (Deut. 21:23). This verse, which commands burial, not cremation, became their command to prove the method of burial to the exclusion of all other practices.[5]

Tacitus wrote that the Jews "bury rather than burn dead bodies."[6] Looking at their history, the Jews saw burial as the noted example from their beginnings in Abraham (c.f. Gen. 23:4). With the Mosaic Law,

sharper cultural perspective when compared to the percentages of a century ago. Between the years 1876 and 1884, only 28 cremations were formally recorded in America. The number of cremations hardly grew during the next hundred years. Even as late as 1977, cremation was used in only 7% of the deaths that occurred.[3] Yet, within the past few decades cremation has grown increasingly more popular. The growing number of people who choose cremation brings the question to us, "Is it, or is it not, wrong?" Many seem to have already made up their minds; what have we decided? For cremation, as with any other question, we need to have a reasoned and truthful answer to the questions that may come from the increasing desirability of cremation.

Any book that deals with life invariably deals with death; the two are inseparable. The Bible not only talks of life and death, it records the origin and personality of death. In fact, God's will for us is inextricably linked to our mortality. Death is an abnormality in God's creation. We were created with the potential for death but God removed it by granting to Adam and Eve access to the tree of life (c.f. Gen. 3:22,23). The sin of Adam and Eve, a violation of the nature of God, resulted in the sentence of death, both physical and spiritual (c.f. Gen. 2:16,17; 3:3,19). With the sentence of death, came a promise that God would redeem His created people from the penalty that was placed upon them (c.f. 3:15,16). This promise became the basis for God's expressed will for people, finding its fulfillment and perfect expression in the person of Jesus.

But, we still die.

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burial became more than an accommodative command to regulate the sanitary aspects of corpses; it became an unyielding moral issue. The process of burial developed into a required and scripted process of anointing, washing, and wrapping in shrouds.[7] Although burial was the required practice, cremation was an exception for those serious offenders of God's laws (c.f. Josh. 7:15,25). Therefore, it was considered to be either offensive, or the sign of judgment, for a body not to be buried (c.f. 2 Sam. 21, 1 Kings 13:22; 14:11, 2 Kings 9:37, Jer. 16:16; 22:19).

Over time, the practice of burial became tied to the land promise that God had given to the Israelites. The importance placed upon the burial of the bones of Saul, Jonathan, and seven other sons of Saul in 1 Samuel 31:8-13 and 2 Samuel 21 illustrates the weight that Jewish thought gave to burial as a rite, and not just a practice. The development of the value of the bones is clearly seen in the latter first century (most prominently after 70 AD), where a Jew's bones were exhumed after a period allowing for the decaying of the flesh and reburied in a stone ossuariy.[8] By the end of the first century, the rabbinic teachings about the afterlife had developed the idea of a resurrection that involved the physical body.[9] Their teachings can be traced back to their understandings of passages like Job 19:25-27, Hosea 6:1, and Isaiah 53:10-12, from which they came to see the resurrection as being physical and intertwined with their beliefs regarding the land rest (c.f. Heb. 4). But the Jews did not attempt to stop the decay of the body, as did the Egyptians. Instead, they seemed to embrace it, visiting the tomb for three days after the death, after which they believed the process of decay to be

irreversible.[10] The value of the bones was that they represented the body, leaving a structure that God could reinvigorate, reuniting body and soul.

This Jewish respect for the bones can be seen as deriving from the fulfillment of God's promise to Joseph that He would take him into the Promised Land (Gen. 50:24,25, Josh. 24:32). God's promise to Joseph eventually took on a physical significance that grew to eclipse the symbolic weight of his being buried in the Promised Land. The value of the physical kingdom of Israel became greater than the value of the spiritual kingdom of Israel. They had placed their faith in the land rest that God had given them, assuming that it guaranteed a perpetual physical kingdom. As they began to think more of God's promises as guaranteeing a perpetual physical kingdom, they began to identity the resurrection as being physical. The growing focus upon the physical valued appearance over the heart, which helped to grow a superficiality that lead to their failure as God's people (Matt. 23:37-39, Rom. 2:28,29; 9:30-33). This misunderstanding of the ultimate fulfillment and focus of God's promises is most clearly seen in their refusal to accept Jesus as their King.

Although the Jews buried, the nations around them had various practices. Egypt entombed their dead, the Greeks practiced both burial and cremation, and the Romans almost exclusively practiced cremation from 400 BC to the 2nd century.[11] The Persians neither burned nor buried the dead. They instead exposed their corpses, not wanting to defile the ground or the fire with the dead body. Yet, all of these nations had some conception of an afterlife.

For example, the Greeks believed in a non-physical afterlife influenced by Platonic thoughts of the immortality and superiority of the soul while the Romans believed that the dead became an eternal "shade."[12] But despite the influences of their captors and surrounding nations, the Jews held to burial.

While the Jews exclusively practiced burial, cremation is mentioned in the Bible. Saul and his sons were burned after they were killed while battling the Philistines. The Philistines had taken the dead bodies of Saul and his sons and defiled them, beheading them and hanging them as trophies on the wall of Beth-shan (1 Sam. 31:8-13). The Israelites recovered the bodies and burned them. But, they did not burn their bones. They recovered them and took them to be buried in Jabesh. The Israelite's respect for the bones should be considered to be weightier than their cremation of the bodies of Saul and his sons. Although they burned their bodies, it should be seen as a matter of necessity because of the violence done to the bodies by the Philistines and that they were not near to a place where burial could be done quickly and satisfactorily.

There is a contested verse in which cremation seems to be mentioned. In Amos 6:10, the third word, "undertaker," is translated from *śār ăph*, the word generally translated as 'to burn, to consume'. Those who argue against the idea of a cremator point back to Amos' denouncement of Moab for burning the bones of the king of Edom to lime (2:1). But, Amos' condemnation of Moab is to be seen in the context of chapters 1 and 2, where he addresses the extreme cases of inhumane treatment of others by the nations

that surrounded the Northern Kingdom. Amos dealt with the cruelty and disregard for people by Judah's neighbors in order to prepare for his denouncement of them for similar reasons. The problem with Moab's action was not so much that they cremated Edom's king, but that they burned his bones to show disrespect for the royal corpse, a very antagonistic gesture.[13] Furthermore, the nations that surrounded Judah did not have the same burial ethic as Judah. While the surrounding nations may not have practiced burial with the same moral zeal that the Jews did, Amos 6:10 does seem to indicate that, in this case, cremation is mentioned. There are a couple of reasons why this may be: first, it could show the depths which Judah's departure from God had taken them, here as the result of an invasion; secondly, it is a prophetic section using prophetic imagery to stress the devastation that was going to come upon Judah as a result of their covenant infidelity with God.

While the instances of cremation as the means of disposal of a dead body are limited, burning a person is mentioned a number of times. The great majority of the times that a burning is mentioned, it is used either punitively or negatively. For example, the first mention of a burning[14] is in Genesis 38:24, where Judah initially ordered the burning of his daughter-in-law, Tamar, as a penalty for her harlotry. Similarly, the penalty that Nadab and Abihu received for offering a strange fire to God was death by fire sent "from the presence of the Lord" (Lev. 10:1,2). In Leviticus 20:14, Moses wrote that, if a "man marries a woman and her mother, it is immorality; both he and they shall be burned with fire." The image of fire as a death penalty is also used in Numbers 16:35. The sons of

Korah had assembled against the leadership of Moses and Aaron and, as a penalty, were consumed with fire sent by God. Fire is again used punitively in Joshua 7:15, 25. God had given the city of Jericho to Israel. Although God gave them the city, everything that was within the city, and the city itself, belonged to the Lord (6:16-19). Despite the ban, Achan took some spoil for himself and hid them inside of his tent (7:20,21). Achan's punishment was that he and his family were stoned and then burned (7:24,25).

The most significant punitive use of fire is in the New Testament, where the fire is represented as the ultimate expression of God's judicial punishment. In Matthew 3:11,12, John the Baptist speaks of Jesus bringing two baptisms, one of the spirit and one of fire. John then illustrates the baptism of fire in verse 12, describing it as an "unquenchable fire," consuming those who do not bear good fruit. Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, uses this idea of a supernatural fire. Three times, Jesus uses *gehenna*, translated as "hell," to describe the place where those like the scribes and Pharisees, who are given as an opposite example of the ethical righteousness that God desires from people, are going as punishment.

The idea of *Gehenna* has its origins in the valley of Hinnom. The valley, which is immediately south of Jerusalem, was know for its pagan rituals, of which child sacrifice was the most infamous. Because of the violent and cruel practices that took place within the valley, Jeremiah prophesied that the valley's name would be changed to "the valley of slaughter" (Jer. 7:31-34). It is also believed that the valley later was used for a dump, where Jerusalem

burned its garbage and dead animals.[15] Overtime, the valley became symbolic of the torment and horror of the final judgment for those who did not follow God. The New Testament writers seem to use gehenna as the place of final judgment, while *hades* is presented as the temporary place of waiting until that judgment (c.f. Rev. 20:14).[16] Hades, like Gehenna, is presented as a place of torment and pain, as seen in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:24). Both Gehenna and Hades' use of the image of fire as punishment gain all of their significance from God, who, in reminding both Israel and the Church of their covenant obligations to Him, described Himself as a "consuming fire" (Deut. 4:23,24, Heb. 12:29).

> Although fire is used to embody the pain of punishment, it is also used as a purifying element. The power and purity of fire can be seen in its use by God to stand in His place. God chose to represent Himself in a burning bush (Ex. 3:1ff), a pillar of fire (Ex. 9:24), fire and smoke at Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:18), as seated upon a throne of fire, out of which came a river of fire (Dan. 7:9,10), as a refining fire (Mal. 3:2), the Holy Spirit coming as a "tongue of fire" (Acts 2:3), and also in Jesus having eyes like a flame of fire (Rev. 1:14). It is also in a positive sense that the creation will be consumed in fire, described by Paul as the eagerly awaited release from the futility of its cursing (Rom. 8:18-23, 2 Pet. 3:7,10).

Fire alone does not provide any answer, although its images of torment and judgment tend to negatively flavor our emotional understanding of fire. But, neither does burial give us an answer. While burial is mentioned many times in the Old Testament, it is usually in passing or in connection with the Mosaic requirements for the dealing with corpses. To help determine the place that cremation should have within our ethic, we will look at two areas: the difference in the expectations of the Old and New Testaments, and the priority of the spiritual over the physical.

Galatians chapters 3 and 4 help us to understand the differences between the expectations of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Chapter 3 begins with Paul addressing the Galatians' misunderstandings about law. They had come to believe that law earned them the right to the inheritance that God had promised them (c.f. v. 18). In order to cause them to understand the appropriate place that law is to have within their lives, Paul explains to them the intention of the Law and its relationship to God's promises. God gave the Mosaic Law to make poignant the reality of sin and the inability of people to effectively deal with it (v. 19, 21-24). The Law was not there to impart life; it could not because it was not designed to address sin. Instead, it was designed to lead people to the Christ by demonstrating to them their need for something greater than the Law and the place that faith is to have over earning in godly living (c.f. v. 22-25). Now that the Law has fulfilled its purpose of leading people to Jesus, those who accepted its leading have become sons of God who have received the

inheritance promised to them (3:29-4:5). Paul images the Old Law as the "guardians and managers" that oversaw the heir while the heir was still a child. But, Christ's coming released the heirs from the watch of their guardians and managers, issuing them into their inheritance. This idea is expressed in Galatians 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." God no longer regulates all of the small details of our lives as He did with the Jews under the Law of Moses. Although the same key elements of grace, mercy, love, and obedience from the heart are present and unchanged, the form in which they are to be played out has significantly changed. The New Testament, our guide for godly living, expects a level of maturity in dealing with life that was not held against the Jews. God no longer directly regulates all of the outward aspects of our life; He instead gives us the attitudes and principles that are to govern us and allows us to work them out in our lives. The expectations of holiness and complete devotion are the same, but we are now expected to act like adults, using discernment and discretion in determining how to act.

The other factor that we must consider is the priority of the spiritual over the physical. This order is emphasized again and again in the Bible as people continually fall under the seductions of the physical. Think of the example of Ananais and Sapphira, who sold their land and brought a portion of it to give to the church, but lied about it, claiming to be giving it all (Acts 5:1-11). They were condemned, not because they lied to Peter or to the church, but because they lied to the Holy Spirit. God consequently killed them because they had allowed the physical to usurp the place of the spiritual.

The value of the spiritual over the physical is most clearly seen in the resurrection. When the resurrection occurs, we are told that all of the dead will be raised (John 5:28,29). It is because of the judgment that Jesus warned people to store up spiritual treasures in heaven rather than physical ones on earth (Matt. 6:19-21). We are to build a spiritual treasury because the resurrection will not be physical as the Jews thought. Instead, the bodies will be transformed into spiritual bodies. For those that Christ will call, their bodies will be changed to look like his, changed into spiritual bodies (Phil. 3:20,21, 1 Cor. 15:50-55). The transformation from physical into spiritual is a great change that even the creation eagerly longs for because it will end the cursing that God subjected all of creation to in Genesis 3 (Rom. 8:18-21, c.f. 2 Cor. 5:1-5). This transformation is important because it lets us know that the body's condition is not important to resurrection. All dead bodies decay, eventually returning to the dust from which they came. God has total control over matter. The issue of a cremated corpse or a buried corpse is irrelevant to God; He can raise them both without concern for the burial process or the state of body. Remember, Jesus raised Lazarus when he was, to the Jewish mind, too far decayed to recover[17]. We should, therefore, not see the end of the physical as a sad passing, but as the final fulfillment of promise. The greatest fulfilling of promise in our changing from physical to spiritual is that we will be able have a closer relationship with God, who is a spirit (John 4:24), living with Him in heaven where all of the problems, pains, and sufferings of our physical lives will no longer exist (Rev. 21:1-4).

The emphasis of the spiritual over the physical does not mean that we are to devalue the physical; it still remains Gods creation. God has made us in His image (Gen. 1:26, James 3:9). Not only are we said to be in His image, as Christians, we are also said to be His temple (1 Cor. 3:16,17; 6:19). So, does cremation show disrespect for our bodies as God's temples? To answer, we must understand why we are called temples of God and what purpose we fill as His temples. In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, we are told that we are to be separate from the world, just as the temple is to be separate from idolatry. As a separated temple, we are to build upon the foundation of Christ and the apostle's teachings (Eph. 2:19-22). Peter calls us "living stones" that build a spiritual house in which spiritual sacrifices are offered (1 Pet. 2:4-9). The spiritual sacrifices that we are to offer within our spiritual temple are sacrifices of pure and wholly devoted lives to God (Romans 12:1, 1 Pet. 2:4ff.). As God's temples, the focus is not upon the physical as physical, but as a vehicle for our being godlike in our lives. When our lives are godly, then God will dwell with us, not physically but spiritually (c.f. John 4:24). Now, part of being godly is to have a proper respect for His creation, so intentionally harming or devaluing what God has made would not be in keeping with pure and holy living. Our responsibility to care for what God has made can be seen in the command that God gave to Adam and Eve to care for the garden (Gen. 1:28-30). We must understand that we are to be stewards of what God has given to us, and to show disrespect for any part of it is to show disrespect for God Himself. But, this does not mean that cremation is a disrespectful

action. Since burial is not regulated for us under our covenant with God (the New Testament), then we are free to choose a way of dealing with the dead that is in keeping with the principles of respect and care for what God has made.

So, what can we conclude?

Cremation is a growing concern for many because of its increasing popularity. But we need not be worried about whether or not the action is wrong. God has told us that our emphasis in life should be upon the spiritual, storing up treasures in heaven. While we are still alive, we have the responsibility to respectfully care for all that God has given to us. Yet, the physical will, one day, end. All that is at that point will cease to exist and all people will be changed into spiritual beings. Our bodies only have significance in this life as the vehicle for expressing our relationship with God through our interactions with others, but our souls have eternal significance. Therefore, our concern needs to be upon the soul of a person and not the state of their vacated body.

We also need to realize that God has not regulated the manner in which we deal with our dead. But He has regulated the manner in which we live our lives. While cremation may not be a moral issue, it is a sensitive topic for many. Therefore, we need to be respectful of other's opinions, never letting the place of opinions become lost in the heat of any moment. Whether we bury or cremate, if we do it in good conscience, respecting what God has made in His image, then we can be content that we have not violated God's laws.

ENDNOTES

[1] All quotes from the Bible will be taken from the *Updated New American Standard Version*, 2000, unless otherwise noted.

[2] CANA Press Release, www.cremationassociation.org/html/pressrelease1.html, 2002.

[3] Leimer, Chris and Tina. *Historical and Social Context of Cremation in the U.S.* www..flash.net/~leimer/cremate1.html

[4] Dr. J. H. Hertz, the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, wrote that the reverential concern Abraham showed in burying Sarah "has been a distinguishing feature among his descendants." "Burial is the Jewish method of disposal of the dead...[while] cremation has always been repugnant to Jewish feeling," (Hertz, 80).

[5] Dr. J. H. Hertz, ed. *Pentateuch &Haftorahs.* Soncino Press, London, 1999. P. 842.

[6] Bromiley, Geoffery, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol.1.* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1982. P. 556

[7] Ferguson, Everett. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity.* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1993. P. 228.

[8] Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity,* p. 228.

[9] Ferguson, Everett, ed. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity.* Garland Publishing, Inc., New York, 1998. P. 196.

[10] Brown, Colin, ed. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.* Regency Reference Library, Grand Rapids, 1971. P. 265.

[11] Bromiley, Vol. 1, p. 812.

[12] Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity,* p 196.

[13] Hubbard, David Allen. *Joel &Amos,* Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1989. P. 137.

[14] The word used for burning is Pra#f5 (*ś ār ă ph,* to burn, consume). This word is used in all references to cremation cited.

[15] Bromiley, Geoffery, ed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol.2.* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1982. P. 717.

[16] Bromiley, Vol. 2, p. 423.

[17] After three days, the Jews considered decay to have irreversibly corrupted a corpse. Brown, p. 265

CHRISTIAN ETHICS: A STUDY IN KNOWING GOD

EDWIN SIMMONS JONES



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INTRODUCTION

Although we are not commonly told so, the study of ethics is, in its most essential aspect, a study of God and His nature. As God is defined by His Holy character, so we should be by ours (Lev. 19:2; cf. Matt. 5:48). This being the case, the importance of knowing God as the true basis for any valid ethical system cannot be overstated. Additionally, neither can we say too often that such a knowledge of God is much more than just a code of conduct checklist —it has to do with a relationship with God that leads to eternal life (Jn. 17:3).

In a deliberate defiance of the consequences of failing to know God (Rom. 1:18, 21), the world has

taken comfort in its own devises (I Cor. 1:18-31). In the place of God, it has substituted the Postmodern pessimism of relativism and a host of related *isms*. The substitution has left our culture on a great battlefield to fight the greatest of wars—but unarmed.

If we do not know God, we will be at a loss to properly understand ethics. Without the knowledge of God, there is only destruction (II Thess. 1:8a).

KNOWING GOD
A DISCOVERY LEARNING EXPERIENCE
JOHN 17:3

PURPOSE

Our purpose is to develop a more intimate, personal relationship with God by discovering the depths of His nature in the mind of the Spirit-revealed Christ (I Cor. 2:16). Through this relationship, we will intend to increase our conformity to Christlikeness (Rom. 8:29).

AN ELABORATION

Sometimes we fail to realize all that God has freely made available to us. In order to maximize our understanding of Christian Ethics, we must learn how to let the words of Scripture reveal to us the very person of God. This is not just knowing things about God, but knowing God Himself! The words of the Bible are the product of God's thoughts and His thoughts are a reflection of His nature (I Cor. 2:10-16).

In our learning experience we will be guided into a discovery of how the words of the Bible to reveal the person of God. Our ultimate aim will be to deepen our relationship with the Father through a reverential familiarity with Him. In this, the place and person of Jesus will be essential (John 1:1, 14, 18; 14:7-9).

METHODOLOGY

This will be a guided, discovery-learning experience. Educational research has clearly established the fact that people understand best and remember longest the things they discover. When we put things together or add them up to find new meanings and ideas, those new thoughts become a part of who we are. The necessary ingredients for discovery will be provided.

If you choose to participate in this discovery-style exercise, you will need to make a personal commitment to excellence. The subject matter allows nothing less than a quality effort. Personal responsibility will be expected. Do not misunderstand; however, the commitment will be very enjoyable. Your work will be especially rewarding!

KNOWING GOD
A LOOK AT SOME KEY SCRIPTURES

The following Scriptures were selected to help create a number of discoveries relating to the idea of finding God in the words of His revelation. As you read over them, make notes recording your thoughts. Write down any relationships you see between the

thoughts expressed in the verses—look for common words and ideas. Look especially for what you can discover about the problem Jesus had with getting people to see God in the words of Scripture? Do you see any similar problems today? What are some of the differences between just knowing Scripture and both knowing Scripture and God? What do these passages reveal about the pervasive popularity of the traditions of men? How well is the church doing with teaching and developing the truths you discover in these verses? What would you suggest could be done in order to better address the implications of these truths?

THE VERSES FOR THE DISCOVERY

1. John 7:28 (6:42; 7:41-42); 8:19, 55; 14:7-9; 15:21; 16:3; 17:3, 25-26.
2. Matthew 11:27-30; John 1:1, 14, 18; 7:29; 10:15; 14:8-9; 17:25.
3. II Cor. 4:6; Phil. 3:8; I Cor. 2:16; Col. 1:19; 2:2,9; II Peter 1:1-3; 1:8; 2:20; 3:18.
4. Phil. 2:5; I John 5:20; John 5:39-44.
5. Rom. 8:9, 29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Eph. 3:16-18; 4:11-16; Col. 1:24-29; I Peter 3:15.
6. John 14:8, 23-24, 26; 15:26; 16:13-14; Eph. 1:23; 4:10; Col. 3:17; John 1:16; Col. 2:10; 3:11; Matt. 5:48; Lev. 19:2.
7. John 14:15, 23; II Cor. 5:14-15.

Give your study time to *percolate*. Read, meditate, pray—mull over these truths for a while and see what happens. Expect to find new ideas and to refine your current thinking—Christianity is about

growth. Remember to take notes and develop your thoughts. Let the words of the Bible be unencumbered by anything that would hinder you from recognizing their intended meaning. Wherever their truth goes is where God wants it to go—that is both where God is and who He is. Let your diligence in study, prayer, and meditation allow you to grow in your knowledge of God.

KNOWING GOD THROUGH KNOWING JESUS
JOHN 14:8-9; 17:1-3

So much of what God has prepared for us depends on our acquiring the knowledge of His character. Our success in the Kingdom hinges on knowing God through knowing the Christ. How then are we to get to know Jesus? The following thoughts attempt to put the answer to this question well within the practical grasp of all believers.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS BY THE WORD *KNOW*

1. To **know**, in the Old Testament, can mean to possess an intimate acquaintance with someone.
   - God as the One we worship and serve (Isa. 1:2-3; Ps. 135:5).
   - A person in a social relationship (Gen. 29:5).
   - A sexual relationship with one's mate (I Sam. 1:19).
2. To **know**, in the New Testament, follows the same understanding as the Old

Testament by emphasizing the idea of intimacy (Jn. 10:14-15).

3. Therefore, when we speak of **knowing** Jesus, we include the factual, but we also require the personal.
4. Being Touched By the Love of Jesus is Part of the Picture
   - II Cor. 5:14-15; Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 12:2.
   - John 12:32.
   - Gal. 6:14.
5. Admiring Jesus Follows.
   - John 7:46; Mark 1:27; 2:11-12; 4:41; 15:39; Matt. 7:28-29!
   - Matt. 11:28-30.
   - Heb. 4:14-16.
6. Trusting Jesus Develops.
   - Heb. 13:5-6; II Tim. 4:6-8.
   - Mark 9:20-23; Luke 5:1-11; John 8:30-32; John 6:68.
   - Phil. 3:7-11.
7. Imitating Jesus Becomes a Joy.
   - John 14:8-9; Rom. 8:29.
   - II Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:9-10.
   - I Cor. 11:1; Gal. 2:20.

CONCLUSION

When we realize the full implication of **knowing** Jesus, we understand the deeply personal nature of the relationship. Through love, admiration, trust, and imitation we come to **know** the Savior as our best friend! This is the amazing and wonderful biblical plan for ethical behavior.

A FURTHER REFLECTION ON CHRISTLIKENESS AND ETHICS

One of the more intriguing promises made by Jesus is found in John 14:18, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you." Curiously, it is often overlooked as far as its implications for Christian Ethics is concerned. Some think the promise refers to the Resurrection, others consider it to be a promise intended only for the Apostles. I believe, however, that there are good reasons for rejecting both of these conclusions in favor of one that has substantial biblical support. Let us have a look.

First, I do not see an adequate reason for applying this statement to the Resurrection. What comfort would it give to know that Jesus would return to the Apostles for a few days before leaving yet again? The way that they would not be left as orphans would be that Jesus would Himself be with them. Yet how could this be if Jesus were going to be with the Father (John 14:28; 17:5; Acts 2:29-33). There must, therefore, be a way that Jesus would be with the Apostles even after the Ascension (cf. Matt. 28:20b).

Second, neither do I think that this promise has implications only for the Apostles. Unlike John 14:26, which of necessity could apply only to those who had been with Christ in His personal ministry, this passage seems to have no such inherent limitations. This can be readily seen by the fact that Jesus return to be with the Apostles is tied to loving Him and keeping the commandments (Jn. 14:15, 21-23). This is not, therefore, the miraculously received promise to endow the Apostles for their special ministry.

What then can explain how Jesus would be with His Apostles even after His Ascension? I believe that it can only be explained through the Spirit's ministry in the revelation of the word (John 14:16-17, 26; 16:13-14). The Spirit's revelation of the full truth for the Christian Age would be the vehicle for Jesus' return to be not only with the Apostles, but with all believers.

The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing "the unity of the faith" (literally, "the faith as a *unit*") would be a work bringing about a mature knowledge of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). The strengthening work of the Spirit would be tied to Jesus residing in the hearts of believers (Eph. 3:16-17; cf. Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27).

For Christians today, this relationship with Jesus begins as we are baptized into Him (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27). We then begin to "partake of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:4). We then begin to participate in a daily walk of transformation toward Christlikeness (II Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). In this relationship, Christians individually and the church collectively are like the temple, a place where God is present (I Cor. 6:19; 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22; I Pet. 2:5). Thus, through the medium of the word, Jesus is present within His people, even as is the Father (Matt. 28:20; Jn. 14:23; Acts 18:9-10; Heb. 13:5-6; Rom. 8:31-39).

An additional word about the presence or indwelling of Christ as it relates to the temple might help us to better understand the nature of the

relationship. When Solomon dedicated the temple he acknowledged that God did not exhaustively or totally dwell in any earthly house (I Kg. 8:27-30). Similarly, the totality of Jesus does not dwell in a Christian or in the church as a whole; He is, after all, in Heaven at God's right hand. We must thus see indwelling essentially as a matter of quality rather than mere location.

Consider how God is present everywhere in His omnipresence, and yet He is with a Christian with much greater quality than with an unbeliever (Rom. 5:1-2). Additionally, when a Christian dies, he goes into a quality of God's presence that is greater than is possible in this life (Phil. 1:23-24). But even that is not the end of it, in Heaven God's presence with His children is of an even greater quality (Rev. 21:1-4).

Christ has not left His followers as orphans! He returned in a spiritual sense through the work of the Holy Spirit. As we love Jesus and keep His word we become Christians and then live in fellowship with the Christ. In that fellowship we open up our hearts to Jesus as we continue to express our love to Him as we accept His guidance in the word. Jesus is in that way with each Christian as He is also with His church. He will not leave us or forsake us; neither will He allow any outside force to remove the faithful Christian from His love. We are not alone!

CHRISTIAN ETHICS IN THE CRAZY POSTMODERN WORLD – MATTHEW 7:21-29

Christian ethics is not, however, completely understood by defining its essential character of

Christlikeness. Christlikeness depends on the acceptance of Christ as Lord and of the Bible as the only book carrying religious authority. Even beyond this, the Bible must be accepted as a book that can and must be understood. Postmodernism brings a particularly potent and pervasive challenge to all of the necessary tenets of Christian Ethics. This challenge must be understood and successfully faced if a Christian view of ethics is to prevail.

Those who make it their business to catalogue and define social trends tell us that we now live in a ***Postmodern*** world. The ***Modern*** world, the era that just recently ended, was one of great optimism that human intellect and the scientific method would discover truth. The optimism of Modernism has, however, fallen to the pessimism of Postmodernism. Postmodern man, having long since abandoned the knowledge of God, has now, in accepting the limitations of human potential, lost all hope of finding truth. In such a world as this, we might well expect that the concept of absolute authority has fallen on exceptionally hard times. Indeed, it has! Today, for most of our culture, there is no absolute basis for ethics.

Truth is now a very relative thing (***Relativism***), controlled by situations (***Situation Ethics***), personal opinions (***Subjectivism***), and emotions (***Emotionalism***). To examine how this relativistic outlook is affecting our world, we need look no further than recent editions of the ***Knoxville News-Sentinel***, the hometown newspaper for those of us at Karns. In the space of a few days in the summer of 2000 we Knoxvillians were subjected to a revealing dose of our

Postmodern world. A brief look will allow us to see the huge need for Christian Ethics and the absolutes in which they are based. We will see the true nature of our modern problems and discover that the solution is found in a return to Christian Ethics.

POSTMODERNISM IS ALIVE AND *WELL* IN KNOXVILLE

The following comments by David Waters from 6/24/00 and 7/3/00, respectively, concern his disagreement with denominations that do not allow women to preach,

> So, for example, even if a woman experiences a "call" to be a pastor, she should measure that experience against fixed and absolute God-revealed verses like this one: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man," the Apostle Paul wrote in I Timothy 2:11.
>
> Hold on say *Living Word* (emp. mine) believers. Even *Written Word* (emp. mine) believers don't take every word of the Bible literally. They don't really believe verses like this one: "Women will be saved through childbearing," the Apostle Paul wrote in I Timothy 2:15.
>
> Take Phoebe, for example. In Romans, Paul described her as a *diakonos* (emp. mine), the Greek word for "deacon." But the word often today is translated as

"deaconess," which suggests a subordinate role.

Let's see if I've got this straight. The Roman Catholic Church, controlled by single, celibate men, claims that God limits the priesthood to single celibate men. The Southern Baptist Convention controlled by single and married men, claims that God limits the office of pastor to single or married men. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, controlled by men, claims that God limits the ordained priesthood to men. The Church of God in Christ, controlled by men, claims that God limits the office of pastor to men. Orthodox Judaism, controlled by male rabbis, claims that God limits the rabbinate to men. Islam, spiritually led by male imans, claims that God limits the role of a spiritual leader to men. Seems a bit suspicious doesn't it?

The following comments from Molly Ivins, 7/3/00, show how she regards all religious writings to be relativistic, and how she relies on a logic of assertion rather than of facts.

The problem with those who choose received authority over fact and logic is how they choose which part of authority to obey.

The Bible famously contradicts itself at many points, and the Koran can be read

> as a wonderfully compassionate and humanistic document. Which suggests that the problem of fundamentalism lies not with authority, but with us?

Terry Mattingly, 6/24/00, here relates comments from a postmodern Baptist who, in the spirit of the new toleration, sees both Christian and Eastern religions as being on equal footing.

> Seay is a Baptist, but his sponsors and coworkers in this project range from conservative Presbyterians to mainline Methodists. They want to build a congregation that is truly "multidenominational" and linked to other bodies [...]
>
> Postmodern seekers are increasingly turning to Buddhism, Hinduism and other Eastern, mystical traditions.
>
> [...] We are moving toward a more spiritual world, one that faces East. The question is whether Christ or karma will be the focus of our spirituality.

Mary Rourke, 6/24/00, here comments on the religious inconsistencies of Sinead O'Connor.

> Sinead O'Connor, the 33-year-old Irish pop star is promoting her new CD, "Faith and Courage," dressed in a priest's collar.

> Though she has been a vociferous critic of the Catholic Church, and famously ripped up the pope's photograph on "Saturday Night Live" in 1992, she now claims to be an ordained priest.
>
> The most recent Gallup Poll shows that 65 percent of the 770 American Catholics queried favor female priests.

The following remarks by Frank Cagle, 6/24/00, at last show a voice of reason. He actually is willing to accept that religious people ought to take seriously the doctrines of their faith.

> Well now, wasn't it a great story? Southern rednecks meet in convention and vote to keep women out of the pulpit. Page one everywhere, lead story for the electronic boys. Ain't it a shame the Southern Baptist Convention members are so narrow minded?
>
> There are a few details that didn't get a lot of attention in the story. But it was such a good story to bash the Baptists. It is not much reported or remarked upon but the doctrines of most religions in this country are definitely not politically correct. There is a tremendous disconnect between the doctrines of most of our religions and the current secular political thought.

> A literal interpretation of the New Testament Scripture is the doctrine of the Southern Baptists. Given that circumstance, then what other conclusion can the Southern Baptist Convention come to about women speaking in the church? So if you reject the doctrines of your church, what makes you a Catholic or a Baptist? 'Cause your parents were?

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
MR. WATERS' STRIKES OUT (PUN INTENDED)

Mr. Waters takes up a rather common interpretation question, "Should Scripture be interpreted as it was intended when written [Literal], or through the eyes of contemporary cultural norms and understandings [Living]?"

If the Bible is to contribute anything to the answer, the answer is easily determined—Literal interpretation (Jude 3; II Tim. 3:16-17; I Cor. 4:6, etc.). If the Bible is seen as merely a relativistic source in the postmodern era for subjective, emotionally based beliefs—Living Interpretation (with the understanding that a Bible that can mean anything) doesn't really mean anything.

Additionally, in answer to Mr. Waters, it does not matter if a religious group is "controlled" by men or women; its doctrines are supposed to square up with that group's source of authority—in Christianity that would be the Bible.

Mr. Waters offers no biblical basis for rejecting male leadership in Christianity. The verses he used, I Timothy 2:15 and Romans 16:1, to attempt to discredit a literal interpretation are both misused. I Timothy 2:15 in context can easily be seen as dealing with the usual or general role of women in having children. Within their usual role women find the context that best allows them to find salvation—family. In other words, the difficulty experienced in bearing children (Gen. 3:16), is more than offset by the role of motherhood.

Also, Paul did not use the word *diakonos*, a masculine form, in referring to Phoebe, rather *diakonon*, a feminine form (accusative form of the noun is the same whether masculine and feminine; when referring to a woman the feminine is understood). Additionally, the word group in question is also only translated by the word "deacon" on three occasions. Its overwhelming use is simply to refer to any who do service. There is no *literalist* slight here, Mr. Waters.

MOLLY MUDDLES THE ISSUE WITH ILLOGICAL ASSERTIONS

Would that Ms. Ivins might have supplied us with some of those "famous" contradictions that she confidently asserted were in the Bible—I have been waiting on at least one of them for years!

Additionally, as demonstrated by Ms. Ivins, if she does not like the conclusions of those who claim biblical authority, she can blithely dismiss the conclusions by suggesting they are illogical. Where,

however, are the logical arguments from Ms. Ivins to support her conclusions? Just saying so is not enough, except of course in Postmodernism.

If principles of logic were applied to the issue I am confident that Ms. Ivins would see the clear difference between the Bible and other "sacred" books. To reject out of hand that there could actually be a "received" authority, as she does by implication, is very unscientific and illogical. Let each case be tried on its own merits.

SEAY AND O'CONNOR REVEL IN POSTMODERNISM

Both Seay and O'Connor have decided to sing the postmodern anthem that there is no objective authority—you make it up as you go along. You can be a "Christian" and an Eastern mystic at the same time. You can be a member of a religious group, but you do not have to stand for anything that group embraces. Do you see where things are going!?

CAGLE BRINGS US BACK TO REALITY

Yes, the postmodern media loves to ridicule anything that is not politically correct. They commonly are very selective in what they report. The Bible and Postmodernism cannot coexist without conflict. Mr. Cagle is wise when he wonder why it should be thought unusual that Bible believers stand up for what the Bible teaches—what do you expect? Christianity must have a biblical identity or it will have no true identity at all. There can be not true ethics unless we

know with assurance that Jesus is God's Son and that the Bible is the only place to find His mind.

AND THE BIBLE SAYS?

Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18; I Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:19-20). We are to contend for the faith "once for all delivered" (Jude 3). All Scripture is inspired (II Tim. 3:16-17). The Bible is not to be interpreted subjectively (II Pet. 1:20).

The Bible is to be interpreted objectively (II Tim. 2:15). We will be judged by the words of Jesus and they are found in the Bible (John 12:48). To any who want to put the Bible to the test, the words of Philip to a skeptical Nathanael are appropriate, "Come and see" (John 1:46).

The world has changed its way of seeing. Most now look through postmodern eyes. The vision through such eyes is that of the darkness of relativism—and great is that darkness (Matt. 6:22-23)! Let us refuse the subjectivity that is just an excuse to enthrone selfishness. Rather let us embrace the Christ to acknowledge and serve His objective, absolute will. The craziness must stop! Christian Ethics must prevail!

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THE LOVE OF JESUS THE PRIMARY PRINCIPLE FOR MOVING FORWARD

As we have demonstrated, Christian Ethics are based knowing God as we see Him most clearly in the person of the Christ. There is, however, one key to

success in this pursuit that we have not as yet developed. To move forward with Christian ethics, we must first have a love for Jesus (John 14:15, 23).

The love of Jesus is the key. This being the case, how can we do a better job of cultivating a deeper love and devotion toward the Christ? In this search for more effective ways to develop the love of Christ (II Cor. 5:14-15), we need to look at the Bible to see how God went about addressing this goal. We will be tempted in a variety of ways to use human wisdom to guide us, we must not (I Cor. 1:18-2:2)!

Looking at Jesus in action is instructive. Jesus was very much a people person; therefore, we must go outside of church buildings to find ways to engage people (cf. Acts 20:17-20). Jesus' best known work was done outside the synagogue assembly.

Jesus used everyday life as His most powerful context of influence. We need to find ways to stretch the context of Christian service beyond the assembly. In this we can explore ways to let the assemblies be more effective in stimulating our love and good deeds to find expression outside the building (Heb. 10:24-25).

Bringing entire congregations into this project will be essential. It is a family thing (Eph. 4:16; I Cor, 12:12-27)! Congregational Meetings, questionnaires, personal conversations, e-mails, letters, handouts, sermons, classroom emphasis, bulletin boards, posters, announcements, messages from the elders, etc., should be employed. If we believe that loving

Christ is of surpassing importance, we need to be sure our actions testify to this.

Prayer is also a must (Phil. 4:6; I Thess. 5:17). Without God's help we are nothing; with God we can accomplish amazing things (Eph. 3:20). Our goals and purposes should be prayed for often. Special times of prayer should be part of what we do—before services, after services, special times when at the building or in our homes we will take time to pray for important congregational concerns.

We should let it be clearly understood that God has expectations for each of us. Patience, support, and encouragement are, of course, to be a primary part of this—but expectations must be understood to be an indispensable part of biblical Christianity (Heb. 5:12-14; I Pet. 3:15).

The nature of true conversion must become more pointedly understood by the congregation. God wants devoted, transforming service (Rom. 12:1-2). This cannot, however, be allowed to degenerate into a Pharisaic guilt trip based on intimidation and coercion—the love of Christ must run the show (I Cor. 13:1-3; II Cor. 5:14-15).

And just what part of the Bible gives us the most concentrated look at Jesus? Easy answer, it is the Gospels, of course. We need to live in them. They bring sense to the Old Testament by solving the mystery it left unanswered (Col. 1:24-29). They explain the courageous preaching of Acts as well as the emphasis of that preaching (Acts 2:22-41; 4:13, 19; 5:28-29). They impart life to the Epistles by giving

them the personal context of Jesus' living example as the indispensable point of reference for all they teach (I Cor. 2:16; I Pet. 2:21; John 13:34-35). They give the unshakable basis for the assured victory of Revelation (Rev. 19:16-21; 20:11-15). They show us the man that all of godly heart will love.

Christian Ethics, as we have seen, is defined by the nature of God. Our best picture of God was painted by the life of the Son. The Gospels are the starting place. In them all who truly seek God will develop a love for the Christ. As we come to love Jesus we will be transformed into His image through a loving compulsion to be like Him. With the Gospels thus understood as the most significant point of contact with Jesus, I use the words of Philip to challenge us, "Come and see."

SECTION IV

LADIES' SPECIAL CLASSES

FINDING A PLACE OF SERVICE

JODY MILLER



Jody Miller teaches classes for the ETSPM Wives' class and has conducted Teacher Training Workshops in ten states with her father, Tom Miller. Jody has also spoken on numerous lectureship and Ladies' Day programs as well as taught Bible classes from pre-school to ladies' classes. Jody has a 12-year old special needs daughter, Gwen, who is adopted. In addition to her church work, she is an active foster parent for the state of TN.

If we are to help Christ to build His Church into what it needs to be, each of us needs to be involved. It is the Lord's work; however, we are His instruments for service. The job is much too big for one person, or for even a few. The purpose of this lesson is to help us explore ways that a godly woman can determine her place to serve in the local church.

To complete the work intended, all are needed. Often times, however, in our haste to involve everyone, we overlook the diversity that exists within the body of Christ. Like fingerprints and snowflakes, each of us is different. We look different. We think differently. And, we have different abilities. The apostle, Paul, pointed this out in his writings to the churches at Rome and Corinth (Romans 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:12-14). He pointed out both our unity and our

diversity. We are one in Christ, but we are different individually.

The failure to accept our differences can be detrimental to individuals and to the body as a whole. Individuals can feel like failures and become discouraged when differences are not accepted and welcomed. People who have not discovered where they fit it are not involved, which can lead to important functions being left undone.

Diversity does not mean that some are important and some are not. All are important. There is no place for arrogant independence in the body of Christ, nor is there a place for low self-esteem. Different functions and abilities are not a reflection of our value. Each gift is to be exercised for the good of the whole body.

WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO SERVE?

How are we to determine the best place for us to serve? Where should we become involved?

First, we need to recognize that we all have a limited amount of time. It would be nice if we had the time to be involved in every good work; however, we all feel the pressure of time. Over the years, the amount of leisure time we have has decreased to the point where we have very little. For many of us, time is our most valuable asset.

To determine the area where you can best serve, you must honestly evaluate the amount of time you can devote. In addition to attending the services,

how much time can you "spare" for other activities? Do not over-commit yourself so that you cannot complete the task in a timely and quality manner. Also remember, however, that we make time for what is important to us.

Secondly, realize that no one person or small group of people can do everything. And they should not have to. Every member of the body should feel a responsibility toward that body and become involved in it is efforts. I am sure that in most congregations, however, the 80/20 rule applies. Eighty percent of the work is done by 20% of the members. Perhaps some of that 80% of non-participants would be involved if they knew what to do. If you are seeking a place to "plug-in," investigate the variety of important ways that you can serve within the body.

Lastly, volunteer to serve in whatever ways you are best suited. Not everyone can be a Bible class teacher or conduct a home Bible study. While stepping out of your "comfort zone" and trying something new can be a wonderful experience; continually attempting to do things you cannot do is frustrating. How can you determine what you are best suited to do?

WHERE DO YOUR INTERESTS LIE?

Where do your interests lie? Because of your life experiences, do you have a particular passion for some area of work? A single person probably has a greater passion for a Singles' program. A person who has lost a loved one probably has a greater interest in a Grief Recovery Group.

WHAT ARE YOUR ABILITIES?

What kind of abilities do you have? We all have talents, gifts and abilities. It is crucial to match our abilities with our area of service. Some folks seem to think they can do nothing, while some think they can do everything. The truth is somewhere in between. As the old saying goes, "No one can do everything, but everyone can do something."

Be sure you "think outside the box." Think beyond the jobs you normally consider. Can you send cards, make phone calls, put up a bulletin board, make communion bread, provide childcare for those conducting Bible studies or mow the yard? All of these are important jobs. Perhaps you never considered your green thumb as a gift you can use in the Lord's work, but it is. Additionally, if you have an interest in a particular area but are not sure if you have the ability, why not volunteer to learn how to help. Ask for the direction and opportunity to try something new. Look around your congregation. What things need to be done?

WHAT ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

What kind of personality do you have? God did not stamp us out with a cookie cutter. We are all made differently. Are you an introvert or an extrovert? Are you a thinker or a feeler? The Bible clearly shows us that God can use all of kinds of people if they will just make themselves available to Him.

There is room for everyone to serve. There are jobs for every person. Think about your interests, abilities and personality, determine the best place for you and then go to work so that you are "[...] always abounding in the work of the Lord [...]" (1 Cor. 15:58).

TO BE DISCREET AND CHASTE

SARA JONES



Sara Jones was born and grew up in Camden, Alabama. She became a Christian at the age of 18 and is a graduate of AL Christian College. She and husband, Edwin S. Jones, minister of Karns Church of Christ, have been married for 32 years. They have three children. Sara is the manager for the bookstore at ETSPM and home schools her youngest child. She and her family have done mission work in New Zealand.. Sara has taught children's and ladies' Bible classes for over 30 years, written articles for Christian publications, and taught classes for ETSPM student wives.

In his letter to Titus Paul indicates that the older women are to teach and train the younger women to be discreet and chaste, among other qualities. He wrote, "to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:5).

DEFINITIONS

One dictionary defines discreet: as: "Careful and sensible in speech and action; wisely cautious." Chaste is defined as "innocent of unlawful sexual intercourse; virtuous; pure in thought, modest, decent."

DEVELOPING THE QUALITIES OF BEING DISCRETE AND CHASTE

DISCREET: Solomon continually links the quality of discretion with wisdom and knowledge in the book of Proverbs. He says that we can gain this quality by listening to wise counsel (Prov. 5:1, 2).

The word translated as discreet in the KJV is also translated as sensible, temperate, self-controlled, and mistress of themselves.

Discretion is a quality that is essential to Christian maturity. Without it we cannot be pleasing to God, or successful in living the Christian life. No matter what degree of physical beauty we may posses, or what degree of education we may obtain, and no matter how many Bible classes we may teach, Scripture we may memorize, or good deeds we may perform, we will not be pleasing to God unless we have discretion. "As a ring of gold in a swine' snout, so is a lovely woman who lacks discretion" (Prov. 5:22).

DISCRETION INVOLVES THINKING, ACTION AND SPEECH

THINKING: The discreet woman is careful not to allow any lustful or evil thoughts that might lead to impurity to take hold in her mind. She exercises self-control over her thoughts. Solomon, said to be the wisest man that ever lived, wrote, "As a man thinks in his heart so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

GIGO is a computer acronym that stands for "good in, good out, " or "garbage in, garbage out." Computer programmers are very careful what they put into a computer since they know what they put in is what they will get out. Likewise, the discreet woman guards her thoughts and is wisely cautious what she will allow to enter her mind, so that only good things might come out of her heart. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19).

Our thoughts are affected by what we see, hear and read; therefore, the discreet woman is careful to avoid inappropriate movies and television, inappropriate reading material, and vulgar or profane language and jokes. Instead, the discreet woman programs her mind daily with God's word. She knows that to reach spiritual maturity she must fill her mind with good, wholesome, and truthful thoughts. We are given a list of worthy things with which to fill our minds in Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things." When we fill our minds with these things, they will leave no room for evil or impure thought.

ACTIONS: Since our actions are determined by our thoughts, once we have a good sense of self-control over our thoughts and our minds, and have learned to meditate continually on God's word, we will

already have taken a big step toward self-control over our actions.

We are all familiar with the old adage, "Actions speak louder than words." When your mate says he is not angry, while raising his voice and slamming his fist down on the table, do you believe him?

The woman with discretion is wise and cautious about her actions. She does not act or react in a way that is out of control or might be offensive. Unchecked actions and reactions show a poor sense of self-control. Uncontrolled actions can be traced back to the days of Cain, and is still a problem in our world today. However, as Christians we are told to be different from the world (II Cor. 6:17.)

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I just acted without thinking," or "I just flew off the handle"? Such statements show a lack of self-control over our actions. Self-control is not something we are born with, as those of us who are parents have no doubt experienced first hand. The toddler is not born knowing how to accept being told "no," but it is something that he learns with his parents' help, as they teach him to practice self-discipline. God has given every Christian the ability to be self-disciplined, but each of us must do our part in developing it.

SPEECH: By now we may be starting to feel just a bit smug and self-assured. Maybe we do not have a problem with lustful thoughts or "fly off the handle" easily, but there is still that little matter of the tongue, the most difficult organ in the body for us to gain control over. The discreet woman is careful and

sensible in her speech, carefully weighing her words before she speaks. "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Col. 4:6).

James tells us that the tongue cannot be tamed, "But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). The tongue can be likened to a wild animal. You might take a wild animal and by giving it a lot of love, attention, and training you might be able to control its naturally wild and vicious nature, but if you do not maintain your consistence in giving it all that love, attention, and training, it will revert to its natural wildness, and once again become dangerous.

Though the tongue cannot be tamed completely, it can be bridled and controlled, just like that wild animal, but it takes self discipline, and a constant vigilance to maintain control of it. The discreet woman maintains control of her tongue through prayer, a constant study of God's word, and practicing self-discipline and love. She knows that she will not be pleasing to God unless she has control of her speech. "If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless" (James 1:26).

The discreet woman bridles her tongue by filling her heart with the things of God: "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matt. 12:34, 35). The discreet

woman knows that when her heart is filled with gentleness, kindness, praise, and love, her tongue will express those emotions.

SINS OF THE TONGUE

The discreet woman avoids the sins of the tongue listed in Rom. 1:29, 30 and Eph. 5:4.

LYING: Lying is one of the things God hates. (Prov. 6:16-19). We have all heard and chuckled at the proverbial "fish story," but in reality lying is no laughing matter. We read in Revelation 21:8 that liars will not be able to enter Heaven. In our society today the truth is not held in as high a regard as it once was. The world does not see the harm in "the little white lie." The wife may tell her concerned husband that the item she just purchased cost $12, when in reality it cost $12.99, or the child may tell his teacher his homework is lost when actually he never did it. The world views this "stretching of the truth" as harmless, but as we have seen from the scriptures above, God makes no such distinction, but makes it clear that any untruth is sinful and can keep us out of Heaven. The discreet woman guards her tongue carefully and allows no untrue or deceitful words to proceed from her mouth.

The discreet woman is tactful in her speech and does not repeat everything that she hears and thinks even when it is truth. She is careful not to say more than she should. "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards" (Prov. 29:11). Some facts, even though truthful, are not appropriate to be voiced. For instance, when visiting the new

mother and her newborn baby, we may notice that the baby has unusually large ears, but it would not be appropriate to point this out to the proud new mother. Some things are better left unspoken. The discreet woman is wisely cautious about whether the truth she knows will serve any positive result by being repeated, or is something that is better left unspoken. A major part of being discreet is having a good sense of timing about our speech, knowing the "time to speak and the time to keep silent" (Ecc. 3:7). The woman with discretion asks herself before speaking: "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" and knows if it cannot pass this test it is probably best left unsaid. "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals the matter" (Prov. 11:13).

PROFANE AND IMPURE WORDS: We have but to turn on our television sets, or pick up a best selling novel, to see that profanity, swearing, and calling God's name in vain are commonplace in society today. Profanity and vulgar humor have gone from being thought of as disgraceful to taking center stage in the entertainment world of today. We are bombarded on every side with such things. The discreet woman is careful and vigilant in guarding herself from such things. Not only does she not speak such words, but she exercises careful control over what she allows herself to be exposed to. "Abstain from every form of evil" (I Thess. 5:22).

You can take a frog and put it in a pot of cold water gradually increasing the temperature and he will stay there until he is cooked. If we are not careful what we allow ourselves to be exposed to, we can be like the frog. We become so gradually accustomed to

hearing such things that we are no longer shocked or repulsed by them. Everything that we see, hear and read leaves an impression on our minds. The discreet woman is wisely selective in what she allows herself to be exposed to and is careful to speak in only a wholesome manner: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 5:29).

ANGRY AND HURTFUL WORDS: Anger is a God given emotion, just like joy and sorrow. It is not the emotion itself that is wrong but is how we react to that emotion that makes it wrong. "Be angry and do not sin [...]" (Eph. 4:26). The discreet woman does not allow her emotions to get out of control but keeps them in check. She is motivated by love and though she experiences the emotion of anger at times, she is careful to react to it in a constructive and helpful way, rather than in a destructive and hurtful way.

GOSSIP: Gossip is strictly forbidden by God: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people [...]" (Lev. 19:16). God gives a very vivid description of a woman who gossips: "idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (I Tim. 5:13).

The discreet woman neither receives nor passes along gossip. To be either the bearer of gossip, or the listener, can put us in jeopardy of losing our souls. Gossip is found in the list of things that God hates (Prov. 6:16-19). By listening to gossip we can be just as guilty as the one who passes it along.

We can often stop gossip in its tracks by refusing to listen to it. Often we have enough forewarning to be able to recognize it before we hear it, since it is usually preceded by some familiar phrases, such as, "I don't mean to gossip but [...]", or "Just keep this to yourself, but [...]" and "I don't know if it's true or not, but [...]". Gossip does not lead to anything good, but rather can hurt, promote strife, wreck homes, tear apart friendships, and destroy the influence of the church. The discreet woman does not instigate nor involve herself in any questionable conversation.

FAULT FINDING: God condemns fault finding. He ridicules those who find fault with others while overlooking their own shortcomings (Matt. 7:3-5). In Psalms 64, the fault finder is pictured as shooting arrows of sharp, bitter, and poisonous words into his victim. The Pharisee condemned himself by feeling that he was better than the Publican (Luke 18:10-12). The discreet woman does not find fault with others but rather concentrates on her own life and her own spiritual growth. She is like the woman of Proverbs 31, "She opens her mouth with wisdom and the law of kindness is on her tongue."

DISCREET WORDS

It has been said that the best bridle advice that a mother can give her daughter on her wedding day is, "Daughter, bridle you tongue." God says, "If any man offend not in word the same is a perfect man and able to bridle the whole body" (James 3:2). The woman with discretion has control over her tongue and is careful that only loving, constructive, and

helpful words come from her mouth. Her tongue is as beautiful as "Choice Silver" (Prov.10:20). Her words are like "Apples of gold in settings of silver" (Prov. 25:11). The discreet woman uses her tongue to bless, encourage, teach, comfort, cheer, impart wisdom, pray and praise God.

CHASTE: The small child is pure because of the absence of sin and temptation and because of his innocence; a woman is chaste in that she controls her actions and impulses. Our inward chastity is manifested outwardly in our behavior and our dress.

Paul begins his list of works of the flesh with sensuality: "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness" (Gal.5:19). None of these things have a place in the life of the chaste woman. God has strictly forbidden any type of sexual impurity. In his writings to the early Christians, Paul shows that all impurity and lust are forbidden in the life of the one who wears the name of Christ (Eph. 4:17-24). We are told over and over again that we must be different from those in the world and to turn from the ways of the world (I Cor. 6:15-20; II Cor.6:17; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:27).

CHASTITY INVOLVES THOUGHTS, BEHAVIOR, AND DRESS

THOUGHTS: Chastity, like discretion, begins in the mind. Though sinful and impure thoughts will at times pass through out minds because we are human, we must not allow them to dwell there or take hold. We must fill our minds with spiritual things that will drive out those undesirable thoughts. The chaste woman is careful not to allow into her mind thoughts

that might lead to actions that are impure. She carefully guards herself every minute of the day to keep herself from any kind of sexual impurity.

BEHAVIOR: The chaste woman's behavior is above reproach. Like the woman of Proverbs 31, she has a good reputation and brings honor to God and her family. She conducts herself with dignity so as to have nothing to be ashamed of. She does not engage in flirtatious behavior or risqué speech. The chaste woman, who is married, is faithful to her husband in all things.

DRESS: The chaste woman is above reproach in her manner of dress. She does not seek to draw attention to herself through her manner of dress. She is careful to dress in a manner so as not to cause anyone to lust: "But I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28), and is careful that her dress does not cause a brother to stumble. "nor do anything by which your bother stumbles or is made weak" (Rom. 14:21).

In today's society too many Christian women are allowing the dictates of the fashion world to determine their manner of dress, but the world has no place in the life of the Christian. The chaste woman clothes herself with apparel that well covers the sensual parts of her body. She does not wear clothing that calls attention to those parts of her body. She avoids the "toos" of the fashion world-too short, too tight, too sheer, too clingy, or too low. It has been said that a woman's clothes should be "just tight enough to show she is a woman, while at the same

time, loose enough to show she is a lady." Many of the styles of today leave little to the imagination. I am afraid we have become a bit like that frog in the boiling pot in our manner of dress. Immodesty has become so commonplace in our world that we are no longer shocked or disgusted by it, and we have developed too lax a level of tolerance for it. We have allowed Satan to boil us like the frog and influence us to think that these things are a matter of culture when in reality it is a matter of sin.

We will be judged on whether or not we have dressed modestly, since modest dress is a command of God. It is possible to dress both fashionably and modestly by making wise choices in our wardrobes.

The chaste woman, while being careful to be neat and attractive in her appearance, puts her greatest emphasis on the spiritual adorning of her heart. "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (I Tim. 2:9,10). She adorns herself with strength and honor and with a gentle and quiet spirit. "Do not let you 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" (I Pet. 3:3,4).

PREPARING FOR THE TASK

We see in Paul's instructions that the older women are to live so that they can both **show** and **tell** God's pattern for Christian maturity to the younger women. The older women should be both examples and teachers to the younger women in the faith, in every phase of the Christian woman's life. A man is just not equipped to teach a woman how to do a woman's work as well as another woman can. Paul implies that the older women are to first look carefully to their own lives, making sure their spiritual houses are in order, and that they are showing themselves a good example to follow, before attempting to teach the younger women. We must ask ourselves, "As an older woman, am I modeling the traits of discretion and chastity in my life?" As older women we should continually strive to become teachers who can say, as did the Apostle Paul, "Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ" (I Cor.11:1).

We should not wait until we are old to begin preparing for the task of teaching the younger women these qualities, but rather, it is something that we should begin building toward and working on from our youth. Just as a man works toward building and developing in himself the qualities that make for a good spiritual leader, or a good elder, in order to prepare himself for the future task, the Christian woman should continually work at building and strengthening in herself the qualities listed in Titus 2, in order to be ready for the task that will be hers as she grows older.

Like Paul, we should not wait until we feel we have obtained the unreachable goal of perfection to begin the process of teaching the younger women these qualities, but it is something that we should be continually striving towards, while at the same time, learning from our failures and shortcomings, and allowing them to strengthen us.

Paul gives a summary of God's pattern for spiritual maturity for the Christian woman in his instruction to Timothy concerning the worthy widows: "well reported for good works: If she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the feet of the saints if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work" (I Tim.5:10). This scripture implies that this woman has not waited until she is old to be the kind of woman God would have her to be, but rather, has worked all during her Christian life toward being more perfect in her spirituality, setting goals for herself and continually striving to reach them in her daily Christian walk.

JESUS – OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus is our perfect example as a teacher. Jesus taught by both word and example. He was well studied and knew his subject matter. He spoke with confidence and inspired confidence in his hearers (John 3:2). We can profit much by closely examining his methods of teaching.

Jesus' teaching was done with the right attitude. Those whom he taught could feel the love and compassion he felt for them (Mk. 6:34). He

taught with an attitude of humility and not with a self-righteous attitude (John8:2-11). Likewise, as older sisters we must approach our teaching of the young women with much humility and with tact and grace and not with a "know-it-all," or "self-righteous" attitude.

To be teachers like Jesus, we must continually work at increasing our spiritual knowledge, both through regular and diligent study of the scriptures, and prayer (II Pet. 3:18). We must continually strive to improve our ability to use the scripture to effectively teach others II Tim. 2:15).

TEACHING METHODS

COUNSEL: The younger women in the church should be able to rely on their older and more mature sisters in the faith for counsel and guidance in every area of their lives. They should not have to turn to worldly sources, such as magazines, television and worldly psychology for information and training in such matters as discretion and chastity.

EXAMPLE: The lives of the older women in the church should be an example of the picture that the scripture paints of what the Christian woman should be in order to be pleasing to God. Are we as older sisters in the faith modeling these qualities of discretion and chastity in our lives for our younger sisters to follow?

WORD: There are many opportunities for women in the church today to teach the younger women, in classroom settings, as well as private settings. Women can teach younger women in ladies'

Bible classes, teen girls' classes, ladies' inspiration days and ladies' retreats, serving as counselors and teachers for girls at Christian camps, as well as other situations that involve women teaching women and girls. In a less public role, the women can conduct studies with other women privately. Many women have younger women from the congregation over for coffee, and Bible study in their homes. Some have the teenage girls into their homes and teach them to cook, sew, speak, etc. There are countless opportunities to teach other women and girls in our congregations today.

There are many classes and workshops available in the brotherhood today designed to help us to improve and develop our skills as teachers. Many of the brotherhood publications have excellent articles with information and ideas to help us develop our abilities in this area.

ROLE OF THE YOUNGER WOMEN

The younger women in turn are to follow the older women's examples as they model the way God would have them to live. The younger women must take seriously the teaching done by the older women. They must have an attitude of humility and subject themselves to the teaching of the older women. They must not mistake the teaching and counsel of the older women as meddling or interference. Is this not sometimes our attitude when our older sisters, who have already walked the road we are just starting down, attempt to help us with wise counsel? By nature of the aging process we gain experience and wisdom in life. Those older in years have learned

many things from their experiences, both negative and positive.

Often we are critical of the one offering us counsel and advice. We are tempted to find fault. We need to remember that a person's life need not be perfect in order for us to learn from their experiences. Often we can benefit from the mistakes they have made as well as from the positive aspects of their experiences.

If you are a younger woman, no matter how young you are, you are an older woman to someone younger than you are. If you are a high school girl, you can model the qualities of discretion and chastity, and the other qualities listed in Titus 2, to those girls in Junior High or younger. If you are a young woman of college age, or a young adult, those high school girls look up to you as their role models, and you have a perfect opportunity to teach them. As a young woman you cannot begin too early to prepare yourself to become the woman God wants you to be. If she lives long enough, every woman will become an older woman and what better time to prepare ourselves for that than the present? Younger women should strive to adopt those patterns of thinking and living that will help them to build toward spiritual maturity. Young women, from their youth up, should be diligently studying the word in order to gain wisdom and understanding.

CONCLUSION

Let each of us examine our lives closely, looking daily into the mirror of God's word

(James1:23), to see whether or not we are reflecting the qualities of discretion and chastity. Whether or not we have these qualities will determine if we are a help or a hindrance in the work the Lord has given us to do. By failing to develop these qualities in our lives we can greatly hurt the work of the church, and without these qualities our lives are not pleasing to God.

Older women can, and must be discreet and chaste, and in turn, they can, and must show the younger women how to live lives of discretion and chastity for the glory of God.

Younger women should begin now to start developing these qualities in their lives, in order to be examples to, and to teach those younger than they are, and in order to gain knowledge and wisdom to prepare for the task ahead as they grow older.

RESPECTING GOD'S LIMITATIONS

IRENE C. TAYLOR



Irene Taylor was born in Fruitland, ID. She and Robert Taylor have two children and four grandchildren. She graduated from FHC, where she met Robert. They have worked with churches in TN, MS, and at Ripley, TN, since 1974. Irene regularly participates on programs for lectureships and ladies' days. She contributes regularly to FF, as well as composes poems for speaking engagements. Her greatest joy comes from her role as wife, mother, and grandmother.

There was a time, in years past, when the role of woman was understood by those who were in the Lord's body, the church purchased by the blood of God's dear Son. If there was any misunderstanding of her role, it was on the side of placing greater limitations than were necessary. This point will be discussed further in the lesson.

Today, there is mass confusion regarding her role in the work of the church. When our main goal was to focus on God's pattern, little chaos was evident. As we (editorially speaking) began to look about us to the activities of the religious world in general, we began to desire to be more like them. Dissatisfaction with God's pattern has **always** created problems and this is very true regarding woman's role in church matters. The denominational world has long ignored God's limitations for woman – and man. (Note

the **usurped** "power" granted the Pope, bishops, denominational "pastors" and the like). The efforts by many so-called Christians to do likewise is removing the distinctive pattern for the church and leading it down Denominational Drive!

The problem seems basically to be one of the heart. We are not really in love with the Lord! Jesus declared, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" John 14:15). The American Standard Version (ASV) renders it "ye will keep my commandments." He further states, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). These simple, yet clear, declarations go straight to the crux of the problem we face: lack of real love. **We have heart trouble!**

GOD'S LIMITATIONS

In a discussion of woman's role in the church, the question always arises, "Just what are the limitations on woman as ordained by God?" Many do not believe, or do not accept, that He has placed any restrictions on her work! And so the question follows, "Has He?"

In Paul's writing to Timothy, we have a discussion of woman's role. Keep firmly in mind the fact that this is **not** the writing of a male chauvinist as some are wont to claim. Paul was writing by the direction of **Deity**, which makes this message inspired without question. As a prelude to the discuss ion regarding women, Inspiration directed Paul to declare,

"I will therefore that **men** pray every where, **lifting up holy hands**, without wrath and doubting [disputing-ASV]" (1 Tim. 2:8, emphasis added).

While the Scriptures often use the word **men** generically, the Greek word used here – aner – is specific, referring **only** to the male part of the human race. One who lifts up **holy hands** is one whose heart and life is pure. He is one who respects God's authority and His right to determine man's sphere of operation. One cannot be pure in heart and life who rejects and rebels against God's pattern and His authority. Women **must**, therefore, willingly and respectfully abide by God's decree.

The following verse outlines the standard of dress for God's woman. (Be assured that modesty is elsewhere demanded of Christian men from the beginning of time. God has no double standard, a fact too often ignored by man). A study of modesty will be more thoroughly discussed elsewhere on this lectureship. Let it here be noted that such is tied in here with the discussion of woman's role. Christians are to be "a chosen generation, a **royal priesthood**, an holy nation, a peculiar people [people for God's own possession – ASV]" (1 Pet. 2:9). It strikes one as significant that God required the priests to clothe themselves in special attire that set them apart from the rest (Exodus 28). Does it not seem reasonable that He still requires His priests – Christians – to dress in such fashion as to be set apart from the world? If we are to be effective workers in His kingdom, we must dress the part. That this is a vital part of our Christian role should be most evident. And that we are **limited** to modest attire should also be evident!

Immediately following this foundation for her work for Him is the following:

> Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
>
> But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

The restrictions here are threefold. (1) In the presence of man she is to be in silence or subjection. This is generally understood to be in the public capacity or assembly. Men are to be in charge or as leaders (Re-read verse 8). (2) She is not to teach over men, still understood as in the public arena. Woman should not be the instructor in a Bible class consisting of men or of both men and women. That she can teach man **privately** is seen in the example of Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:24-28). Not only is this to be observed in the States, it must be observed on the Mission Field as well. (3) She is not to usurp authority over the man. Closely linked to teaching over the man, this limitation seems more encompassing. It would prevent her from "taking over" a Bible class session from her seat. It would preclude her appointment to any official capacity where she would have authority over the man. It would prohibit her from serving as an elder, deacon, preaching, presiding in public worship assemblies, etc.

Her exclusion from public office in the church is further underscored by a study of the qualifications for elders and deacons. The listing of these qualifications

comes immediately after the listing of woman's limitations. Though most of the qualifications also apply to all Christians, some are unique to the role of elder. Again, the word man is used in 1 Timothy 3: 1. Here the term means **some one, a certain one**. That certain one is identified specifically in verse 2: "the husband of one wife [...]" There is no way a woman can be the husband of one wife! Even in our loose society which is clamoring for same sex partners to be considered a married couple, such does not meet the demands of God's qualification for marriage. That God intended for a man to fill this vital office is further enhanced by the usage of male pronouns: "**his** own house [...]**his** children [...] **he** fall into condemnation [...] **he** must have a good report [...] **he** fall into reproach [...]" (vs. 4-7). The attempt to re-write the Bible by including feminist pronouns and/or eliminating all "sexist" language also does not change the import of God's requirements.

Jesus Christ was not being sexist when He chose men as His apostles and proclaimers of the gospel. It is more than amazing to this preacher's wife that women (and many men) do not recognize this as protection of the woman. The opportunity to view up close and personally the duties and problems involved in the work of the preacher and understanding somewhat the grave responsibilities resting on the shoulders of elders has made me appreciate that it is not incumbent upon me to function in such positions!

Likewise, there resides within me no desire to fill the shoes of a deacon. **His** specific role is to be supported by a faithful wife but she does not become an official deaconess.

LIMITATIONS PLACED BY MAN

It may seem strange to include a brief discussion of limitations placed by man on the role of woman. Nevertheless, such has contributed, although perhaps only in minor fashion, to the overall problem.

For a number of years, many churches apparently felt there was truly little woman could do for the Lord. As a child, I recall having only a man teacher in cradle class through primary and grade school. It was not until we moved to "the city" in eighth grade that I realized a woman was permitted to teach a girls' class at church. I was amazed when, as a junior in high school, I was asked to teach two and three year old students. (This was based on no special training of any kind – another lesson entirely)!

The concept that woman could do work for the Lord beyond her role as Christian wife and mother and preparing food on special occasions was foreign to the men in the congregation of my childhood. Surely, no one would argue that a tremendous good, perhaps her greatest, can be rendered by woman through her role in the home but she is in no way limited to that arena. Though we have learned better than this in the intervening years, in practice many women in the church today seem content to **act** as though such is still the rule! Truthfully, too many professing female Christians are not willing to do much **for the Lord** through the home!

Through the years there have been those who would prevent woman from doing any kind of teaching

through the written page even though it is clearly directed to other women or children. On occasion such objectors would confront this writer with a differing opinion over some minor point. He would then reprimand me for teaching man. My immediate response would be, "If you felt it was wrong, why were you reading my article?!!" If it is wrong for a man **ever** to read words from a woman, what are we going to do with words of woman included in the Bible? **Inspiration** selected those for inclusion! Some would eliminate the words to many of our beautiful hymns because the words were written by a woman. This would include our beloved "Jesus Loves Me." While certainly no right thinking Christian lady would want to violate God's order, she should not be limited in her service beyond what God has ordained.

SOME DEVIATIONS TO WOMAN'S ROLE

Having made the comments just above, we hasten to add that violations do exist and they are growing. "Give them an inch and they'll take a mile" is certainly descriptive of the work of women in the church by those who lack respect for the Lord. Too many, both women and men, have listened to the wrong standard of operation. They have turned to the voice of the liberal thinkers (?) instead of the Lord. Their usurpation into man's role does not invalidate any aspect of her God-given role, however.

The design for deviation has been carefully and deliberately planned. Those determined to be like the world about us years ago outlined the steps by which this could be accomplished. In this writer's file are copies of numerous pages instructing those in charge

as to how they should introduce various innovations to woman's role in public worship. When the "old fogeys" objected, the instigators were instructed to pull back and wait for the change to "sink in" before pushing forward again. And many of these instructions were at the behest of "progressive" elders!! This method has been repeated in congregation after congregation across our brotherhood.

Some of the deviations are:

1. Women teaching classes with both men and women students.
2. Women participating in chain prayer in a mixed class of men and women.
3. Women serving the Lord's Supper to the congregation.
4. Women reading scripture in the public assembly.
5. Women as part of a "praise team" leading the song service and/or performing special numbers.
6. Women giving public **testimony** in the assembly. Notice the sly progression of functions. Supposedly innocent participation in the classroom setting points the participant toward greater participation in a more public capacity. The obvious goal is the pulpit and the eldership a goal just a mere step away! That step may already be reality in the most "progressive" congregations. There has already been a cry from some circles for women to serve as deaconess or elder. (Would she be titled as elderess)? They are not to be

> handicapped by the limitations of the qualifications revealed in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1! Those defending woman's right to serve in such capacity quickly call attention to Romans 16:1-2 where Phebe is mentioned. Some Bible dictionaries describe her as a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae. However, the King James Version says simply that she is "a servant of the church [...] a succourer of many." A deaconess is simply a servant or helper. Nowhere, in a reliable translation, is there portrayed that deaconess is an official office in the church. To so declare is to add to God's word and such is condemned (Rev. 22:18-19).

The church belongs to the Lord, not man. It is He who created man and who established the church (Gen. 1:26-27; Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2). Christ is head of His church (Eph. 5:23). It is Deity's prerogative to establish the framework wherein we are to function. He has not delegated that right to us. It is a serious matter to tamper with God's will and foolish indeed is the Christian woman who listens to the ploys of the Change Agents among us.

THINGS WE CAN DO

Invariably, when teaching on the topic of woman's role in the church, the inquiry arises, "Well, what **can** we do?" It seems to this writer that much of the problem stems from a desire that our work be **seen**. Too often woman is not content to work quietly behind the scenes. There is a tendency to want our works to be recognized, but this is an empty reward

(Matt. 6:1ff). We need to give serious thought to our importance! It is not merely the man out front who makes a work succeed. The one or ones who perform the behind-the-scenes ground work tasks provide the foundation upon which any program is built. Without that foundation, no work could be accomplished. That work is duly noted and rewarded by The One who counts! We, need to get past the desire for praise of men.

The inquiry as to what woman may do is generally prompted by a desire to receive an itemized list of tasks approved for her to perform. Opportunities vary from congregation to congregation. When a new work is begun in a mission area she may have the privilege of opening her home for use as a temporary meeting place. She may even be in position to bake unleavened bread for use on the Lord's Table. In established congregations she can certainly volunteer for her turn at preparing the Lord's Supper. This is such a simple task and yet so vital to our worship each Lord's Day. Why, then, must we be begged to do our part?

Teaching children and other ladies is certainly an opportunity for woman to wield great influence. Here, again, it is sad that most congregations must beg for teachers. Ask any director of the teaching program. It takes dedication and a willingness to study to impart knowledge to others. It has always disturbed this writer that we are content merely to secure a "warm body" to instruct in our classrooms with no training. Should our public school systems follow this policy the outraged cry would be deafening! This writer has yet to learn of a congregation that **trains**

the teachers before placing them in the classroom. We continue our present practice with our spiritual teaching – the area which directly affects the destiny of a child's soul in eternity. When will we ever realize the need for training our Bible Class teachers? **Perhaps the root of the problem lies in a lack of desire in individuals wanting to be trained!** All teaching need not be done in the classroom setting. Some of the most effective is that done one-on-one. Inviting others to come for teaching by a competent teacher can bring amazing results (See John 4:28ff).

Vastly overlooked in our day is the tremendous opportunity to promote the growth and strengthening of the church through the avenue of hospitality. Our mothers and grandmothers put us to shame in this realm. In a day when wives have all push button conveniences, the beautiful homes, matched china, silverware and crystal, who is it who usually signs up for the visiting preacher, etc.? It is most often the older ladies who may or may not have the items mentioned above but who open their homes to guests with a welcome that is warm and inviting. Today's wife either works outside of the home and thus excuses herself from this practice, or today's mother is involved in so many out-of-home activities, either school or civic, that she has little time left to extend hospitality. There is still the opportunity of providing food and assistance to the sick, bereaved and needy. True hospitality is not necessarily a table filled with gourmet food. It may be a simple snack but it is presented with such warmth that one's guest feels welcome and comfortable (Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9). Newcomers and visitors should be extended special, warm hospitality. The command to be hospitable is

not to be exclusive to elders!

Our role in the home can make the difference in the strength of a congregation. If each Christian home reared children to respect and obey God's will and render faithful service to His cause only heaven knows the effect it could have on His church. If each generation passed that legacy on to the next generation it would not be long before we could turn back the tide of liberal influence now invading the church.

The example we set before our fellow man is one of the most effective tools with which we can influence another. It matters and matters greatly the manner in which we conduct ourselves in daily life. We are **limited** to conducting ourselves as women professing godliness (Tit. 2:3). Our speech, our dress and our conduct should always be of the highest standard reflecting that we are truly children of the Most High God.

Christian women must abound in good works (1 Cor. 15:58). When we are busily engaged in that which is good and brings glory to God, we will not have time to be influenced by the world's cries surrounding us.

ARISE AND BE BUSY

May it never be our attitude to declare, "There is nothing for me to do!" If we are willing to do the numerous menial tasks which need to be done, there is always a work for us. If we **really** want to be busy, there is plenty we can do. When we graduate to

Christian maturity to the point of willingly serving as "unsung heroes" God will have a need for us to fill.

As a young lad in the temple talking with the doctors, Jesus laid down a principle for us to follow. He said to Joseph and Mary, "[...] wist [know-ist] ye not that I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49). The busy person is not only a happier person, she will find little about which to complain.

God placed limitations on woman for a reason. Firstly, "Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13). Someone has to be head or commander. Christ is Supreme Commander and man must answer to Him but woman is in subjection to man. She was the one deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). This writer also believes woman is being granted protection with man shouldering the greater responsibilities in matters pertaining to the work of the church with its difficulties and serious decisions. Rather than resenting such, we should be grateful that they, not we, must wrestle with the problems that arise.

Let us forget about resenting our role. Let us be thankful for our abilities and opportunities to serve. Instead of the attitude displayed by the lady lawyer who deeply resented having to be in a Bible class taught by a man with a mere high school education, let us overcome sinful pride and be busy with **our** Father's business. **Let us arise and go to work!**

MODESTY

MARY SMITH

Mary Smith was born in Lilesville, NC. She is a member of the Olga Ave. church of Christ in High Point, NC. She is married to Lonnie Smith, Sr., who served as elder of the Olga Ave. church for twenty years. They have two sons, Lonnie, Jr., and Thaddeus. Lonnie, Jr., is the minister of Scarboro church of Christ in Oak Ridge, TN, and Dean of Students at ETSPM. He and his wife, Brenda, are the parents of Mary's precious granddaughters, Britney and Brooke. Thaddeus is a Lieutenant with the U.S. Navy. He and his wife, Yolanda, reside in Chesapeake, VA. Mary has spoken at Ladies' Days and retreats. She shares in teaching Ladies' Bible classes and Wednesday night primary class. One of her favorite scriptures is Proverbs 3:6, "In all they ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths."

INTRODUCTION

As we look at our world today we can see in our modem permissive society that moral values are at an all time low. We have lost all shamefacedness. Immodesty in dress, impurity in behavior and attitude and indiscretion in conversation have inundated society and seem to be overflowing into the church.

We are like ships on the ocean. As long as the water remains in the ocean we are safe, but when the water starts coming into the ship we are in danger of sinking. We are in the world, but when we allow the world's thoughts, behavior and attitudes to permeate

our lives and control our actions we are ships in danger of sinking. As Christian women we must be sure that our dress, behavior and attitude are worthy of the Savior's name we carry.

BIBLICAL USAGE OF MODESTY

As we look at the biblical usage of modesty we find in I Timothy 2:9 these words "In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearl, or costly array; but that which becometh women professing godliness with good works."

The Bible further states in I Peter 3: 3-4 "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold or 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."

Modesty means more than being covered. Vines' dictionary defines modesty as orderly, well organized, decent.[1] We are to be well ordered, not just in dress and behavior, but also in our inner self, which is manifested in out outward actions. We can act or talk immodestly just as we can look immodest in our appearance.

Our responsibility to God is to keep every aspect of our life fitting for him. Our body is God's creation and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (I Tim. 6:9). We must not yield to vain impulses but

exercise temperance in dress, attitude and behavior. We are responsible for inappropriate messages we convey to others in our dress, mannerism and language.

MODESTY IN DRESS

Every age has had its form of immodest dress. In this modern world of indecent exposure, we as Christians have a special responsibility to wear clothes that are modest and appropriate. Children of God must be careful in the selection of the clothing we wear.

Posted recently on the bulletin board at my place of employment was a memo in reference to dress codes. It said:

> Extremes in dress are not appropriate in the work place. No short shorts are allowed. All shorts should be no more than 4 inches above your knee. Also clothing should not display offensive language or images. Your cooperation is needed.

Inappropriate dress in the work place prompted the posting of this memo. Just recently the newspapers and television reported controversy concerning inappropriate dress and behavior that banned Miss North Carolina from proceeding to the Miss America Pageant. The pageant's moral clause banned its contestants from engaging in any activity that could reasonably be characterized as dishonest, immoral or indecent. We should not be underdressed

nor overdressed. If what we put on is too short, too tight, too sheer, too low, too clingy then it is too inappropriate to wear. Edith Head, a famous Hollywood costumer said, "Your dresses should be tight enough to show you're a woman and loose enough to show you're a lady."[2]

As godly women we have no need to draw attention to ourselves with fashion fads. Fashion does not change modesty. Shorts and halter tops that reveal too much, scanty undergarments that show the form of the body, splits in skirts and dresses that reveal too much are not proper attire for the woman who wishes to be pleasing to God.

God has always been concerned about modesty in dress. This was seen early in man's history when he made clothing for Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:21). If you have any doubt as to whether a certain garment is modest, chances are it is not. Open your closets, take a look, and ask yourself these questions as you take inventory. Would I wear this garment in the presence of Jesus? Do I have garments that fit too tight; blouses that gap at the bust line; fabrics that reveal too much of the outline of any part of my body? Do I own swimsuits or other clothing that cover no more than my underwear? Do I ever wear clothes that are scant enough that a man would desire to mentally or physically disrobe me or have evil thoughts about me? If your answer to these questions was no, then you are honoring God in your dress. However, if your answer to any of the questions was yes, you have some closet cleaning to do. Dressing appropriately and in good taste give glory to God for "We are a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that we may show forth the virtue of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light"(I Pet. 2:9).

MODESTY IN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR

Attitude has been defined as a way of acting or behaving that shows what one is thinking or feeling. "As a man thinks in his heart so is he" (Prov.23: 7). We are never far from our thoughts for they are acted out in our behavior.

No wonder Paul instructs us in Philippians 4:8 to think on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. In all things we are to show ourselves to be a pattern of good works in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech, that cannot be condemned, that he that is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of us (Titus 2:7-8).

No matter how good a religion we "talk," we will never convince anyone unless we communicate the same message by the way we live. Our walk must go along with our "talk." When what we show and what we talk conflict, those around us will discard what we tell them and believe only what we show them.[3]

Paul's conduct was of such that not only God knew but also the people around him could witness that he behaved devoutly, justly, and blamelessly. The psalmist David said in Psalm 101:2," I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

Wise behavior involves being well disciplined in our speech also. Control of the tongue is a constant challenge to every Christian. A Jewish proverb says, "Words are like medicine, they should be measured with care, for an overdose may hurt." A tongue out of control can tear a home, a community or nation apart. A controlled tongue can help spread the gospel and win souls to Christ.

Paul warns us against bad language, meanness, and improper use of anger, quarrels, harsh words, and bad attitudes towards others. The words of our mouth and the meditation of our hearts should always be acceptable to God. Our words need to have the right amount of salt to be pleasing to God. Paul tells us in Col. 4:6 that our speech needs to be seasoned with salt. Our speech will have a well-blended flavor if we apply the following attributes of salt to our speech.

Salt saves – Spiritually, if any saving influence is to come through our speech, we must guard our lips carefully.

Salt flavors – Whenever our words have the right amount of salt our speech will be both wholesome and tasteful.

Salt de-ices – Salt melts roads and sidewalks that have become harden with ice. The salt of kind words will also melt harden hearts.

Salt operates internally- Salt placed inside food changes its taste. Our speech, when controlled from the inside, will make us think before we speak.

James's advice is to be "quick to hear, slow to speak.". God will hold us accountable for careless words. Words should be treated like money. They should be spent wisely, never wasted, and whenever possible used as an investment.[4]

As women of God we should demonstrate strong convictions. Queen Vashti stands out as a woman with strong conviction in her behavior and attitude. There is a saying that states, "If you do not stand for something, you will fall for anything." Because Queen Vashti stood up for what she believed, she was removed from her royal position. She refused to violate the custom of decency and modesty by allowing herself to be paraded before a huge gathering of wine-filled men. She knew that it was considered shameful for a woman to appear before any man except her husband. She stood firmly on what she believed to be right and proper.

Christians today are sometimes called upon to pay a high price for their determination to do right. How many today would be willing to forfeit a high position because of our strong convictions in the standards set forth by Christ.

People should be able to see a difference between Christians and the non-Christians because of the way they live. We must be willing to put off the old man of sin and put on the new life in Christ Jesus. As we live each day we must let the word of God dwell in us richly so that it controls our minds as well as our actions.

CONCLUSION

Purity of life starts from within and manifests itself from without. We should adorn ourselves with the fruit of the Spirit that produces character traits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Ga1.6: 22-26). These adornments give beauty and grace to our spiritual life. Our Christian faith should be modestly and consistently lived so that our influence will have a positive affect on others. We influence so many people it is hard to imagine the impact and force we have. We can inspire to lofty heights or plunge to the lowest depths of the earth's society.

MY INFLUENCE

My life shall touch a dozen lives
Before this day is done;
Leave countless marks for good or ill
Ere sets the evening sun,
So this I wish, I always wish,
The prayer I ever pray,
Lord, may my life help others lives
It touches day by day.[5]

ENDNOTES

[1]W.E. Vine. Expository Dictionary of the New Testament Words (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1981)

[2]Nancy Eichman, God's Makeover Plan (Nashville; Gospel Advocate Company 1998). p.76

[3]Sandra Humphrey, What Do You Communicate (Nashville; Christian Communications 1988) pp. 16-18

[4]Nancy Eichman. Seasoning Your Words (Nashville, Gospel Advocate Company 1997) pp.16-17

[5]J.B. Livingston, Today's Victories Woman Vol. n (Texas: Quality Publications 1983) p.66

LOVING HUSBANDS AND CHILDREN

JANE BROWN



Jane (Pierce) Brown is married to Charles Brown, Dean of Admisions at ETSPM. She teaches classes for the wives at ETSPM. Charles and Jane have three married children and eight grandchildren. She has spoken on lectureships at FHU, OVC, and ETSPM. Jane has participated on Ladies' Inspiration Days in numerous states. She has also appeared on several Teacher Training series. "The Perfect Fragrance is a video by Jane and produced by *"The Way of Life."*

Home is the haven into which is built principles, ideals, integrity of purposes, courage, unswerving honesty, sympathy, loyalty, and understanding. A family is a shelter from the storms of life. The family is that basic unit which holds up all else. Marriage means companionship, shared joy, and responsibility.

Home is the beginning point for biological life to begin (Gen. 1:28) and the beginning of moral, mental, spiritual, and emotional life (Luke 2:52). When God sent His only son to earth, He came as a little baby in a family. Believe in the value of the family! A judge once said, "We adults spend far too much time preparing the path for our youth and far too little time preparing our youth for the path."

We need wisdom from God. The Old Testament book of Proverbs is **practical** wisdom,

showing us what we cn do to succeed in this puzzling world without losing our way and ending in disaster.

God's wisdom is contrasted with man's wisdom. Living God's way changes a home full of anger, power, and fractured relationships into a home of peace, submission, and togetherness. The one word is exercised wisdom learned from God, the Master Designer. We will explore verses in Proverbs for learning to have peace, joy, and stability on earth that will lead to eternal life. Proverbs is the best marriage manual!

It begins with wisdom personified as a woman and ends with that beautiful role model woman of value and worth. In between the first chapter and the thirty-first chapter, many women are named.

> Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord (Proverbs 18:22). [All scripture from the KJV.]

Our husbands are to be our closest and dearest friends as well as our lovers. Ideally we talk to each other. A survey found that both men and women ranked the ability to talk to each other about feelings as one of the three most important elements in a mature relationship.

Weddings are happy; it is the living together afterwards that causes all the trouble. God's idea of marriage has always involved **completing** one another rather than **competing**. Completeness was the first marital counseling to Adam. God went to

great lengths to bring Adam to the realization that Eve would complete his life. God placed woman in a very essential place in His plans.

Wives, love your husbands unconditionally as God loves us unconditionally. How can we do that? We pray for him often (James 5:16). It is impossible to neglect a dear one for whom you are praying. Focusing on your husband's needs before the throne, God will keep him in your heart.

Plan good things for him daily (Prov. 21:5). Post notes of your love for him on the bathroom mirror. Make his favorite dessert or quit cooking the unhealthy foods you have always served him. Buy him a sweatshirt or t-shirt with his favorite sports team's name on it. Sew that button on his shirt. Keep his clothes clean, folded, and in the drawer where he can find them.

Make time for yourself. You cannot give, give, and give unless you are calm and confident. A simple scented soap in your shower may lift your spirit.

Have favorite happenings, words that produce good memories, laughter, and traditions (Prov. 17:22). These can be glue to hold a marriage through hard times (Prov. 16:24). Read the comics to each other. Save jokes to tell each other. Laughter causes fewer wrinkles than frowns. What a good beauty treatment to keep us younger looking!

Prepare for your husband's homecoming. This shows he is a priority in your life. Have the table set for dinner. This is a promise of what is to come, a

tempting mouth-watering meal. I read that before marriage, a woman's favorite words are, "I love you." After marriage, her favorite words are, "Let's go out to eat." Eating out is fun and necessary sometimes, but budgets and finances do not always permit it (Prov. 17:1).

Prepare your words and actions to say, "Welcome home" (Prov. 12:25). What if you work outside the home and are not home before your husband? Refresh your make-up, spray your favorite fragrance and put on a smile before you come into the house. Have a plan and prepare for the evening meal.

William Shakespeare wrote many hundreds of years ago, "They do not love that do not show their love."

Consider many verses in Proverbs which deal with our words and actions with anger. Proverbs 15:17; 17:1; 21:9; 21:19; 27:15 write about love versus hatred in a home which practices extravagance, a contentious woman who nags, and a wife who wants to live in a "wide" house. Make your home a refuge from trouble, agitation, and stress. Make your home a "safe" haven for your husband. Your husband should know he can tell you problems that you tell no one else (Prov. 25:9). When we apply all the wisdom found in these verses, submission to our husbands becomes pleasing to us.

We show our love and compassion by the way we communicate in body language. Look into the eyes, lean forward in anticipation of what he will stay.

Standing with our hands on our hips or folded on our stomachs gives a negative reaction.

Some suggestions for better **verbal** communications:

1. Confine the discussion to the event, especially if there has been a disagreement. Do not bring out the garbage can with all the leftover feelings.
2. Discuss the problem, not the character of the person nor the faults of the person.
3. Never use sarcasm. A wall will be built instead of a bridge.
4. Be ready to say, "I'm sorry," and mean it. Pray together.
5. Give positive reinforcement. If your husband comments on the good food, say, "Thank you. I prepared it for you." You have linked your appreciation with his action. Plan meals he likes. Keep your home clean and attractive no matter how small it is.
6. Be trustworthy (Prov. 31:11). A wife who is trustworthy does not ridicule her husband privately or publicly. God's love demonstrates acceptance. Love will honor with kind words and makes her husband feel secure. Joy will result. A man wrote, "Where happiness is we seldom see a failure regardless of weaknesses or lack of ability." Proverbs 4:23 is appropriate here, "Keep thy heart will all diligence; for our it are the issues of life." Without trust, there is no foundation for a lasting marriage.

7. Communicate how your money will be spent. Financial differences and problems create a major problem in marriages. Decide how much you will charge on credit cards, what major purchases of clothing are needed this season. **Pray for guidance and wisdom.** Give God from the total income.
8. Appreciate your husband's good qualities; what first attracted you to your husband. Dwell on these. Find one thing everyday to thank him for. Compliment him with sincerity, not flattery. Be specific. If he has repaired the washing machine, say, "You really save us a lot of money by knowing how to repair the washing machine."

We need an inner certainty that tells us we are loved enough to establish an outer predictable trust, in others. If this loving and nurturing are absent the first several years of a child's life, it may be impossible to establish later in life. The child becomes an adult who is very detached from emotion. This adult will feel "Who can love me?" Trust will have to be built. Henry Van Dyke wrote, "One truly affectionate soul in a family will exert a sweetening and harmonizing upon all its members." Are you sweetening and harmonizing?

The book of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon describe the wholesomeness of sexual intimacy in marriage. The sexual actions renew the marriage relationship and is blessed by God. It is the most intense expression of giving and receiving. This physical relationship gives security and fulfillment.

Marriage is a relationship in progress. Many joys come throughout a marriage. We keep these joys faithfully between husband and wife.

Cleon Lyles, a preacher, wrote before his death:

> A man needs a home because of his need for a place where he can shut out the world. A wife who loves her husband can provide that kind of home for him. In the stress and strain of living, beaten by the waves of many waters that seek to weaken and destroy, many a man has gone home to find the strength he needed to face up to life and become its master. It is a tragedy when a man does not have a kind of home he can turn to at the end of a long hard day.

If a home is blessed with children, what a responsibility parents have. When the child is placed in our arms, the child feels secure. Security is one of the greatest needs of children. As parents, we want to give them roots of security so that they will blossom and grow into the beautiful flowers God wants. For this reason, security is on your handout before spirituality. A sense and awareness of security comes before teaching verbally.

You remember the very beautiful story of four people discussing their favorite translations of the Bible? One liked the **King James** best, another liked the **American Standard**, another liked the **New American Standard.** When the fourth person spoke,

he said he liked his mother's translation. She translated the Bible into life, and it was the most convincing translation he ever saw. This is our task as mothers – to translate the Bible into every avenue of a child's life. May our children say, "We get to go to church," instead of " Do we have to go to church?"

God, over and over in the Old Testament, told Israel that they were His people and He loved them. He had created many good memories for them. What memories are you creating for your children to feel secure, loved, and wanted? Tucking them into bed at night, baking cookies, sharing holiday memories, rehearsing songs together, taking time to play with your children, and celebrating special occasions such as birthdays live with them forever. Make memories! Stu Weber wrote, "Inheritance is priceless. Heritage is a treasure. Clear paths left behind are the pathway for tomorrow." My hope for children is that when they visit and reminisce as adults, they have more good memories than bad memories.

Our children's spiritual lives are the most precious part of our children. If I provide my children clothing, money, computers, a college education, and a home and do not impart spiritual values and trust in the Lord (Prov. 3:5-6), then I have not fulfilled my role as a Christian mother. A spiritual heritage is provided as parents combine their faith into their daily lives and activities in such a way as to demonstrate knowing God makes a real difference.

Christianity is a daily walk. The home is the most important laboratory. It has been said that we remember thirty percent of what we hear, sixty

percent of what we see, and ninety percent of what we do. Live by example and words. "Train a child in the way he should go [...]" (Prov. 22:6).

The wise woman of Proverbs 31 trained her children to live as adults. Start your children early in life with responsibilities as part of a family who works together. Cooperation makes the work go faster and then all of you can have a picnic in the yard. Have a checklist in the child's bedroom.

Make up the bed	✓
Put away toys before bedtime	✓
Set the alarm clock and be ready for school on time	✓
Lay out school clothes the night before	✓
Brush my teeth	✓

As the child grows older, add to the list.

We are doing our children great harm if we fail to train them to know the value of work. Proverbs 22:6 teaches that the principles they learn as children will benefit them as adults. This verse applies to more than their spiritual training.

Teach sons and daughters housecleaning habits, laundry "do's and don't's," simple cooking, care of stained clothes, and how to manage money. They will bless you. Give your child an allowance and discuss what the money should cover. First consideration would be to the Lord. As the child grows older, increase the amount and let him be responsible

for more things, including school lunches, clothes, and entertainment.

Assign home jobs for a certain period of time and then change the jobs to other children. They learn how to do more things. Remember we have learned ninety percent is learned by **doing**! A very wise elder's wife counseled me when our sons were young to give different jobs rather than letting one son do the same work all the time and the other son do another job all the time. One son did the lawn mowing, and the other son did the vacuuming. Many grumbles and complaints were heard by this mother after I switched their jobs. The happy ending of all the moaning and groaning came when the boys had jobs to help pay for college and graduate school. One son (who had loved mowing) had a job to vacuum a house for a woman as he and his wife lived rent-free on her property. The other son (who loved vacuuming) had a job with lawn maintenance of commercial property. Mothers, prepare your children to live in the realistic world. In our sons' married lives, each one vacuums as needed and takes seriously the yard maintenance and landscape.

Encourage your children to like good books, history, art, music, foreign cultures, good manners, courtesy to all people, and even foreign languages. Discuss a book that has been read by all. Make a list of books. Take your children to story hour at the library. Have them think of the library as a great place to be. I had the happy privilege last summer to spend time in a bookstore with our granddaughter and help her select some Nancy Drew books which her mother, our daughter, had read as a child, and I had read as a

child as well. Three generations enjoyed discussing these books.

In the majority of families today, very little time is spent together. Make family mealtime, at least one a day, a **TOP** priority. Choose the meal best suited to your schedules. In our family, dinner time was the best. My husband said, "I'll be home by six, or I will call." The children were to follow his lead. Our children had the average involvement in school activities and we understood. Those nights I prepared the same food we had for dinner on a tray and let the child know we had missed him or her. Our meal was shared.

Sitting at a table together is one of the best ways for parents to have communication on a daily basis. Mealtimes can be happy times. The food and conversation weave into memories. The child thinks, "My father and mother want to spend time with me." Food stimulates conversation. Think about the many times Jesus enjoyed people in conversation and food. Discuss the day's activities. Tell jokes, discuss world happenings, and family plans.

Permit your child to set the table with creativity. Serve appetizing food because we eat with our eyes before we eat with our mouths.

Mealtimes develop social skills in carrying on a conversation and using good manners. Teach the use of knives, forks, and spoons. Require courtesy with, "Please pass the meat." Manners are for family first and then for company.

The mealtime is a good time to have family devotions, simple ones as children are little. More time as the children get older can be used. Go around the table and recite the books of the Bible, say a memory verse, or tell a favorite character in the Bible. Let your sons plan a devotion.

Christian parents may assume that their children are protected from the seventy percent of all American teens who have had sexual intimacy by age eighteen. Nearly twenty-five percent of American infants are born to unmarried mothers, and these babies' mortality rates are higher than the rest of the infant population.

Pressure to have sex before marriage is more powerful today than it ever was. Puberty with raging hormones arrives earlier today. Young people have more years to keep their sexual urges under control (Prov. 6:20-28). Family schedules leave children alone at home; a fact that has been true for many years is that the greatest number of teenage unmarried pregnancies occur in the girls' homes when the parents are not home.

Peers pressure a young person to have sex and may ridicule the teenager. Christian teen girls have told me that Christian boys have urged them to take the pill and go ahead with sex.

Self-control to say "No" does not start with the teen years. Your rules, discipline, and consequences have been going throughout the child's life. By the time the teen years arrive, the child has learned some self-control. Young people desire our guidance and

protection from the movies, TV, music, and books (many required reading in English classes).

We want our young people to keep their bodies pure to present them on their wedding night in purity to their spouse. Train them from an early age that their bodies belong to God and are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:18-20). His or her body is to glorify God. The clothes they wear and their body movements reveal whether their awareness of this principle is known.

Pray with your child that another child of the opposite sex is keeping himself or herself pure for a future mate. Such prayers will place your child's faith in God's control. Talk with your child about what qualities he or she wants in a mate. Be there for your child to ask questions and answer honestly. Tell your daughters how God has prepared their bodies in maturity to have children within marriage (Heb. 13:4).

Studies now show that teenage girls who have a good relationship with their mothers have less or no sex before marriage. Once again, social conditions are saying what God's Word has taught. Secure attachment promotes healthy self-esteem. Insecurity will develop such a strong desire to be held and touched that teenagers will revert to sinful measures to obtain false love.

Research shows that parents' active affection towards their children is the most important factor in shaping their children's sexual identity. Mothers, encourage your husbands to hug your sons and

daughters. The affectionate father is most likely to encourage a child to have a healthy body identity.

Teach your child what is appropriate and inappropriate touching by the opposite sex. What God wants covered by the body is not an appropriate place to touch.

Use your home freely for your children's friends to congregate. Be around and not gone. Have family rules that if you are not home, neither is a child's friend to be in the house. Pray, pray, pray for all of you to have strength to obey God!

One of the main purposes of disciple in our homes is to have children realize that they are responsible for their actions. When we discipline, we want to shape instead of crush our children's spirit (Prov. 15:13). Discipline provides firm direction and self-assurance that will benefit them the rest of their lives. Recognize the differences in personalities and train them according to their needs.

Explain carefully your rules, expectations, boundaries, and **consequences**. Be sure the child understands.

Discipline in private, not before the whole grocery store or church.

Hug your child after punishment. Tell him God loves him and you do too.

Think seriously about being at home when children come home from school. If you are working

outside the home, consider options for being with your children. Postpone that career that is far less important than your children's few years at home. I have talked with college-educated women who feel home is more important than career. I realize many mothers must work outside the home, but count the cost.

The stronger the foundation of the home, the greater will be the strength of the children. Wives and mothers, take heart. God is for you and exalts you in all the Bible, and especially in this great book of Proverbs.

TO BE KEEPERS AT HOME

FELITA SMOTHERMAN



Felita Smotherman is a Christian who worships with the saints at the Highway 231 South Church of Christ in Murfreesboro, TN. She is married to Sherman who is an elder at the congregation and they have two children, Shia and Jantrice. She is a real estate agent with The Prudential Rowland Real Estate, Inc. Her favorite things to do are read and receive edification from others as they tell of the goodness of God. She longs to be among the saved who will gather around God's throne and proclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain". She hopes to see all of you there!

For as long as I can remember, women have struggled with their roles in and out of the home. It is important to establish in our minds who will have the final say and how important this final say is to us. "And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18)[1]. Therefore, as women in the vineyard we must examine everything we do to make sure we are falling in line with God's original plan for us. God's original design for woman was for her to be a helper to her husband. This is very important to remember as we establish our roles in the home. We live in a world where statements are made to teach us to consider ourselves above all others. Statements such as, "If you don't look out for yourself who will?" or "Women don't have to be second class citizens," and so on, and so forth. If we buy into these types of

statements the door is open for Satan to make an attack much like he did in the Garden of Eden. Eve had a desire to know more than God wanted her to know and to be more than God wanted her to be. She had a desire to be just like God (Gen 3:5). As women we sometimes desire a different road other than the one God has mapped out for us. We do not understand why Eve did not just walk away from the forbidden tree. Were not things good enough for her as they were? She had a beautiful place to live, plenty of food to eat and a wonderful husband to enjoy. Perfection was at her disposal but in her mind something was missing. Why did Eve want more than God had given her?

GOD HAS THE RIGHT ANSWERS

In Genesis chapter 3, Eve does not consult God or consider how the choice she is about to make will affect her home. She simply has a desire and follows that desire. Seemingly, this is the same action that takes place in the home today. Because of Eve's choice in the garden we have consequences we must live out today. If we do not get back to the basics and consult the Bible in managing our homes today we will experience more and more havoc from within our family structure. We all must admit that things have changed in our homes. The God-centered values we once knew seem to disappear year after year. Can we trace the problem? Is there a solution? Just as God had all the right answers in the garden, He still has all the right answers today.

Paul writes: "to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands,

that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Tit 2:5). The KJV uses the phrase "keepers at home" instead of homemakers. Why is this so hard for the women of today? Does this piece of advice still pertain to us? What does this mean? What are the consequences of not doing things God's way?

The Greek word for *keeper* means guard, manager, one who preserves or maintains. Psalms 121:5 says, "The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade at your right hand." This scripture tells us that God is responsible for us. He cares what happens to us. He is our guard and manager. He is our shield when life heats us up. Ps. 91:9-11 reads, "Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways." God has always kept or preserved those He loves. There are benefits bestowed upon us simply because He loves us. Were it not for God we would not know how to care for or manage our homes and families.

Peter writes: "As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3). Because of this scripture we know that the answer for everything we need in life is found in the word of God. With this in mind let us explore the word of God as it relates to women as "keepers at home."

WARNINGS AGAINST DEPARTING FROM GOD'S WAY

Ezekiel warns the children of Israel in chapter 44:8, "And you have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep charge of my sanctuary for you." One of the reasons why women do not take serious being a keeper at home is because society has made it very easy to set others in charge of our children and homes. The same warning Ezekiel had for the children of Israel can be used for women today. Our families are holy in the sight of God. They are precious to Him and should be equally precious to us. Have we set others in charge of God's holy things? We have an abundance of daycare centers and maid services. This makes it very easy for women to enter the work force outside the home and to leave God's children in the hands of those who may not know Him nor be interested in keeping His commandments. While the Bible does not specifically say that it is a sin to work outside the home, we know it is order that Paul is encouraging according to Titus 1:5. Just as God wanted order established in the church, He wanted order established in the home. He gives us the formula for doing just that in the book of Titus. As clearly stated in Titus 2:3, the older women should be "teachers of good things." One of the good things Paul instructs the older women to teach the younger is how to be keepers of the home. The opposite of order is disorder or chaos. When wisdom is not utilized in this area of our lives, we invite disorder and chaos into our homes. Why does Paul instruct the older women to teach the younger women and not the other way around? The reason Paul advises the older women to do the teaching is

because they have lived through some of the same choices the younger women will be faced with making. They have by experience proven what works and what does not work. Women would do well to adhere to the same advice today. Find an older Christian woman who has worked outside the home. Ask the successful businesswoman in her sixties about her relationship with her children. Ask her if she had it to do all over again would she change anything? Ask her what God has taught her about home and career. Ask with a heart that really desires a word from the Lord through the life of a woman with experience. Do not stop at one ask several and be ready to receive words of wisdom. Seek the order God desires for your life. Seek the order He desires for your home.

In seeking to keep order in the home we would do well to examine the way the Maker of all order keeps His children. In order to receive the results God wants us to receive we must sincerely desire to do everything His way. Remember to be a keeper means to guard, manage, preserve and maintain. What examples can we glean from God's word?

EXAMPLES FROM GOD'S WORD

Let us first look at how He kept the children of Israel. In the book of Exodus chapter 1 we read where a new king arose in Egypt. He decided the children of Israel had grown too much in number and that he would deal shrewdly with them to keep them from multiplying. He afflicted them with heavy burdens but they multiplied and grew even more. The king then ordered the midwives to kill all the male

children born to the Israelites. Because the midwives feared God instead of the king they saved the male babies being born in their care. One of the babies saved was Moses. Moses was saved because God had a job for him to do concerning His people. In chapter 3 we read of Moses being instructed to go free the children of Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians. In the chapters to follow we read how God kept His children and how he guided them, preserved them and moved them toward safety. God led them by day and by night. He wanted them out of bondage and into a land that flows with milk and honey. He did not want them to be overtaken by the enemy. As keepers of the home we must want the same for our families. We must have enough time invested in the lives of our children and husbands that we know when the enemy enslaves them. We must be willing to spend enough time in the home to earnestly desire the promised land for our family. The children of Israel needed guidance whether they believed they did or not. They needed the insight of one who could see better than they could. Our children need our guidance today. As God guides us we must in turn guide or keep our homes. In order to establish whether or not it is wrong for women to work outside the home we must continually ask questions that cause us to evaluate the condition of our homes. Do our jobs keep us from giving this type of guidance to our children? Can we see when our children are in danger or are we too busy with other things outside the home? Are our children in bondage to anything that keeps them from pleasing God?

Let us look at another example of God keeping His children. God keeps us through prayer. At the

very time that Jesus was filled with grief over his impending crucifixion he had us in mind. He wanted this cup to pass because He knew a cruel death was approaching. Most of us would have offered up a self-centered prayer. We would have spent time begging for mercy or praying that God would find someone else to handle this gruesome task. Right there in the midst of all His agony Jesus offered a prayer. Listen to the words He offers on our behalf:

> I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be as one as We are (John 17:6-11).

There it is. Jesus let us know the importance of prayer for those we want God to keep. What a model prayer! What a selfless act on the part of our

sinless Savior! As keepers of the home, we should offer up similar prayers. When the heat is on for us we must recognize the power of prayer for those who will be in future danger. Just as Jesus knew how much we all needed prayer and asked God to keep us, we must do the same for our families. Jesus knew that this world would have so much to offer us that would tempt us to walk away from our Father. He asked God to watch over us, to keep us from the evil one and He trusted His Father would do just that. Do we trust God as keepers of the home to watch over those we love and have been chosen to care for? Do we offer them up in prayer everyday? Do we pray for our children while they are in school or visiting with friends? Do we pray for our husbands while they are on the job? Do we pray prayers of absolute faith? Do we believe without a doubt that God will keep our family safe because of our prayer? Jesus believed. He believed to the point of pouring His heart out in prayer for our benefit. As keepers of the home we would do well to do the same.

KEEPERS OF THE HOME – PLACE IN THE HOME

God also keeps us in perfect peace. Isa. 26: 2-3 reads, "Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Paul writes, "and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). Peace in the home is very important. If we have experienced turmoil in the home, we definitely can appreciate peace. Do you remember the story in Luke chapter 8 when the disciples went over to wake

Jesus because a storm had come upon them? They were so afraid they would perish. Jesus rebuked the wind and the raging water and they ceased. What calmness the disciples must have witnessed after the storm. What peace they had been afforded. As keepers of the home we must bring the same effect to the table. We must be able to speak words that calm a situation. We must keep a cool head when confusion arises. Just as Christ did, we must be willing to challenge the faith of those in the home to bring them closer to where God wants them to be. How much time must be spent in the home to recognize the storm and to know the words to speak to calm the raging waters and the fierce winds that sometimes blow within the home? In our home we have experienced those times when the storm was raging. It was very important for me to deal with these situations in a way that pleased God. In order to do that I had to know what was happening and inquire of God for the most peaceful solution. I did not need to be distracted by my job or any other outside forces. As the keeper of the home I needed to be still and focused in order to hear a word from my Father. I needed to experience the same peace the disciples were seeking. I needed the storm to be stilled. I needed the raging waters to be calmed.

We must also keep the home by example:

> For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth, who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return;

> when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed (I Pet. 2:21-24).

Christ did not leave us without a pattern. As keepers of the home we must leave a pattern for our family. We should all be able to encourage our children to follow our steps as we follow Jesus. We must not leave our children ignorant without a map as to which way to travel in this life. This scripture says that no deceit was found in our Savior's mouth. Let us look at some things we should know about our tongue as we keep our home. Ps. 52:1-4 reads, "Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually. Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking righteousness. You love all devouring words. You deceitful tongue." Jesus was honest with his words. There was no deceit found in His mouth. We must teach by example in the same way. Do we say dishonest things in the home? Do we lie to our children or to other people? Jesus could have tried to lie His way out of dying, but He always chose truth. Do our tongues love evil more than good? Do we constantly run people down in front of our children? A good gage for this is to listen to what our children say about other people. Are they gracious with their words? The scripture in Peter also says that Christ did not revile when he was reviled. This means that Christ did not call others bad names when they did

the same to Him. How do our families watch us handle others when we are mistreated? Do we live by an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? Do we teach our children to fight those who fight them? The Bible says that Jesus entrusted His case in the hands of the one He knew would judge righteously. He did not defend Himself but trusted God to handle everything. As keepers of the home do we follow this example or have we established our own pattern? Are we interested in the footsteps that Jesus has left behind or do they seem too archaic and outdated?

I can remember being a young girl and waiting for the first snowfall of the season. I loved going out and walking in the snow where my father had left his footprints. This kept me from getting snow in my shoes and kept my feet dry for a longer period of time so that I could stay out and play longer. As soon as I decided to venture outside of my fathers footprints and create my own, the snow got inside my shoes and my feet got so cold I had to go inside and could no longer enjoy the snow. As long as I stayed in the footprints of my father all was well. It was only when I decided to do my own thing that my playtime was interrupted. In our homes it works the same way. When we follow the footsteps of Christ all is well. But, as soon as we begin to order our own steps our lives are sure to be interrupted by the ploys of the enemy. Walking in the footsteps of Jesus does not mean that we will never experience hard times because we know that Christ had many trials. However, what it does mean is that we will always have the opportunity to entrust our case to Him who judges righteously. As we follow the example of

Christ inside and outside the home, we will never venture in the wrong direction.

HOW GOD KEEPS US

As keepers of the home we must also be keepers of the faith. Paul inscribes: "But the scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed" (Gal. 3:22-24). There will be many people and situations that the enemy will use to challenge our faith. We know that faith is essential to our salvation; therefore, we must recognize without faith it is truly, "impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Does our faith in God carry us through anything or do we crumble to pieces as soon as trouble arises? In the home there will constantly be conditions that challenge our faith. There will be times when our children are disobedient or our household funds are low. There will be times when the family experiences death and many other tragedies. All these conditions must be met with faith. The Bible definition of faith can be found in Heb. 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." My personal definition is walking, believing in a result that I cannot see, but I know will happen. My faith has increased each time I have dared to believe the very opposite of the picture Satan so vividly paints for me. I do not allow circumstances to dictate my response to a difficult situation. I ask for an end result by faith and I live as though that end result has already taken place. Remember the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel Chapter One? Hannah was barren and greatly

desired a child. Not just any child, Hannah was very specific, she desired a male child. When she decided to go to the tabernacle of the Lord she prayed so intensely that Eli, the priest thought she was drunk. After she explained to Eli that she was praying he told her to go in peace because God had granted her petition. Now at this time Hannah's circumstances were still the same, but the Bible says her countenance was no longer sad. She had already begun her walk of faith. She knew that God would do as He had vowed to do. She walked in the end result even though it had not yet happened. What a lesson of faith! If this type of faith existed in our homes today our children would learn at an early age that God is the supplier of all our needs. They would learn to walk in victory even when the circumstances smell of defeat. They will become the mountain movers of their generation.

The next comparison we will make as to how God keeps us can be found in Jude verses 24 and 25, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." God has the desire and the power to keep us from falling. He wants to present us faultless before His very presence. Let us face it there will come a day when we are all presented before our Father. How will we be found? How will those we have been held responsible for be found? Will God be able to trace their faults back to us? Do we keep our homes in such a way that we can stand before God in good conscience. God knows we are not perfect people

but he expects us to move toward perfection. Just as God keeps us from stumbling, we must remove all stumbling blocks from our homes. We definitely do not want to be a stumbling block. Do our schedules and full calendars lend a hand to the stumbling of those entrusted to our care? Are we so preoccupied that we do not see those things that trip our families until they have already fallen?

I recall one Christmas morning some years ago. My oldest daughter was taking cookies to our neighbor and there was an accumulation of ice and snow outside. She had taken care to dress up very nicely, even down to her shoes. They were fairly new and still somewhat slick under the bottom. I did not examine her from head to toe because I was busy with other things. As she left the house she slipped and fell on the porch chipping her front tooth. She was so embarrassed and hurt. Before I had a chance to advise against wearing those shoes in the ice she was already on her way toward a painful experience. I am not saying that we can watch every move our children will make, but I am saying perhaps some of the things to which I was attending were not as important as the welfare of my daughter at that particular time. My daughter is 24 years old today and you can still see the fault of her cracked tooth. When God presents us, there will be no evidence of the falls we have taken in this life. God will present us to Himself without fault because He does see every move we make and He is able to keep us from falling. Even when we were all fallen sinners at our very worst, God had a plan to bring us back to Him by the blood of His dear Son. Because we trust that God will

keep us from falling we must entrust our homes and our whole selves to Him.

The last comparison we will make as to how God keeps us can be found in I Pet. 1: 3-5:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

God keeps us for salvation so that we will be ready, "in the last time." Considering all the ways we keep our homes, this is the most important. We must be sure our interest in our family is always toward salvation. Oh how we displease God when we place more emphasis on teaching our children to get the proper education, or marry the right spouse, or purchase an impressive home. Nothing should matter more to us than salvation for our family because nothing matters more to God than our salvation. It matters so much that He has already made our reservations and uses His awesome power to guard us so that we may take full advantage of our inheritance. Should we want any less for our family?

Having gleaned from the scriptures concerning the topic "keepers at home" does the Bible teach that it is a sin to work outside the home? The Bible does

not teach that it is a sin to work outside the home. However, our decision to work outside the home must agree with our husband's desire. Remember God's original design for us to be a helper? Does your decision about whether to work outside or inside the home help your spouse, or is the decision a hindrance to your family? Let us also review the curse put upon Eve after she sinned. Gen. 3:16b reads, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Whether we like it or not this punishment bestowed upon Eve is still true for us today. If our husbands do not want us to work outside the home it can definitely be a sin to do so. We were designed to be a helper and we move outside the will of God just as Eve did when we choose to do what we want to do the way we want to do it for whatever reason. There are times women feel they are nothing if they are keepers at home. This is a grave mistake. Our self worth is not determined by whether or not we work outside the home, but by God's view of His creation and His never ending love for us. God's advice through Paul is that we be taught to be keepers at home and there are many blessings attached to this most honorable position. It is good to be a keeper at home, yet God does not remove our freedom of choice. We must, however, consider that anytime we exercise a freedom there will be consequences. The decision as to what is best for your home must be made having looked at all your options through the eyes of God. He is the greatest keeper of all times and He alone is wise.

ENDNOTES

[1]All scripture quotations are from the New King James version of the Holy Bible unless otherwise noted.

SECTION V

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

SUPPORTING GOOD WORKS

DENNIS L. CURD



Dennis L. Curd was born in Union, SC. He is married to Sandra Jean, and they have 2 children. Their daughter, Jennifer, is married to Shawn Sprouse, and they live in Mechanicsville, VA, where she is a high school teacher. Their son, Justin, is a sophomore in high school. Dennis has a B.S. degree in Biological Sciences from Auburn University. He is also a 1988 graduate of ETSOPM. He has done local preaching in Phenix City, AL, and Christianburg, VA, where he has lived and worked for the last fie years. He has made four mission trips to the Ukraine. Prior to preaching, he worked as a truck driver and served in the Army.

Jesus was once approached by a young man who was honestly looking for eternal hope. That man addressed Jesus in a way he believed to be proper for someone like Jesus. The young man spoke the words, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life" (Mark 10:17), obviously with respect towards one he believed could answer his question. Surprisingly, Jesus did not immediately answer the question about eternal life, but rather questioned the wording of the address. Jesus said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18). This unexpected response receives no recorded reaction from the young man, but it set up Jesus' authority in answering the initial question. Goodness, Jesus implied, was godliness for only God

is good. If Jesus was really the Good Master, He is of God and able to answer questions concerning eternal life. Only God can provide such answers, and Jesus certainly wanted the young man to grasp that thought fully.

This brief interchange helps to explain to us as well the concept of good things or good works. Goodness is not an arbitrary entity but is defined by the nature of God, for as Jesus said, "only God is good." Nothing that can accurately be described as good can exist apart from God. All that is good is from God. James tells us that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father" (James 1: 17). In this study of supporting good works our task will be to determine the works of God and our responsibility to be employed therein.

Peter's sermon to Cornelius began with a discussion of Jesus (Acts 10:34ff). Every gospel sermon, despite the specific topic must begin with the same. After all, the gospel is good news and Jesus is the good in the news. Peter recalled to Cornelius the nature of Jesus' work. He said that Jesus had been anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power and "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). The work of the Godhead, evidenced in Jesus' action, produced good works, specifically here healing the sick and casting out demons. Again, it is evident here that good works are God's works.

It is readily admitted that being good and doing good are worthwhile. Man has often desired to

categorize many evil things as being good (Isaiah 5:20), but generally even human society has recognized good things as being good. Paul tells us that even civil governments "are not a terror to good works" (Rom. 13:3). Good things are so obviously good that they cannot be spoken against. Peter would use that reality to encourage his readers to live "honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12). These good works could put to silence the false claims of ignorant men (cf. 1 Pet. 2:15). Good is so obviously good that even those who are enemies cannot resist. Heaping coals of fire upon the heads of our enemies comes from goodness in action, rather than vengeful evil (Rom. 12:17-21). Good can truly overcome evil just as God is supreme over Satan.

Supporting good works, or being supportive of good works, is the matter at hand. To support something means being behind it or holding it up for its success. It also implies the belief that it is the right thing to do. Occasionally one may do good even when he does not really want to, but such could only generally be called support. Real support must be a conscious decision, committed to the expressed goal.

When a sinner becomes a child of God that person is born again into a new life (John 3:5; Rom. 6:4). That new life is made in the image of Christ (Col. 3:10), and therefore is to be lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and died for us (Gal. 2:20). Jesus, thus, becomes our guide and our direction in what we are to do. If He did it or taught

that it be done, so we are to do. The old man of sin is dead and our servitude to sin is at an end. The new man is "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). To be right before God requires a conforming to the nature of Christ and to His godliness and goodness. Clearly, these and many similar statements declare the essentiality of good things coming from those who are God's children.

The question often arises concerning good works of whether such works are necessary to be saved. The battle lines in the Reformation in Europe centuries ago revolved around the works oriented salvation of medieval Roman Catholicism and faith-based salvation of the up-and-coming Protestants. The excesses of the Roman Catholics' emphasis on good works led many on the other side to reject works, or anything that resembled man's action, as being part of salvation. Like many human attempts to resolve important issues the pendulum swung freely from works only doctrine to faith/grace only doctrine. As usual, God's way provides the necessary joining of these concepts.

Paul explained it this way: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). Salvation is truly by grace, but through faith. Faith is revealed by the word of God and established only on that basis: "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The faith through which grace comes, however, is not work-less. Faith is evidenced

by the works that come as a result of the newness of our being, having been created in Christ Jesus, for we "have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. 3:10). If we are His children we must be like Him. He did good, so must we. James would clarify these thoughts succinctly with these words: "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). We are His workmanship, made by the Master Craftsman, to be what He wants us to be. We are designed to be engaged in good works which God has ordained for us (Eph. 2:10). It is truly impossible to be pleasing to God and not be supportive of, and involved in, good works.

Faith evidenced by works, obviously good works since they are pleasing to God, is a fundamental concept in understanding the subject of supporting good works. One is saved by grace and created unto good works, thereby enrolled in a mission to glorify God in a life given fully to His service. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Clearly, being supportive of good works is synonymous with living a faithful life.

What then are good works? Many statements in Scripture help us to determine what God considers good. Jesus once asked the question, "What man is there among you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to

give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him" (Matt. 7:9-11)? Jesus attributes the willingness to take care of the bodily need for food as being a good thing, even when done by evil men. Such a need among our physical children is something recognized as good by men of all nations in all ages. (Interestingly, the words "good things" here in Matthew are replaced in Luke's statement of identical content with the words "Holy Spirit" (Luke 11:13). This again connects the things of God to good things.)

The many miracles that Jesus did were to prove His deity and to cause men to believe on Him (John 20:30,31). In several types of miracles Jesus specifically proved that He cared for the welfare of people. The healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the feeding of hungry multitudes, and the casting out of demons, all were motivated by Jesus' tremendous compassion for those He came to serve (cf. Matt. 9:35,36). Matthew quoted Isaiah once to describe this interest of Jesus toward men. After casting out demons and healing all who had come to Him, it is said that this was fulfillment of the passage, "Himself [He] took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses" (Isaiah 53:4; Matt. 8:17). While the ultimate healing Jesus came to do was to relieve the suffering of sin, it is clear His benevolence in physical relief was broad and widely dispersed. On one occasion when a palsied man was brought to Jesus to be healed Jesus first declared his sins forgiven. Later, after being challenged concerning His right to say such a thing, Jesus healed the man and declared that the former statement was made to show that "the

Son of man hath power to forgive sins on earth" (Mark 2:10). Jesus made it clear that the power to do miracles and to forgive sins had only one source, God. To accept His goodness in healing implied acceptance to His claims to be God in the flesh.

This fact again points out the similarity of how good things are God things. Nothing that is truly good can have at its source some power other than God. As the attacks against Jesus increased throughout His ministry, it became increasingly clear that His enemies could not find evil in which to accuse Him. They resorted then to blaming His timing. The accusation that He had healed on the Sabbath, therefore in their minds breaking the Sabbath, caused Him to say, "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life; or to kill?" (Mark 3:4). This followed a previous statement only a few verses before when He said that, "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The accusers held their peace upon hearing this for they understood God's provision for them had always been for good (cf. Deut. 6:24). To accuse Jesus of evil for doing good had to have been seen as ridiculous even to them at that moment.

John records a similar debate Jesus had with His accusers. Jesus there said: "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of them do ye stone me?" (John 10:32). Their attempts to find fault with Him now focus on His claim that God was His Father. Jesus defends Himself by again allowing their own law to explain that when a man spoke or acted on behalf of God, he himself was essentially God (or god): "Is it not written in your law, I said ye

are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God" (John 10:34-36; Psalm 82:6). To do God's will is good, and doing good is always a glory of Him that is represented in the act. The enemies of Jesus were unable to accuse Jesus effectively because He was only guilty of being good. In His goodness His godliness was evident.

Jesus called works of others toward Him good. His disciples reproved the woman who anointed His head with spikenard for what was deemed as excessive and wasteful. Jesus commented, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me" (Mark 14:6). Clearly an expression of submission to the might of the Christ was considered a good thing. Jesus would use this same idea to convey to the sheep awaiting heaven what it had been that they had done for Him in their lives. To the sheep He would say, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matthew 25:35,36). In each of these acts good things had been done, but unlike the woman mentioned above they were not done directly to Jesus. The righteous, so addressed, responded, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and come unto thee" (Matthew 25:37-39)? Jesus' answer is remarkable and moves us along in

our study. He said, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40). In the remaining verses of the chapter the goats that are bound for hell are guilty of failing to help the least of the Lord's brethren, therefore, guilty of failing to help Him (Matt. 25:42-45).

This passage takes us from seeing good that Jesus did, and good that was done for Him, to realizing our continued obligation to do good to others. If we will be judged as having neglected the Lord when we neglect the needs of our fellow man, the need to be supportive of good works becomes very clear. Our successes in this area will determine our eternal place. It is therefore of highest import.

Paul tells us that God "will render to every man according to his deeds [literally, works]; to them who by patient continuance in well doing [literally, good works] seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2:6,7). He continues: "But glory and honor, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also of the Gentile" (Rom. 2:10). A child of God is to be engaged in a patient continuance in good works. This good work is not in order to earn salvation, as noted above, but is to evidence the saved state we are in. We are created to that end.

As Christians we must understand the mind of Christ, to think and act as He did. We must be moved by compassion towards the downtrodden of the earth, both for their spiritual plight, as well as their physical plight. To fail to do so puts us in the category of the

priest and the Levite who passed by the Samaritan left beaten on the road (Luke 10:30-37). Those men had spiritual interests without compassion. God will be their Judge. So too, will He be ours.

The letters of Paul are replete with injunctions toward supporting and promoting good works. He encouraged the Colossian brethren that they "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10). He told the Thessalonians to "comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thess. 2:17). He told Timothy to purge himself from evil so that he could "be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). Also, to Timothy and to all future people, the inspired word of God was to be, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). These passages, and generally all of Scripture, have the implied purpose of preparing God's children to be effective in God's work. God's work is good work.

In these passages both individuals (Timothy) and churches (Colossae, Thessalonica) are addressed. Controversy has arisen over what the church should do versus what individuals might do in matters of benevolence. Since benevolence deals with the direct action taken towards the physical welfare of people, this controversy deals with who can and should do such good works. Does the church have responsibility in this area, or are these commands to apply only to individuals? If good works

are God's work, how could the church be prohibited from doing them? The church is God's people, the called out of the world. They are the saved, the very ones described by Jesus as having been successful at helping the least of men thereby helping Him. The churches of Christ have long demanded that authority for every action must be obtained from the Bible. If we have commands or examples of early Christians and churches engaging in such benevolence, then it is certain that such can be done today. If there are prohibitions or principles that limit such action they must not be done. It is often seen that the early Christians, as a group, gave to other churches in times of distress and need. Often they sold what they had and made it available for distribution (Acts 2:45; 4:34,35). Sometimes it is specifically mentioned that this was for relief of brethren. Note these words: "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea" (Acts 11:29), and, "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem" (Rom. 15:25,26). Doubtless, the relief of fellow Christians was the prime reason for these benevolent actions. However, the question remains, is it inherently wrong to help those outside of the church with monies collected by the church? In all fairness, however, the proposition that institutions outside of the church cannot be supported, or that non-Christians cannot be supported from the church treasury, cannot be casually dismissed. The question must be asked, did the early church do such things?

Paul described the giving of the church at Corinth as being one of generosity and free will (cf. 2 Cor. 8,9). This collection was made to help those in need both to saints and to all men: "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men" (2 Cor. 9:12,13). The early church was to give primary attention to the needs of Christians, but was never instructed to dismiss the needs of non-Christians. Paul told the churches of Galatia, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Clearly, "all men" is in contrast to the household of faith, or those saved. These statements are often made to say that individuals are under consideration, not churches. But we must remember these words were written to churches, and therefore must apply to Christians collectively as well as individually. What sense would it make for Christians to be free to do good works (remember good works are God's work), and the church which is the body of Christ being forbidden to do so. Such thinking is contrary to all of Scripture.

The matter of contributing to institutions outside of the church is a more difficult matter. An institution would be some organized effort that is engaged in a good work, that in and of itself, is a biblically defined work in which the church is given charge. Orphan's homes or homes that care for the elderly would be examples. To support widows and orphans is

described by James as pure and undefiled religion (James 1:27). Many other groups do good things in our communities, such as park and recreational services, veteran's organizations, or historical societies; however, these do not fall under the work of the church. They are not under consideration here.

While no clear example of institutional support is readily seen in the New Testament some principles, nevertheless, do apply. An institution that is accomplishing the works of God is obviously worthy of support. Supporting widows and orphans is, according to James, "pure and undefiled religion" (James 1:27). Can the church practice pure and undefiled religion? The answer is obviously yes. Must Christians do so only in private homes, or only by adopting them as one's own, or can it be done by the church through a legally organized orphan's home or "old-folks" home? Clearly, it can be done in any way that does not compromise the church's place or autonomy, or violate the command to be ready unto every good work. Expedience may dictate how it is to be done, but no clear principle in Scripture is violated by an institutional approach towards helping those in need. The gravest danger is not doing what must be done, that is, helping the least of the Lord's children.

Our support of good works is done with the whole of our lives and our resources. We contribute to the church and it has obligations to do the work God has for it. But we also live as individuals and should never lose sight that a benevolent heart is a heart after God Himself. How well we involve ourselves as Christians and as brethren will determine how we will be judged one day.

Our support of good works, of good things, of God's things, indicates just how well we understand the greatest gift ever, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. He did that for the good of all men. With that measure of goodness, how well do we stand on the scale of good works?

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). His desire to preach the gospel, the good news, was the method He used to do that. His compassion for the physical plight of men moved Him to powerfully express his ability to relieve such sufferings. But His prime emphasis was on bringing man back to God. His ultimate good work was His redeeming power over sin's hold on man. The world must, likewise, see in us a benevolent spirit toward their needs, both in the physical realm and in the spiritual realm. May we always be supportive of all good works, for they are truly the works of God.

REPENTANCE

STEVE BAGGETT



Steve Baggett graduated from ETSOPM in 1978, received a B. S. in Secondary Education from Tennessee Tech in 1989, and a Master of Arts in Religion from Lipscomb in 1995. He served the following churches: Fairlane - Shelbyville, TN 1978-1981; Jefferson Avenue - Cookeville, TN 1981-1989; Franklin, KY 1989-2001; and Walnut Street - Dickson, TN 2001-present. He has been active in Character Counts, Habitat For Humanity, and Citizens United Against Alcohol. He presently serves as secretary for the Dickson Lion's Club. He and his wife Pam have two sons: Matt (born 2-9-80) and Jason (born 5-24-83).

"Momma, I'm sorry. I won't ever do it again." With these words little Johnny begins a lifetime filled with apologies. Because he is human and will commit a myriad of mistakes and sins, as long as he lives, he will have the opportunity to utter those words. However, if little Johnny's mother were to undertake a serious investigation into his words, she would, no doubt, ask questions like these: Is little Johnny truly sorry for his actions? Is little Johnny sorry he got caught? Is little Johnny saying these words hoping to avoid the punishment that he knows is awaiting him? Does little Johnny really intend to "never do it again?" In reality, little Johnny's words were words indicative of repentance. However, borrowing the words of hymn writer Robert Arnold, little Johnny's mom

probably wanted to know, "Did you repent, fully repent?"[1]

The concept of repentance is a truly biblical one. As early as Gen. 6:6 we learn of God's repentance when the Bible says, "And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."[2] Later, the prophet Jonah provided a good example of man's repentance. When Jonah refused God's command to preach to the people of Nineveh he was swallowed by a great fish. While in the belly of the fish he came to understand the error of his way, and he said, "Those who regard worthless idols forsake their own Mercy. But I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:8-9). When the word of the Lord came again to Jonah, he "arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord" (Jonah 3:3). In the New Testament when Simon sinned by trying to buy the gift of God with money, he was told, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22). The fact is, "God commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

REPENTANCE DEFINED

Webster defines the word "repent" as "to feel pain, sorrow, or regret for something done or left undone by one's self, to experience such sorrow for sin as produces amendment of life; to be penitent."[3] Arndt and Gingrich define the word "repent" as "to change one's mind, then feel remorse, repent, be converted."[4] Vine says "repent" means "to change

one's mind or purpose [...] involving a change for the better, an amendment."[5] Thayer defines the word "repent" as "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins."[6] Repentance, then, means a feeling of sorrow or remorse over sin which leads to a change of action or life; to turn around and start going in the opposite direction spiritually; to determine no longer to serve Satan but to serve Jesus Christ and walk in His ways.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF REPENTANCE

In order for repentance to take place, a person must of necessity first **know the difference between that which is right and that which is wrong**. Prior to the flood, God repented of making man because He knew of man's wickedness. Jonah was able to repent of his refusal to preach to the people of Nineveh because he knew his actions were wrong. Simon's repentance of trying to purchase the gift of God with money was preceded by his being taught by Peter that his actions were wrong. A person acquires the knowledge of right and wrong through an understanding of God's Word. The apostle Paul said, "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 Tim. 3:15-16). This knowledge of God's Word may be attained through a variety of sources: parental instruction, personal Bible study, participation in Bible classes, listening to sermons and lectures, and association with Christians who share an understanding of God's Word. May we never tire of reading and studying the Word of God, and may we

always remember the words of Jesus, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

After we have learned the difference between right and wrong, a second characteristic of repentance is **understanding the consequences of sin**. The fact that we are all sinners is undisputed. Paul said, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). The apostle John wrote, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us [...] If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8, 10). Just as the fact of our sinfulness is undisputed, so are the consequences of that sinfulness. Paul clearly stated, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Jesus said of the unfaithful "depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). John's description of the fate of a lengthy list of unrepentant sinners is that they "shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). The knowledge that those who refuse to repent of their sinfulness and turn to God will suffer eternal condemnation in hell will surely cause one to consider the necessity of repentance.

A third characteristic of repentance is the **desire to serve God**. For, without that desire, one will never make the necessary changes in life to overcome sin. Satan is a formidable foe. Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary

the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). The devil never gives up on his quest to seek and conquer God's creatures. He even made a full frontal attack on our Lord Himself. Matthew wrote, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). Thankfully, because our Lord was in tune with the will and word of God, He easily rebuked the devil's temptations. However, it ought to be crystal clear that if the devil is bold enough to approach the Lord Himself, he will surely come after sinful human beings. Not only is he bold, but he is crafty (Gen. 3:3), and he is a liar (John 8:44). Without a heartfelt desire to be pleasing to the Lord, knowledge alone would be insufficient motivation to lead a person to resist his attacks.

One of the more important characteristics of repentance is **godly sorrow**. Even a full understanding of right and wrong and of the consequences of sin, coupled with a real desire to serve God are not sufficient. In the absence of godly sorrow, one will not repent. Remember, repentance is feeling sorrow or remorse over sin to the point that a change of action results. A person may be sorry he got caught in a particular sin, or he may be sorry he is having to suffer the consequences of his sinfulness, without ever being truly sorry for his actions. Paul told the people of Corinth, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10). Sorrowfulness for sin is not repentance; however, it does lead one to repent.

A fifth characteristic of repentance is **courage**. Only the courageous will be strong enough to break sinful habits and remain steadfast in the presence of those with whom he has sinned. Former sinful partners will not take kindly one's about face regarding their sinful practices. Thus, when one decides to repent of sin and serve the Lord, he must be strong and courageous. God has told us to be people of courage. Moses told the spies who were entering the land of Canaan, "Be of good courage and bring some fruit of the land" (Num. 13:20). Near the end of his life he told Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31:6). To Joshua, his successor, Moses said, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it" (Deut. 31:7). When Joshua assumed the leadership of the nation of Israel, God told him, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord you God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9). Those who truly wish to serve the Lord and stop their sinful practices will courageously turn their backs on sin. They will, to the best of their ability, "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

The final characteristic of repentance is **sincere action**. Repentance requires action. John the Baptist required as much in Luke 3:8 when he said, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance."

King Agrippa, after listening to Paul preach the gospel to him and plead with him to repent and turn to God, said, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:27). Agrippa knew the difference between right and wrong; he understood the consequences of his sin; he may have even been sorry for his actions, but he lacked the courage actually to do anything about it. Noah preached fervently to his peers but could not bring them to action. Jeremiah unsuccessfully pleaded with Israel to repent. With great eloquence John the Baptist spoke to King Herod regarding repentance, but Herod would not act upon what he heard. Certainly repentance involves knowledge, understanding, desire, godly sorrow, and courage. But if one does not act upon that which he knows, and does not follow through with his desire to serve the Lord, and is not led by his godly sorrow courageously to do something about his sin, he has not repented.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF REPENTANCE

One of the very beautiful aspects of serving the Lord is that He not only tells us what to do: He shows us how to do it. He has given us numerous examples of how to obey His commands successfully. The following chart illustrates this point:

Command	**Example**
Great Commission (Matt. 28:12-30)	Phillip (Acts 8); Aquilla & Priscilla (Acts 18)
Preaching (2 Tim. 4:1-4)	Peter (Acts 2); Stephen (Acts 7); Paul (Acts 17)
Cheerful Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2)	Macedonian Christians (2 Cor. 8)
Kindness to others (Eph. 4:32)	Good Samaritan (Luke 10)

Thankfully, God in His Holy Word has given us many wonderful examples of what is involved in repentance. When Jonah went to Nineveh and preached about the coming punishment of God, the Bible indicates that the people of Nineveh repented of their evil ways. Their repentance involved all of these steps: believing the word of God (Jonah 3:5), indicating godly sorrow by the wearing of sackcloth and the proclaiming of a fast (Jonah 3:5), praying to God (Jonah 3:8), and turning from their evil ways (Jonah 3:10). When the prodigal son in Luke 15 repented of his sins, his actions included coming to himself (Luke 15:17), determining to go home (Luke 15:18), following through with those plans (Luke 15:20), and acknowledging his sin (Luke 15:21). Following Peter's gospel sermon in the city of Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, many among the multitude repented of their sins. Luke indicated their repentance by stating that they "were cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37); they asked, "what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37); they followed the commands of Peter and were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:41). Saul of Tarsus, following his conversion, became known as Paul, the apostle of the Lord. When Saul was confronted on the road to Damascus by the Lord, his repentance became evident by his obeying the Lord's command to go into the city and wait until he was told what to do (Acts 9:8), fasting for three days while he awaited the messenger (Acts 9:9), following the command to be baptized (Acts 9:18), and faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:18). How thankful we should be that our Lord not only tells us what to do, but shows us how to do it!

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

The necessity of repentance becomes evident when one honestly looks at what the Bible teaches. Mankind must repent of his sins, simply and primarily because God, in His Word, said to do so. John the Baptist, in preparing the way for the coming of Jesus, preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Jesus, in Luke 13:3-5, said, "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." The apostle Peter, in the first gospel sermon ever preached, said, "Repent, and let every one of you 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). The apostle Paul, in his sermon to the Athenians, preached in the Areopagus, said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Jesus, to the church in Laodicea, said, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

The fact is, without repentance, one remains under the control and power of the Devil. As noted earlier, the Devil is a formidable foe. While Jesus is more powerful than the Devil, we must be aware of the fact that the devil is still active in the world. John said, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We are grateful that Jesus is greater than the Devil, but

without turning to Jesus and repenting of our former ways we will still remain in the Devil's grip.

SHOULD REPENTANCE BE PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

Sometimes the question is asked regarding whether repentance should be a private matter or whether it is necessary for one to make his repentance a public matter. Certainly there are times when a public acknowledgement of sin and repentance of that sin would be appropriate. If one's sins were of a public nature and thereby reflected negatively on God's people, it seems reasonable that one's repentance should be as public as the sin. King David, following the series of sins which he committed, including adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, publicly acknowledged his sinfulness. He penned Psalm 51, which was more than likely sung as part of Old Testament Jewish worship. The Psalm, in its entirety, is an acknowledgement of David's sinfulness and an outpouring of his heart as he sought God's forgiveness. Why did David make his repentance so public? Perhaps it was because his sins had become widespread news among the nation of Israel, and he did not want his sinfulness to have an adverse effect upon God's people.

However, just as surely as the repentance of some sins should be public, so also there are times when a private acknowledgement of sin and request for forgiveness is appropriate. Jesus instructed his children to deal privately with a brother who has sinned against them. In Matt. 18:15 Jesus said, "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell

him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." If that brother repents, there is no need to make his sinfulness public. It is only when he refuses to repent that any kind of public action is mentioned.

CONCLUSION

Little Johnny said, "Momma, I'm sorry. I won't ever do it again." If little Johnny truly repented of his actions, he found out that his mother was more than happy to forgive him and treat him as though he had never done anything wrong. How Godlike her actions were! Our Heavenly Father, because of His great love for us, anxiously awaits our repentance and earnestly desires to "cleanse us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

ENDNOTES

[1] Robert S. Arnold, "Did You Repent, Fully Repent?" *Songs of the Church*, compiled and edited by Alton H. Howard (1977), p. 82.

[2] All scripture references come from *The Holy Bible. New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992.)

[3] Virginia S. Thatcher, ed., *The New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language* (Chicago: Consolidated Book Publishers, 1970), p. 712.

[4] William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 513.

[5] W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, Va.: MacDonald Publishing Company), p. 961.

[6] John Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, 1885), p. 405.

CONFESSION

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"Confession. Oh, how good for the soul it is." Have you ever heard such a remark? Confession is indeed good for the soul. Why is that? Confession is good because it contributes to the *releasing* of anxiety built up inside. When a person recognizes that which is against him (sin or some emotional strain), he is apt to acknowledge it to someone. Confession is also an *affirmation* of belief. The apostle Paul said that our Lord made the good confession as He stood before Pilate. What was that good confession? Our Lord affirmed the truth of His mission.

The outline of our study will unfold a brief consideration of the history, the meaning of the word "confession," a study of particular New Testament passages, and finally, a consideration of what I think are relevant questions.

INTRODUCTION

There exists some interesting history about the word "confession" in Christendom. With this interesting history, it is very possible for a person to become confused if he tries to understand what the New Testament teaches on the subject. In the New Testament, the word confession is simply an expression of heart-felt belief toward God or an acknowledgement of one's sin. The idea of there being any kind of "sacrament" of confession (which is what one will learn if *history* is the teacher) is simply foreign to Scripture. However, given the way man operates, it was only a matter of time until a corruption of simple New Testament teaching resulted in something else.

According to *post*-New Testament history, *confessionals* (or "auricular confession"[1]) came into existence, in some form or another, after the third century.[2] It was customary for the priests, and then the congregants, to confess their sins publicly before the congregation. Pope Leo the Great (fifth century) encouraged the practice of confession to be no longer a public matter, but in private and to the priest alone. He made no *law* in this respect, but his recommendation was the foundation needed for the church to "lay down the law" in this matter. At the Fourth Lateran Council, A.D. 1215, regular confession became absolute law. What the Church[3] (or council) required of the penitent was that they make confession at least once each year and privately to the priest. The penitent would either be *absolved*

(forgiven) of their sin or excommunicated. An excerpt from the Britannica Encyclopedia says:

> A detailed **confession** to a bishop or priest, however, appeared early in the church's history. In the 5th-century discipline of the Roman Church, the practice was to hear **confessions** at the beginning of Lent and to reconcile the penitents on Holy Thursday. Gradually, however, the practice of reconciling, or absolving sinners immediately after **confession** and before fulfillment of penance was introduced. By the end of the 11th century, only notorious sinners were reconciled on Holy Thursday. Often, those guilty of serious sins put off penance until death approached. To correct this abuse, the fourth Lateran Council (1215) established the rule that every Christian should confess to a priest at least once a year.[4]

So corrupt had the idea of "confession" become that during the Middle Ages "it was customary to pay a tax to the priests for hearing confession [...]"[5] The practice of auricular confession, over the years, brought Martin Luther to the forefront of church history. In A.D. 1519, Luther wrote, "There is nothing in the church which needs reform so much as confession and penance."[6] While we appreciate the tone and the words of Martin Luther, I am afraid that the Church of which he spoke (was and) is well past the point of there being any reform.

THE WORD "CONFESSION"

"Confession," as used in Scripture, is the expression of certain words in the direction of another. *We* generally use the word in the context of sin, sorrow, and penitence. The word "confession," however, can be used in contexts different than sorrow for sin. Our English word "confess" comes from a Latin word that means, "acknowledge."[7] If a person confesses the name of the Lord, that person is, practically speaking, acknowledging Him as Lord (of his life). Likewise, when a man confesses his sins, he is acknowledging the existence of sin in his life and that it (they) stand against him. Our English word "confession," in Scripture, is a translation of respective Hebrew and Greek words that, while similar to the Latin idea, is slightly different. The Greek means, "to say the same thing,"[8] while the Hebrew conveys the idea of acknowledgement by "holding out or extending the hand."[9] An interesting idea, in the Hebrew, is that confession is made, not only in what we consider the traditional way, but also in praise to God. For instance, the English word "confess" is the translation of a Hebrew word (*yada*) that can also be translated to indicate praise or thanksgiving[10] (cf. Heb. 13:15). With this understanding in view, let us focus our attention upon a small number of noteworthy passages in the New Testament.

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES

CONFESSION BEFORE MAN

One of the more well-known "confession" passages is found in Matt. 10:32-33. The passage reads, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men,

him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."[11] A number of things are worth noting here: first, we are to confess (acknowledge, ESV) our Lord before men. Jesus is the *lawgiver* in the life of each Christian. If we confess Him before men, then we are identifying our direction in life. Peter said to the penitent crowd that Jesus is both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Jesus is not only the chosen of God, but also the Director of one's life. Paul said that he was crucified with Christ and because of this, Christ was the one who *directed* Paul's life (Gal. 2:20). There is to be an "acknowledgement" of our Lord in one's life. To acknowledge our Lord is to do much more than simply utter a phrase, it is to live as He lived.

Second, our Lord will confess (or acknowledge) our name before the Father. I think it is important to appreciate this phrase more than we often do. If we acknowledge the Lord, the Lord will acknowledge *us*. Because we live our life for Him, He will call out our name within the midst of all the people who have ever lived on this earth (at the Day of Judgment). Paul said that it is a blessing to be known by God (Ga. 4:5-9). In the context of explaining "justification by faith," Paul said, "just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin'" (Rom. 4:6-8).

Third, if there is a denial of the holy name of our Lord before men, then He will deny our name

before the Father. Note how the Williams translation reads, "Therefore, everyone who will ***own*** me before men I will ***own*** before my Father in heaven, but anyone who ***disowns*** me before men I will ***disown*** before my Father in heaven"[12] (emphasis added, RT).

The significance of what Jesus said in Matthew 10 is to be understood in the context. Jesus commissioned His twelve disciples to go throughout the whole region of Israel preaching that the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." He told the disciples that persecution would arise because of their preaching, but they were to continue with their preaching just the same (cf. Acts 4:29). The persecution that resulted was going to get each of them to take stock in those things that were important. Sometimes it is easy to read the word "persecution" and fail to understand the severity of it. In Acts 17, for instance, the Scriptures teach that people **dragged** Jason out from his house (17:6). Clearly, the idea conveyed in that passage is that Jason (and others) were violently overthrown because they were willing to confess the name of the Lord before the authorities. In Matthew 10, the disciples were really going to have to consider whether or not they wanted to keep their hands attached to the plow (cf. Luke 9:62). When the "kitchen gets hot" would they stand tall, acknowledging Jesus and His message of hope or would they decide, as some did, to turn back and follow no more? (cf. John 6:60ff). This is illustrated, most effectively, in John 12:42, "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."

CONFESSION UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS

A second passage necessary for consideration is Romans 10:9-10. That passage reads, "[...] that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." There are some very important things to learn here from the pen of the apostle Paul. First, confession of our Lord's name is the result of what is in a person's heart. It is not simply the articulation of words. Many during Jesus' day were confessing the name of God, but Jesus was not impressed. The Scriptures teach that Jesus, "[...] answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heat is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of me'" (Mark 7:6-7). Jesus was emphasizing the role of the heart and how there was no contrition in the heart of those doing the confessing. Do we have a "heart-felt" religion? Is that "heart-felt" religion based upon the faithful teaching of God's word, or the desires of the flesh? Joel exclaimed to a nation, "'Now, therefore, says the Lord, 'Turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.' So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" (2:12-13). An interesting point in the context of Romans is that Paul said, essentially, that a person who has a heart "touched" by the message of God is not going to be asking for the Lord to be present that one might

inquire of Him. No, this person has already come to a clear understanding and has accepted that which the Lord has said. I suppose it is similar to the people who asked Jesus for a sign; they wanted to inquire of Him. He had already demonstrated His authority and they knew this. They did not have a clear understanding because their heart was in "things of men."

Secondly, before our Lord will receive one's confession, that person must believe Jesus was raised from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4). This is a "must" to one's salvation. Why is this so important? Our hope lies upon the foundation of it! Related to this is the thief on the cross. In discussions with our denomination friends, the thief on the cross is often brought up. The reason for this is because of their desire to *regulate* baptism to a command of God, but not a command of God one has to obey in order to be saved. They will say something like, "Well, the thief was not baptized." This, evidently, is said to "prove" that one does not have to be baptized in order to be saved. Without considering how Christians normally respond (and legitimately so), let us take note of that which Paul said in Romans is what the Holy Spirit **requires** one to believe. One must believe in the *resurrection* of Jesus from the dead before *salvation* comes to that person. Did the thief on the cross believe this? There was no possible way for the thief on the cross to have believed this. The Roman soldiers went to the two people (one on either side of Jesus) and broke their legs so that suffocation might hasten death. The thief died before our Lord's resurrection.

Before we leave this part of our discussion, let me take a moment to mention something I heard years ago. A television preacher commented on this passage – something to the effect:

> Do you want to know how to be saved? It does not matter what you read in other passages of the Scripture. If you want to be saved, then you must do what Paul said in Romans. What is that? Believe from the heart and confess our Lord's name.[13]

For those who know their Bible, they understand that Paul is not saying ALL one has to do to be saved is believe and confess. This has to be done, but this is not ALL that has to be done. Does God require a person to change his mind about living in sin? Clearly He does (Luke 13:3-5). But Paul says nothing about a penitent attitude in Romans 10:9-10. Does one have to be immersed into Christ to be saved? Clearly he does, for Paul put such an emphasis on it in Romans 6, but he says nothing about it in the passage under consideration (where immersion into our Lord's name is connected with the death, burial, and resurrection). Why some people will try to take one passage, apart from what the Holy Spirit says elsewhere, and establish Bible doctrine is amazing. They do this to their own destruction.

IS THAT ALL?

A third passage for our consideration is found in 1 John 4:2-3 (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). The apostle John writes, "By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit

that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world." This passage might have us ask the following questions: "Is that all I have to do? Can I just *say* the name of the Lord and be saved?" Considering the context in which John wrote (that is, the whole epistle), I think the answer to these two questions is simply, no. John said, in the context of our passage, that one must "try" the spirits (that is, determine their origin). While people may articulate a certain phrase, in due time, it becomes apparent as to whether they are of Christ or not. John's point is not simply the articulation of words, but Whom it is that we confess and live for.

Earlier we said the word "confess" means to "acknowledge." The confession of our Lord's name has each one of us to assume that the Lord will direct that person's life. While we may *think* all is well, in time, we will *know,* and what will we know? *What* we will know is whether this person is living by the authority of Christ or not. The *how* is going to be determined by the life lived and the words taught. We will know because the person who has confessed the Lord's name has submitted to His holy will. Further, that person will listen to what the apostles have said in every area of Christian living and doctrine (1 John 4:6). When a person refuses to abide by the apostle's authority, clearly, that person merely *thinks* he has acknowledged the Lord. When one does not acknowledge the *apostle's* authority, that person does

not acknowledge the *Lord's* authority because the Lord sanctioned the apostle's mission (1 John 1:1-3).

Consider, also, that false prophets have an origin. Their origin is the antichrist. Who is the antichrist? No one in particular, as far as the record is concerned. Rather, John speaks of the *spirit* of the antichrist. The Scriptures teach that Satan is a powerful being and his influence is felt far and wide. Peter said, "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Again, the apostle Paul spoke about the influence of Satan this way, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). As can be seen, Satan works in such a powerful way; he influences all the false prophets and has them presenting themselves as true to God's word. It is quite possible that people may confess the name of our Lord, thinking all is well, when they actually have accepted the influence of Satan. Paul said Christians are very aware of Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2:11). We are to "try" them in accordance with the word of God (1 John 4:6) so that we can determine their origin. If we do not, then we are allowing Satan to make inroads where no inroads are to be made. That is, we are allowing Satan to direct the life of another (maybe even our own) as that person deceives himself into thinking everything is okay.

IS THERE A PRECEDENT?

A fourth passage is an example of confession in practice. In Acts 4, there is a perfect example of what it means to *confess Christ*. Confessing the name of our Lord before we are immersed into water is really an easy thing to do. Confessing the name of Lord before men who are antagonistic to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is entirely different. This is exactly what you have in the record of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4). The apostles recently proclaimed the gospel to those in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Shortly thereafter, an opportunity came for two of the apostles to demonstrate their faith. These two disciples were going to the temple for the hour of prayer, and as things turned out, they had an opportunity to reveal their faith before others and thereby give glory to God. This they did and the record says that a multitude gathered around them (3:11). Peter and John again took advantage of the occasion and spoke to them about the Man they (the crowd) crucified. They were guilty of that crime and Peter made this abundantly clear. Nevertheless, the Lord was gracious and merciful in granting them time to repent. The religious leaders did not care at all for what the two apostles were preaching. They apprehended them and imprisoned them for the evening. The next morning, the apostles stood before the council and could have denied our Lord and saved themselves some grief. This was an opportunity they refused to take. Rather, they *preached* to the council about *their* guilt in crucifying the Lord. The orthodox leaders were taken aback by their boldness; the Scripture says they took notice "and they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

An opportunity lost by the disciples of the Lord? Not hardly! I suppose the apostles could have thought to themselves about a circumstance that may not come again. They could have said, "Let us bring glory to the Lord's name, while the chance is ours." On the other hand, it may have never entered their minds concerning the taking an advantage or not – it was simply part of their life. I am certain they remembered the words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 10: "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [...] Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (10:28, 32-33). They were warned and threatened, "Do not preach in the name of Jesus any longer!" But, the disciples rejected that as quickly as it was said. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). The life of our Lord was *their* life.

What circumstance will present itself for us that we might confess the name of our Lord? The opportunities to glorify the Lord's name come along in different ways, but they exist every day. The occasions to confess the name of our Lord are numerous. The first place it must start is at conversion. Will we confess the name of our Lord before men, letting them know that Jesus is the Lord of our life? Secondly, we must be willing to confess the name of our Lord, daily. Sometimes, we are unaware of daily occurrences because we are not looking for an opportunity. If the life of our Lord is our

life (like it was for the apostles), then we will find opportunities every day to confess the holy and righteous name of our Lord. We will do this not only by the life that we live, but also by the words we speak. In time, people will begin to inquire about our pattern of living, and then at this point, we can "give a defense [answer] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

RELATIVE QUESTIONS

Let us consider, first, *"Should one confess his sin to another individual?"* (James 5:16). This question is important in light of the historical development we considered earlier. The context of the words in James is associated with forgiveness and the prayer of faithful elders on behalf of one who is sick. How is the word "sick" to be understood within the context? It is easy for one to think that the word "sick" would have reference to someone *physically* sick. But I am not so sure. While the word "sick" could refer to one physically sick, it is also possible that it may have reference to one who is sick *spiritually*. Brother William Cline said, "The sickness James mentioned is not physical. He wrote of sin-sickness. The oil James mentioned is not medicinal oil, but is the anointing of the Word of Truth."[14] Without giving any consideration to what the anointing oil is, I think the word "sick" refers to the person who is spiritually ill. Let me explain.

In verse 14, the elders were to offer prayer on behalf of the sick person to the Lord. In what way was this person sick? The following verse says that the

prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, the Lord raising him up. Who is offering the prayer of faith? In my judgment, not the elders only, but also the sin-sick person. Because of the faithfulness of the elders *and* the penitent sick person, there would be healing. In the "healing" process, there is forgiveness. Forgiveness is not going to be granted to a person who does not repent. It seems to me, this would imply penitence (and prayer, cf. Acts 8:22) on the part of the sin-sick person. What about the phrase "and the Lord will raise him up." Does this not refer to someone who is physically ill? Certainly it could, but it can also refer to one who at one time was in sin, but is now spiritually raised up (cf. Rom. 6:3-7; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 2:6). The person who offers his prayer to the Lord, in faith and in conjunction with the elders (by context) will be forgiven. James uses a "therefore" in the next verse (verse 16) to connect what he is about to say with what he has just said. His point in verse 16: the prayer of the righteous person will heal all sin-sick Christians – if the sin-sick Christian is penitent. Since this is the case, Christians should utilize the "avenue" that God has allowed all His faithful children to access. The answer to the question, then, is yes one should confess our sins to another. Why? To begin with, we should certainly confess our sins to the one we have sinned against (cf. Matt. 5:21-26; 18:15ff); that way we can be forgiven by that particular person. Secondly, it is reasonable to confess our sins before one who will help us (via prayer) to be reclaimed by God. This does not mean that we are to itemize our sins before a person or group of persons. We are to acknowledge our wrongdoings and turn back to God. As you look at the text, the point is not confessing our sins to elders,

exclusively, but the prayer of a righteous person is going to be heard by the Lord. What we are to do is confess our sins and allow the righteousness of another to go before the Lord with us on our behalf.

Connected with the previous question, "*Should we confess our sins in a public way?*" I think we understand that we are to confess our sins to the Lord. Most often, this is done privately and in a time of deep sorrow. What about doing so in a public manner? We should certainly confess our sins, all of them, to the Lord. However, there are times when we find ourselves in a "hot" spot and bring public shame to the Lord's name. The Lord is very concerned about His name. What do we do when we profane the Lord's name in public? In Ezekiel 36:21, the Holy Spirit records the word of the Lord when He says, "but I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went." The problem for Israel is that they seem not to care.

Brother Guy N. Woods has an excellent piece on this that is worthy of consideration. After a page of logical analysis of James 5:16, coupled with 1 John 5:16-17, he says: "It is a practical rule, clearly grounded in the premises above that the confession should be as public as the sin – but not more so."[15] I think there is wisdom in this. If one were to sin in a public way, shame would come upon our Lord in a public way (cf. 2 Sam. 12:14). I have often thought that if one brought shame to our Lord's name and confessed his sin before the brethren (and the Lord), then it would be possible for the church to not only forgive the sin, but the church could also defend the brother who sinned (not the sin itself). They could do

this because the brother did exactly what the Lord wanted him to do, that is, acknowledge his wrong and repent. Who better to pray for him, than the people who can help him best, the church? All things being as they should, the Lord will forgive that person. Should we not also?

A third question for our consideration is, "*Should one confess, formally, the name of Christ before submission to baptism?*" Simply put, I think the answer to this question is yes. Why would we not want to confess the name of our Lord before we submit to baptism? We should not **only** confess our Lord's name before baptism, but also for the remainder of our days. Did not our Lord say, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32)? Allowing the Bible to set forth the precedent for our actions, let us consider the case of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). The eunuch was reading Scripture when Philip caught up with him. After Philip took time to teach him, the eunuch mentioned the availability of water and asked what was stopping him from being immersed. Well, of course there was nothing. Philip, however, did put a stipulation on this request by saying, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he [the eunuch] answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37, NKJV). If the eunuch confessed the Lord's name before his baptism, can we be wrong in asking for a similar confession from another before that person is baptized? But someone will object, this verse is not in their particular version of the Bible. It is true that many of the newer versions do not have this verse. What should we make of this?

In modern versions of the Scriptures, some will have this verse included, most will not (except by way of a footnote). The rationale for including it in the footnote is that there is some doubt about its inclusion into the text. Every now and again, textual critics come across a passage that is perplexing and brings doubt. Acts 8:37 happens to be one of those passages. While believing that the verse should be omitted, Bruce Metzger said this:

> Although the earliest known New Testament manuscript which contains the words dates from the sixth century (ms. E), the tradition of the Ethiopian's confession of faith in Christ was current as early as the latter part of the second century, for Irenaeus quotes part of it (*Against Heresies*, III.xii.8).[16]

While some may wonder about the validity of this verse's inclusion in the text, I do not. What it teaches is substantiated elsewhere in Scripture.[17]

We not only have precedent in Acts 8:37, but we have the apostle Paul reminding Timothy of his own confession being made (1 Tim. 6:12). At the time of Timothy's conversion, he confessed the holy name of Jesus. Now, Timothy did not have to make this confession, but by not doing so, he would have shown that he was ashamed of the name of Jesus. Timothy never did that, rather, he acknowledged, affirmed, confessed the name of our Lord before many witnesses.

Last, because of our rejection of "confessions of faith," *What about brethren who demand that a "creed" be affirmed before a person speaks on their program?"* This is a controversial question. Some will strongly argue that program directors are to submit a "creed" of sorts to prospective lecturers before those speakers come (although there is a strong denial that it is a creed). Others will say, no; there should be no such thing because you either know the person or you do not. The "creed" under consideration is a questionnaire. These questionnaires are submitted to ascertain individual positions on individual issues. This has contributed to unnecessary division in the brotherhood. In effect, this creed has become a "confession of faith." If we accept the particular "confession of faith" offered us, then men will be allowed to speak before the congregation.

Answering our question, though, is not so easily done. In one respect, it seems to me, elders have a right to know the positions of the lecturer before he comes. But is it not reasonable that the one who offered the invitation know something about the one invited? Not just known as an acquaintance, but known as one who teaches the truth of God or not. If the elders already know the speaker and they know him reasonably well, then why the necessity for a "confession of faith" to be signed? It is understood that if the potential speaker does not submit "correct" answers to all the questions, then there will be no forthcoming invitation. Let me illustrate with a sample question: "Do you believe mixed swimming in today's commonly accepted swim suits to be sin?" I would answer that question, "Yes, it can be sinful." I think I can make a case for why a Christian ought not to be

swimming in public scantily clad. Sometimes, though, a simple question like this must be understood in certain contexts. For instance, what if the reader of the question had in view a husband-wife scenario; is it a sin then? On the other hand, what if one were to think differently than myself, is that person a false teacher? If I were to have fabricated the questionnaire with that question on it, would I be asking the potential lecturer to accept the "implied way to answer"? If I am, has this then become a "creed" or "confession of faith," even though it is in the form of a question? Are we asking men to accept our "confessions of faith" before we allow them to speak?

How do we strike a balance? In my judgment, elders have a right to inquire of people (lecturers, Bible class teachers, etc.) to ascertain certain things. The idea behind this is for them to shepherd the flock more effectively. It is quite unfortunate, however, that it would have to be done. But it does because of the error running rampant with many individuals and congregations in the brotherhood. When it comes to a lectureship or a gospel meeting (or any such meeting), it seems to me that the best way to alleviate problems and creeds is to *know* the prospective preacher. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for elders to determine certain things, but I wonder if it is as necessary as many practice it. Striking a balance may not be easily accomplished, but it can be achieved if the motivation is properly aligned.

CONCLUSION

"The New Testament knows nothing of confession as a formal institution [...]"[18] This is the comment of one scholar. Yet, the New Testament does indeed know and teach something about confession, just not as a formal institution. When a person confesses the name of our Lord, he is doing much more than just articulating words before baptism. That person is doing much more than uttering phonetic sounds so people will think he is faithful to the Lord's name. No, a person who confesses the name of our Lord is exhibiting the life of Christ in his life. Confession is made before immersion into the name of the Lord, and it is to continue throughout the remainder of one's life. Confession is great for the soul because of Whom we confess. When we are living for God, doing as He would have us to do, we are showing our obedience to the confession of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 9:13).

ENDNOTES

[1] This means the confession of sin "into the ear" of the priest.

[2] Kenneth Scot Latourette, *History of Christianity*, (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1953) p. 217.

[3] By this time the word "church" was not at all recognizable in comparison with what one reads in the New Testament. It only became worse.

[4] *Encyclopedia Britannica CD* (2001 edition).

[5] "Confession," *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, (John M'Clintock and James Strong, vol.2, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1968, reprint) p. 466.

[6] "Confession of Sins," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, (vol. 3, Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York, 1909) p. 221.

[7] *Dictionary of Word Origins*, (John Ayto, Arcade Publishing, New York, 1990) p. 130.

[8] *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Hendrickson Publishing, Peabody, MA, n/d) p. 226.

[9] *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, (MacDonald Publishing, McClean, VA, n/d) p. 91.

[10] "Confess, Confession," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, (volume 1, edited by George Bromiley, Eerdman's Press, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1979) p. 759.

[11] All Scripture references will come from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

[12] *The New Testament*, (translated by Charles B. Williams, Moody Press, Chicago, 1957), pp. 31-32.

[13] Since I cannot gave a date and time when this occurred (except in the early 80s), I have decided not to attribute the preacher's name to this manuscript. He was a television preacher who feel from television disgrace only, at a later time and with a much smaller following, to be on television again.

[14] William S. Cline, "Principles Concerning Prayer," *Studies in James*, (The Ninth Annual Denton Lectures, Valid Publications, Denton, TX, 1976), p. 213.

[15] Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers, Open Forum*, (Freed-Hardeman College Lectures, Freed-Hardeman College, Henderson, TN, 1976), p. 213.

[16] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, (United Bible Societies, 1975), pp. 359-360.

[17] A good review of the validity of whether this verse is to be include or not is found in Gareth L. Reese's Commentary on Acts (*New Testament History, Acts*, College Press, Joplin, MO, 1976), pp. 340-341.

[18] *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*, p. 221.

SECTION VI

STUDENTSPEAKERS

MUSIC IN WORSHIP
JOHN 4:23 – 24; EPH. 5:19

KEVIN E. KEY



Kevin Key was born in Corydon, IN, 1967. He and Dawn (Galloway) have two children: Trent and Miranda. Before attending ETSP, the Key's lived in Paoli, IN, where Kevin worked as an upholsterer and preached the gospel for four and a half years with the Plainview Church Of Christ. During that time he spoke in area gospel meetings; church camps, and assisted in many other related works. With a deep desire to have a deeper understand in God's Word, which would enable him to preach the whole council of God, Kevin and his family elected to move to Knoxville, Tennessee, so he could attend ETSPM. Kevin is currently a second year student at the school; upon completion in July, he hopes to work full-time with a congregation.

INTRODUCTION

When one begins to read and study the Bible, from Genesis through the book of Revelation, you soon discover the importance that is placed upon worshipping God, He desires for man to worship Him. Beginning in *Genesis 4:1-3,* during the *Patriarchal dispensation*, we see Cain and Abel, the children of Adam and Eve, were involved in offering sacrifices unto God. From the context of the passage, it is clear that they had been given instructions as to what and how they were to offer these sacrifices unto God. In doing so, Abel's offering was acceptable to God and

Cain's was not. Because of this, Cain was punished. It is fair to say that if they had not been given instructions concerning these offerings, it would not have been fair for God to punish Cain. In *Genesis 8:20-21*, Noah, after coming off the ark, built an altar and offered sacrifices unto God in worship and praise of Him. It is important to see that this was pleasing to God. He desired such of Noah. Further, in *Genesis 22: 1-19*, Abraham's faith was confirmed in his offering Isaac, his son, as he had been instructed by God to worship (James 2:21-23).

The importance of worship is emphasized again in Mount. Sinai, during the *Mosaic dispensation*, *Exodus 20: 1-17.* After Moses, by the guidance of God, had led the children of Israel out of their Egyptian bondage, he brought them unto the region near Mount Sinai. Here he gave them instructions from God concerning life and worship, which would be pleasing unto Him, the one and true God. We see this pattern throughout the Old Testament and restated in the New Testament by Jesus, *Christians dispensation*, when speaking with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well:

> Women, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit and in Truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those

> who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:22-24).

There are at least five important points which we may glean from this passage. First, Christian worship is not in a physical place. Secondly, God desires/seeks for mankind to worship Him. Thirdly, Man must worship God with the proper spirit/attitude and mindset. Fourthly, those who worship God must do it in a manner of truth (6:25). Fifthly, Jesus was introducing the fact that there would be a final dispensation in which God would be worshipped. It would be different than that of the Mosaic age which they had been accustomed to.

Today, in the Christian age, we are living in a society which feels that they can live and worship God in any manner they please and God, being a "loving God," will accept them as they are. While it is true, God is "loving" (John 5:6-8), He is also a jealous God (Exodus 20: 5) and a just God (II Thess.1: 7-9) who expects mankind to follow according to His pattern or suffer the consequences.

> Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their own thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lust of their hearts to

dishonor their bodies among themselves (Rom.1: 21-24).

Within the context of these passages Paul explains the steps these people had taken which led them away from the true worship of God unto pagan idolatry: They turned away from the precepts which God had laid down, turning to their own desires and lust, taking upon themselves all forms of idolatry. Therefore God gave them up to their own desire. Jesus stated, *"but in vain they do worship Me, seeking for themselves the commandments and doctrines of men" (Matt.15:9).* We see, very clearly, that there are two types of worship in which we may offer, either truth or vain.

The church today has been given a pattern in which we must follow concerning life and worship *(II Pet.1: 3; Matt. 28:19-20).* To fail to follow this pattern would be not to go far enough or to go too far, either extreme would be wrong. When we consider worship, as found in the New Testament, there are five distinct acts which serve as a pattern that we, His church, are to do in our coming together to worship God.

1. **Teaching Bible** *(Rom.10:13-15; Acts 2:1-41).*
2. **Praying** *(Acts2:42; I Thess.5:17).*
3. **Singing** *(Eph.5:19; Col.3:16).*
4. **Lord's Supper** *(Matthew 26:26; I Cor.11:23-29).*
5. **Giving** *(I Cor.16:1-2; II Cor.9:7).*

The subject that has been assigned to me for the purpose of this lecture is entitled "Music in

Worship." In consideration of this subject, we will look first at what others have said (historical statements), secondly, what must be our standard of authority, the method of biblical authority, then finally, what the Bible says or does not say on the subject.

When we think of the "religious" world today, it is quite clear that there are various views regarding music in worship. We see the usage of mechanical instruments, choirs, soloist, "praise teams," and a host of other things being used in "Christian" worship. Mainly among the denominationalist, and even today, among those who are "within" the Lord's church. Therefore, we can see the need for a discussion concerning acceptable music in worship.

WHAT HISTORIANS AND OTHERS HAVE SAID ON THE SUBJECT

"**Ignatius**, Bishop of Antioch around 110 A.D., wrote: "Now all of you together become a choir so that being harmoniously in concord and receiving the key note from God in unison you may sing with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father."[1]

Justin Martyr (139 A.D.) said, "The use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches, as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song."

John Wesley stated, founder of Methodism, "I have no objections to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither HEARD nor SEEN."[2]

John Calvin, founder of the Presbyterian church, stated, "Musical instruments in celebrating the praise of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the law."[3]

There are many other famous religious leaders and historians whom we could quote, but I believe that these should suffice to make my point, instruments and choirs, etc., have not always been used in Christians worship nor been accepted as the divine pattern. While what these scholars and religious leaders have said may help us to understand this point, their statements alone must not serve as our standard of authority.

WHAT MUST BE OUR STANDARD OF AUTHORITY?

In order to come to an agreement on the type of music which we can or must used in worship, it necessitates that we first come to an agreement on what must be the guide/authority for our decision. Will it be my opinion or yours? Or, will we use the Bible? I believe that we would all agree that we, that is each of us, do not have the right to impose our opinions upon one another. Everyone has an opinion and most of ours tend to different from one another. Therefore, we must seek another standard, one which speaks clearly on the issue and is truly capable of being our guide unto the truth of the matter. Having said this, what must be our guide?

Jeremiah states, *"O Lord, I know the ways of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to*

direct his own steps" (Jer.10: 23). Solomon stated, *"there is a way that seems right to a man. But the end is the way of death" (Pro.14: 12).* Let us say I desired to travel to California; I would need some form of guide or map to show me the way that I am to travel. Yet, merely having the map would not be good enough; I would have to follow the instructions that the map supplies in order to arrive at my, desired, destination.

The same principle applies when we consider our life and worship unto God; we need God to guide us. However, today, we see that many people have God's word, but fail to properly use it as their sole guidance in worship and the manner of life. *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalms 119:105).* The Psalmist further proclaimed God to be the eternal authority (Psalms90:2). His authority was not only exemplified in creation, but also in the manner in which He moved and worked through and for His people. The Hebrew's writer explained,

> God, who at various times and various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the Prophet's, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through who also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb.1:1-2).

From the text above, we see that God spoke/guided His people, in Old Testament times, by way of His words, through the prophets. But now, *"in these last days" (Christian age)*, He speaks through His Son, Jesus Christ. Shortly before Christ's death, He told His apostles that the *"Comforter"* (KJV) would be sent by the Father. He (the Holy Spirit) would come in His name (Jesus), and bring to their remembrance all things that He (Jesus) had said unto them; He (the Holy Spirit) would guide them into all truth *(John 14:26; 16:13)*. At the time of Jesus' death He delegated this authority to these inspired men who were led by the "Holy Spirit" when they wrote the words of the Bible *(II Pet.1: 20-21)*.

The apostle Paul in writing to Timothy stated, *"all scripture is given by the 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" (II Tim.3: 16-17)*. The Bible is God's inspired, or literally meaning, "God breathed or God spoken." Peter says, God has given unto men *"all things which pertain to life and to godliness" (II Pet.1:3)*. God has supplied man with the map for both life and Christian worship. Therefore, I believe that all would agree, since the Bible is the inspired word of God, and it is God that we are striving to please in both life and worship, it must be His word we use to be our standard of authority in this discussion.

THE METHOD BY WHICH THE BIBLE TEACHES

A. Explicitly:

1. The word explicit is defined as, "to make clear." When we state that the Bible teaches explicitly on a matter, that is to say that it is exactly stated within the Bible, leaving no question concerning what is to be done and all that is involved.
2. Biblical examples:
   a. (Specific) Noah was told to build the ark. In the instructions to build it God told Noah the exact wood (gopher), the exact dimensions (length 300 cubits, width 50 cubits, height 30 cubits). These are specific instructions (Gen.6:13-22).
   b. (Specific & Generic) Jesus instructed the apostles to *go* into all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *Teaching* them to observe all things I have commanded you (Matt.28:19-20). By this we are specifically told to go. The generic command is how I am to carry this out. This is left up to me.
   c. Explicit teaching does one of three things. It would either require that a thing is done, give permission for a thing to be done, or not permit it at all from being done.
3. "Whatsoever you do in word or deed do all in the name of Jesus Christ."

***B.* Implicitly:**

1. The word implicit defined: "to be understood though not plainly expressed.
2. Biblical examples:
   a. The Bible says that Lot was in Canaan (Gen.12:5). Then later Lot is said to have

gone up out of Egypt (Gen.13:1). Nowhere does the scripture say that Lot had gone down to Egypt, but because we see him coming out of Egypt we can only assume, necessary inference, he went there first in order to come out.

b. "When geometry sets forth the axiom that the 'whole of anything is the sum of its parts,' then geometry sets forth implicitly that the whole of anything is larger than any parts, and that the part of anything is smaller than the whole to which it relates" And, that which is here taught implicitly is just as true as is that which is taught explicitly. Just so with the word of God (Gobel Music, *Where the scriptures are silent we must be silent*).
c. When Jesus said, *"he that believeth and is baptized shall be save, but he that believeth not shall be damned,"* He did not need to add my name personally to this statement in order for me to understand that I must obey it.
d. "A law authorizes only what it authorizes, and it does not have to detail everything that it does not authorize" (Vaughn-Lewis Debate – Argument #15).
e. As with the explicit teaching, the implicit would carry with it the same principle in requirements, requiring, giving permission, or not allowing at all.

C. Silence is not permission:

1. When the Bible is silent on something that does not give permission for men to add their wants.
2. Consider the words of the Hebrews writer.

> [11]Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? [12]For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. [13]For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. [14]For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests (Heb.7:11-14).

Here he is discussing that there has been a change in the priesthood. The priesthood established in Aaron has given way in the New Testament to the better priesthood founded in Christ. He suggested that Christ could not have served as a priest "after the order of Aaron" (cf. 8:4). Because Jesus was a descendent from the tribe of Judah, and, as to that tribe, Moses **spoke nothing** (i.e., the law was silent; there was no authority) concerning the priesthood. Thus, the silence of the law was prohibitive! If God does not authorize a religious practice, it is therefore

forbidden. This principle absolutely must be respected[4].

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE HAVE TO SAY OR NOT SAY, ON THE SUBJECT?

In this section we will look at it from two different angels: first, from the Old Testament perspective and secondly, from the New Testament teachings. From my studies, I have found that there are two types of music:

1. "Vocal music - this is music which is made by man, without the assistance of any mechanical device.
2. "Instrumental music – music made by playing upon a man-made instrument such as piano, drum, guitar, etc."[5]

OLD TESTAMENT:

When looking at the Old Testament, we see both types of music represented here. The first mention of a type of music is found in Genesis 4:21, concerning Jubal, who is said to be the *"father of all those who play the harp and flute."* Later, Laban, when Jacob had left with Laban's daughters without telling him, mentions this same type of music. He tells Jacob that had he been informed of their departure he might have sent them away in "song, with timbrel and harp" (Genesis 31:27). The usage here is seen in that of rejoicing and celebration.

Further, we see what is often referred to as the "Song of Moses," when the children of Israel, along

with Moses, sang to the Lord, praising Him for delivering them from the hands of the Egyptians after their crossing the Red Sea (Ex.15: 1-21). Deborah and Barak sang a similar victory song attributing Israel's victory to the God of the Sinai Covenant (Judges 5:1-3). Also, when David and Saul had returned from David's defeat of the "Philistine," there was a woman who sang a song of victory. These were songs of praise unto God, for deliverance and victories over their oppressors.

Then, finally, David, in a number of passages, instructs his people to praise God with the use of both vocal and instrumental music. We must mention that clearly God allowed for David and Israel to use both vocal and instrumental music in worship and praise unto Him. The Psalmist stated,

> Sing aloud to God our strength; Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the trimble, The pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, on our solemn feast day. For this is a statue for Israel, A law of God of Jacob. This He established in Joseph as a testimony, When He went throughout the land of Egypt, Where I heard a language I did not understand (Psa.81:1).

Therefore, when David and Israel offered songs of praise and worship either with or without the instrument, it appears to have been acceptable. Why? Because they were, under the Mosaic Law,

acting with the authorization of God *(I Chron.28: 11-13, 19; II Chron.29: 25-26).*

We know that those things that had not been given divine approval, either explicitly of implicitly, was not acceptable and God punished all that were involved in such acts in some fashion. First, take for example the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu: *"each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord,* ***which He had not commanded them.*** *So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord"(Lev.10: 1-2).* They had been given the instruction not to burn offer strange fire (Ex.30:9). By adding to what God had explicitly stated cost them their lives. Secondly, Moses, having been instructed at Kadesh to speak to the rock, instead of striking it, (like had been the case at Horeb) to bring forth water in the presence of Israel in order to fill their thirst. Moses strikes it, going against divine authority. Because of His disobedience, both he and Aaron are punished. He is not allowed to enter into the Promised Land and Aaron is stripped of his priestly garments and killed (Num. 20-21). Thirdly, we see that Saul usurps his authority as king, offering a burnt offering not according to the instruction of God. Samuel tells him *"you have done foolishly.* ***You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you."*** Because of this, he is told that one who is after God's own heart will replace him as king over Israel *(I Sam. 13:9-15).*

Finally, Paul writing to the church of the Thessalonians stated that *"those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel"* will suffer eternally.

> When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting punishment from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those, who believe, because our testimony among you was believed (II Thess. 1: 7-9).

John says that in order for us to *"know God"* we must keep His commandments and it is only by this, that we may *"know that we know Him" (I John 2:3-6)*. Therefore, it necessitates that we follow only according to the divine pattern, which has been set-forth in the Bible.

Many people today are advocates of the idea that we can use all of these types of music in worship and praise to God simply because they were used under the Mosaic age. Yet, they say nothing about bringing forward the offering of sacrifices and the burning of incense that we see under the Law of Moses. What we must keep in mind is that we are no longer under the same law as David and Israel.

Paul stated in *Colossians 2: 14* that the Old law had been nailed to the cross; and the Hebrew's writer explains that a *"New Covenant"* has replaced the former, under the priesthood of Christ *(Heb.8: 7-13;*

Heb.7: 12). While it is true that the Old Testament serves as an example of things to come, (Rom.15:4; Col.2:16-17) it is also clear that each dispensation must have divine authorization in order to be pleasing to God. Having come to this understanding, we then ask, what does the New Testament authorize for the Christian age?

NEW TESTAMENT: THE EXAMPLES OF JESUS

I ask that you recall Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan women at Jacob's well, mentioned in our introduction. One of the points that we learned from this passage is that of a new dispensation that was coming in Christ. It was to replace that of the Mosaic dispensation, which characterized the Old Testament and the time of the gospels in the New Testament.

> In these words, which adumbrated the genius of gospel-worship, our blessed Lord clearly taught two things: first, that the ceremonial, typical, and ritualistic worship of the Jewish temple was designed to be temporary, and that the hour was swiftly approaching when it would be entirely abolished; secondly, that even that stated worship which had been devoid of a ceremonial, typical and ritualistic character, would, under the influences to be exerted upon the people of God in the dispensation about to be inaugurated, become more spiritual than ever.[6]

When we view the life of Christ, we see it is filled with many kinds of examples, in both word and deeds. These serve as a standard of biblical authority for both biblical times and today (I Pet.2: 21-22; I John 2:6). Some of these are implicitly (Specifically) stated and other explicitly taught (by implication). Let us view those, which deal with our subject.

When Jesus introduced the Lord's supper to His apostles in Matthew 26:26-30, just prior to His death, we see that the scripture states that they concluded by singing a hymn. It is interesting to notice that there is no mention of the use of instrumental music and also the fact that the wording suggests, "after **they** had sung a hymn, **they** went out into Mount of Olives," that all present took part in singing the hymn. In the teachings of Christ, He has given us the example of a cappella and congregational singing.

Just prior to His death on the cross, He told His apostles, " I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). It is only when we follow and do according to the teachings of Christ that we may have access unto the Father. After His death, just before His ascension, He commissioned His disciples to go and make disciples, *"teaching them to observe all things, I have commanded you."* The examples which Christ had given to His disciples were brought to their remembrance by the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and throughout their ministry (John 14:26; Acts 1:1-2). This enabled them to teach the all-sufficient truth that Jesus had taught them in His ministry (John 16:13).

EXAMPLES OF THE APOSTLES AND THE EARLY CHURCH

As we consider the apostolic examples and that of the first century church, we understand that we are looking at the passages of scripture from Acts chapter two and following. These are considered to be the Acts of the Apostles and that of the first century church. On the first Pentecost after Christ's death, the day the church was established, it is said that those who were baptized into the body of Christ, (Gal.3: 27-28) "*continued in the apostles doctrine* [...]" (Acts2: 37-42). Therefore, when we see the practices and teachings with which they were involved or not involved, it serves as an example, in some form, for the church today since we are the "New Testament Church."

In the examples of the apostles, it is interesting to me that we not only find the type of music that is authorized by God for the Christian age, but, we are further told who and how this music is to be presented, and then finally its purpose.

First, let us consider the type of music we see. Every New Testament passage, which discusses music in worship, says that we are to sing. From Ephesians 5:19, Paul says "*speaking to one another* [...] *singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.*" Speaking mandates verbal communication. This point is stressed in the following scriptures: I Cor.14:15;26; Col.3:16; James 5:13; Heb.2:12; Rom.15:9; Acts 16:25.

To the Church at Ephesus and Colossae, Paul explains the type of songs, which are to be sang in worship (Eph.5:19, Col.3:16). (1). "*Speak to one another in* ***psalms***." These are said to be "psalms of devotion to the praise of God, extroling His name, power, character and works." (2). **"Hymns."** Hymns are considered to be "songs of praise, thanksgiving and supplication teaching our dependence on God and His willingness to hear and bless." (3). Paul says we are to sing **"spiritual songs."** Spiritual songs are songs intended to inspire and cultivate feeling of spiritual devotion, and to bring the spirit of man into harmony with and under control of the Spirit of God."[7]

From the passages last referred to, there is no mention of instrumental music. While this is the case, it is here that some try to introduce an argument for it. Their claim comes from the phrase *"making melody,"* (Eph.5:19) in which they state that the Greek verb "psallo" includes that of playing. In consideration of the etymology of this word, we see that it carries at least five different meanings at various periods of time:

1. To move by a touch
2. To play on a stringed instrument
3. To twitch a carpenter's line
4. To touch the chords of a musical instrument
5. In New Testament times, to sing praise[8]

While an understanding of Greek does prove to be very helpful, I do not believe that we need to be Greek scholars to understand the Bible (I Cor.14:33). In order for us to derive at the correct definition, we must consider the meaning of the word from the

context where it is used. Looking at the complete phrase we see that it reads *"singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* (Eph.5:19) When we plug in the various meanings of the word into the context, it is clear that what Paul is saying is that we are to touch the chords of the human heart in singing. You see the text itself provides us with the instrument to be use, the instrument God created us with, that of the human heart.

Secondly, we are told that our singing is to be congregational. There is no mention of choirs, soloist, "praise teams," etc., found in the teachings of the apostles. In both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, the command to sing is that it is something done to "one another." The implication is that everyone who is a Christian must be a participant in the song service to our Lord. Those who are advocates of choirs and soloist, etc., base their argument from I Corinthians 14:26, claiming it to be a "proof text." *"What is it then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."* Bro. Wayne Jackson refutes this argument very soundly in his book entitled, *Notes From The Margin Of My Bible,* he states,

> Paul's question, with its corresponding answer, comes in the midst of a rebuke to the Corinthian saints, who were abusing their spiritual gifts. One hardly seeks biblical authority in a rebuke! Twice previously in this epistle, Paul has employed the Greek adjective *hekastos*

> [each other] to highlight what Professor Harold K. Moulton calls the 'selfish individualism' that was characteristic of these saints (The Challenge of the Concordance-Some New Testament Words Studied in Depth, 1977, p.37). Earlier, the apostle had admonished them because 'each other' had adopted the name of the person who immersed him (1:21). The Corinthians had violated principles of truth when 'each other' had put his own participation in the communion supper above the interests of the group as a whole (11:21). So now, in chapter 14, 'each other' is attempting to exercise his spiritual gift divorced from those regulating principles which were designed to facilitate edification.[9]

As Brother Jackson points out, those who hold to such are merely grasping at strolls, because there is no such authorization to be found in the New Testament.

Thirdly, we see the attitude with which our singing is to be presented in worship. Paul states,

> What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. (I Cor.14:15)

This text, and others, tells us that the songs we sing in our assembly must be done in the proper spirit. In that I mean, we must have the right attitude and devotion as we sing and worship God. Singing is more than that which comes from our lips. Paul stresses this in *Ephesians 5:19*, *"singing with* ***grace in your heart*** *to the Lord."* Jesus said, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me" *(Matt.15:8)*. Let it not be said of us that we do not sing to our greatest potential in worshipping our God.

Then, finally, we see the purpose of music in worship. Music in worship is directed in two ways:

1. To God, *"singing and making melody in your heart, to the Lord" (Eph.5:19).* Our purpose in this is to offer *"praise"* and *"thanksgiving" (Acts 16:25; Rom.15:9; Heb.13:15; Eph.5:20).*
2. In teaching both ourselves, and to others who are present. *"Teaching and admonishing one another* [...]*" (Col.3:16).*

What may be the effect of our singing? (1). We may encourage and strengthen our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. (2). We may teach the sinner the error of their ways. (3). It may serve as a means of warning to those that have forsaken the Lord and fallen back into the affairs of this life. (4). Music in worship is to edify one another, *"all things are to be done, unto edification" (I Cor.15:26).*

CONCLUSION

"And whatever you do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col.3:17). As each generation comes and goes, let us always strive to maintain the pattern of New Testament Christianity. In order to accomplish this it necessitates that we "speaking where the Bible speaks, and keeping silent in the areas where the Bible is silent."

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BAPTISM

MICHAEL MCKISSICK



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INTRODUCTION

He came at just the right time, preaching and teaching in the wilderness of Judea. His name was John the Baptist, and the object of his unique ministry had been prophesied by Isaiah: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). This highway was also mentioned in the 35th chapter of Isaiah. It pictured the kingdom of the Lord, and only the holy and righteous could walk on it. There was John: following the instructions of the Master Architect, preparing the people to walk on the Lord's highway, and ushering in the kingdom of God. And as part of this new ministry, and as part of this new kingdom, there was what appears to be a new instruction.

THE BAPTISM OF JOHN

So amazingly successful was the ministry of John, that it is recorded that all of Judea, Jerusalem, and the people of the area surrounding the Jordan River came to be baptized by him, confessing their sins (Matt. 3:5-6). This apparently new baptism was part of the preaching of John, and is described as a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). In other words, John, while fulfilling his ministry, which was prophesied by Isaiah, and while preparing the people for the new kingdom of God, was baptizing them as part of this new ministry. In order to demonstrate the importance of this new feature, he even had a rather special visitation.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

What a day it must have been for John the Baptist. It started like any other day. He was preaching and baptizing the people of the Jewish nation in the waters of the Jordan. However, on this particular day, He was called upon to baptize the man who represented the very purpose of his ministry. In fact, when Jesus appeared to John, the Baptizer tried to prevent him saying that he needed to be baptized by Jesus. However, the response, as recorded in Matthew is as follows: "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). This baptizing ministry received the divine stamp of approval, with Jesus stating that it was an act to fulfill all righteousness. It is here that we see the example of Jesus himself submitting to an act that was required for those entering this new kingdom. In fact,

this act of submission represented a beginning to the ministry of Jesus, for it is here that we see the Holy Spirit descending on him, and it is here that God confirms vocally his divine offspring. However, there are a couple of questions that remain unanswered: Why baptism? And what is unique about our requirement to be baptized into Christ?

FINDING OUR ANSWERS IN THE PAST

Is it possible that we sometimes fail to look to our Jewish heritage as Christians? Could it be that there are important issues discussed in the Old Testament that would increase our understanding of why we do the things that we do under our new covenant? Could it be that our understanding is incomplete because we fall short in OT knowledge? The writer of the book of Hebrews seemed to think so. In fact, as recorded in chapter 5 of Hebrews, he was disappointed because the Christians to whom he was writing were not mature enough to explore the value of their Jewish roots and thus gain a greater understanding of the Christ. He wanted to talk about how the priesthood of Christ was like that of Melchizedek. However, they had "become dull of hearing" (Hebrews 5:11). Dull of hearing? Not mature enough to explore their heritage? Do we have that problem anywhere in the church? But what does this have to do with baptism?

While the purpose of the writer of Hebrews was to encourage the readers to move past the fundamentals, he does provide a list in the 6th chapter of some fundamentals that they should have mastered. These include: "the foundation of

repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment" (Hebrews 6:1-2). It is important to notice the use of the word baptism in the plural. The writer is talking to Jews who would be familiar with the various ceremonial cleansing rituals and baptisms used in the first century. Perhaps they should have used their experience in understanding Christian baptism and how it is the ultimate ceremonial cleansing. It is a once-for-all cleansing that made their other forms of cleansing obsolete. In order to really understand the context of both this verse and of baptism in general, it is necessary to understand the use of baptism in the distant past and during the days of the ministry of John and, finally, of Jesus.

THE CLEANSING BY WATER OF OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

It was a time of ritualism, ceremonialism, and sacerdotalism. God wanted to separate for himself a kingdom of priests and a holy nation unto himself. In order to do this, he gave the Jewish nation the Mosaic Covenant, by which they could be cleansed to approach their maker. So much of this covenant centered on ritual cleanness/uncleanness. There were many rules that had to be followed. One of the fundamental agents of ritual purity was none other than water.

One of the verses that demonstrates the importance of water for purification is found in Numbers chapter 19: "But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut

off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. The water of purification has not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean" (verse 20). This chapter deals with ceremonial washing of people who are defiled by contact with the dead. It also details the preparation of the ashes of the red heifer and the purification that the participating priest must go through, also using water. This was not the only time that a priest was washed with water for purification.

In the 8th chapter of Leviticus, the consecration ceremony for the high priest and his sons is described. In addition to being clothed, sacrificed for, anointed with oil, and anointed with blood, they were to be washed with water. "Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water" (Lev. 8:6). There were plenty of times when common people had to wash for ceremonial cleanness too.

In Leviticus 13-15, there are detailed laws concerning the uncleanness of leprosy and of bodily discharges. For the lepers, their garments were cleaned by water and examined. If a leper became well, he had to go through ceremonial cleansing to be considered clean again. Additionally, those suffering from bodily discharges (and their garments) were also cleaned with water. These were, of course, purification rituals prescribed specifically by the Law of Moses. However, it is also important to examine some of the customs that developed closer to and included in the time of Jesus.

IMMERSION CUSTOMS IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

According to research by Peggy Pryor, of LeDevar ministries, it was a custom of the people copying scripture to immerse themselves before beginning their work. Furthermore, if they later had a bad thought or began to sweat, they had to undergo another immersion. Young boys studying scripture would immerse themselves beforehand. Finally, before bringing a sacrifice to the temple, people would immerse themselves in a Mikvah. In fact, even today, there are many who immerse themselves before the Day of Atonement[1]. But what about this Mikvah?

THE MIKVAH

> The Mikvah is a ceremonial bath. It is the equivalent of a modern day baptistry. It was used for immersion for the purpose of ritual cleanness. Both people and objects could be purified in this manner. Mikva'ot (plural of Mikvah) dating back to the first century have been found in many cities including Jerusalem, Masada, Jericho, Qumran, and Sepphoris. The Mikva'ot of Sepphoris have recently been discussed in the March/April 2002 issue of Biblical Archaeology Review. In this article is a great description of a Mikvah.[2]

There were 22 Mikva'ot found in the ruins of Sepphoris alone. They are large pools coated with up to seven layers of plaster for protection against

leaking. They are designed to accommodate somewhere between 60 and 250 gallons of water, while baths of the period were normally much smaller. What is most interesting is that there were so many of these ritual baths found in one location and in many private homes. Additionally, they are located in a city that is just 4 miles northwest of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. It is clear that Mikva'ot were a common part of Jewish life in the 1st century (2:50-55). They were vital to ritual purity, and they were in an area where Jesus began and completed much of his ministry. Now it is time to revisit the scene of John the Baptist again.

While John was out in the wilderness of Judea baptizing the masses, he was not introducing some completely new concept. The people were used to the customs as well as the Biblical use of water for purification. The difference here was that it was a baptism of repentance. Christian baptism, however, is even more unique.

With all these types of baptisms in the first century, none of them would have been performed in the name of a man. There were many baptisms, but after the ministry of Jesus, there was only one baptism, and it was one that was performed in the name of the Son of God. Our baptism is baptism in the name of/by the authority of/into Christ. All of these other ritual washings/baptisms were imperfect in that they had to be repeated, because they were only good until a man became unclean again. However, baptism into the Christ was a one-time event, powerful enough to cleanse us forever, from the greatest cause of uncleanness: SIN.

That concludes the portion of this report dedicated to the historical Jewish heritage of ceremonial washing. In the second part, I wish to look at the commands for, examples of, and benefits of baptism.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

It is very interesting to notice the large number of groups claiming Christianity in these times that do not accept the validity of the New Testament teaching on baptism. This situation is just the opposite of the early church. Their belief in the necessity of baptism is well attested to as noticed in the writings of Tertullian, Justin Martyr, and the Didache. In fact, it was Tertullian who said that we are saved like the fishes: in water. Additionally, it was this very belief in the necessity of baptism which eventually led to the baptism of infants, a practice still performed in the Catholic church today. Given this obvious belief in the necessity of baptism, one might wonder why the situation is reversed today?

It is my opinion that much theology is reactionary in nature, even in the Church of Christ. In other words, people form their opinions on theology by reacting to perceived extremes. Let me illustrate: The Catholic church of the Middle Ages and Renaissance period was corrupt and very works-oriented. In rejecting this concentration on dead works, people began to believe that no works were necessary at all...including baptism. They formed an opinion not based on the Bible, but based on their

reaction to the extremes of Catholicism at the time. This very process is continuing today.

There are certain denominations that have, at times, reconsidered their official position on baptism. Additionally, there is a large number of home churches, undenominational churches, Messianic Jewish congregations, and Mennonite congregations that practice New Testament Baptism. However, there seems to be a number of people in the church today that are again reacting against the idea that baptism is necessary. Questions seem to be arising once again whether or not baptism is essential. This happens more and more as we want to eliminate barriers to fellowship. The question is asked: Must we really draw lines of fellowship on this issue? However, the purpose of this article is not to be swayed by public opinion or to build a theology by overreacting to others. The purpose of this article is to determine genuine New Testament teaching on baptism, discovering the purpose, method, and benefits of this great event in a person's life.

WHOSE IDEA WAS BAPTISM?

We have already looked at the ministry of John as he prepared the people of Israel for the manifestation of the kingdom of God. His was a ministry of repentance, and he baptized with a baptism unto repentance. However, he spoke of a coming authority figure who would baptize differently. This person was Jesus. After he performed that which he had set out to accomplish on the earth, he gave these final instructions: "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" (Matt. 28:19). Some additional information is given in Mark: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (16:16). There are several things that can be gleaned from these passages.

First, baptism is the God's idea. Jesus submitted to the Father's will by being baptized. He then left instructions for Christians to go through the world teaching and baptizing. This baptism, then, was clearly something that people could administer. This limits it to water baptism. It is clearly a command as opposed to a decent suggestion. Finally, according to Mark's account, it is a necessary step to salvation. In fact, you can notice this from the order. It does not say that whoever believes is saved and then gets baptized. It does say that a person believes, (+) is baptized, and becomes (=) saved. At this point, I would like to ask this question: Is it strange that there would be something that we have to do?

We often talk about faith being demonstrated by works. Of course, according to the discussion of James, this is true. There are, however, other places in scripture where this kind of idea is suggested. For instance, in the Lord's Prayer, we are told to pray for forgiveness. There is a stipulation to follow for receiving this forgiveness. We must forgive others their trespasses. In fact, in Matthew 6:15, we are told that if we do not forgive others (kind of a work), then neither will we be forgiven. Now I cannot imagine anyone suggesting that people who are not forgiven for their sins are saved. Nor can I see why people would suggest that baptism is not an essential part of

being saved. There is, in fact, a very beautiful reason to be baptized.

BAPTISM: ILLUSTRATION OF THE GOSPEL

According to Romans 6:1-6, baptism is how we illustrate the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is how we identify with the most important events in the life of our savior. Just as he died, we die to the world of sin. Just as he was raised, we are raised to a newness of life. This begins our walk with Christ. While his death was real, ours is only symbolic, even though it is we who deserved the death penalty. Baptism, then, is a small price to pay when compared with the price Jesus had to pay. As a consequence of identifying our lives with that of the Lord, there are some great benefits.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

There was a large group of Jewish people with a rather burdensome problem on the Day of Pentecost. They had collaborated on the death of the Messiah. Their problem was blood guilt. The wound that guilt leaves was still fresh when Peter stood up and reminded them that they had killed Jesus. Finally, when they could stand it no longer, they asked, "What do we do?" Peter was quick to report the solution to them. It was a matter of doing two things: repenting and being baptized. It is clear from the context that they were beginning to believe the message. As a result of taking these next two steps, Peter promised them two things: Remission of Sins and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. In other words, their sins would be washed away and they would be indwelt Christians. This

would take place after they fulfilled their dual-action responsibility. There are quite a lot of benefits to being baptized into Christ.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING BAPTIZED

First, through baptism, as has been demonstrated elsewhere, we are said to "put on Christ." This is found in Galatians 3:27. Continuing to the next verse, we find that there is an added benefit: We become members in the community of God. Now this community does not operate like the world, for there is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). There are no economic, racial, or any other kind of distinctions to be made. We are collectively grafted in to the group called "Abraham's seed," and are, therefore, recipients of the promise that God made to Abraham. In fact, in being baptized we become heirs to every promise that God has made to the Christian.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER



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INTRODUCTION

The Lord's Supper is a supper. There is no doubt about that. Paul did not use the word "Supper"[1] when referring to "the Lord's Supper" for no reason (1 Cor. 11:20). There is eating and drinking involved (1 Cor. 11:26). There is bread and a cup involved (1 Cor. 11:26). It is a supper.

But the Lord's Supper is more than a supper. There is more involved than eating and drinking. There is more involved than bread and a cup. In this lesson, we will look at some of the things that make the Lord's Supper the Lord's Supper, and not just a supper.

THIS IS MY BODY

Concerning the bread of the Lord's Supper, Matthew and Mark record Jesus as saying, "This is My body" (Matt. 26:26, Mark 14:22). Paul and Luke

record the same thing, except Paul adds the words, "which is for you [...]" and Luke adds the words "which is given for you" (1 Cor. 11:24, Luke 22:19). Notice that word "given." It tells us that the body of Christ is a gift. The words "for you" were first spoken to the apostles but are applicable for me and you. "But why," you may wonder, "would anyone need the gift of the body of Christ?"

The Hebrews writer wrote about the insufficiency of "the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" and that God thus prepared a body for Christ and that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:4-5, 10). Notice also what Peter wrote: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). And notice what Paul wrote to the Christians at Colossae: "And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach [...]" (Col. 1:21-22). So we need the gift of the body of Christ for sanctification, the bearing of our sins, and reconciliation. This body, which Jesus said was the bread of the Lord's Supper.

THIS IS MY BLOOD

Paul and Luke both record Jesus as saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood [...]" with Luke adding that the cup "is poured out for you [...]" (1 Cor. 11:25, Luke 22:20). But Mark and Matthew record Jesus as saying, "This is My blood of the

covenant, which is poured out for many" with Matthew adding, "for forgiveness of sins" (Mark 14:24, Matt. 26:28). Surely the expressions "new covenant in My blood" and "My blood of the covenant" are two ways of saying the same thing.

A covenant is "an agreement between two people or two groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other."[2] Our agreement with God is summed up in 1 John 1:7: "If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Our promise to God is that we walk in the Light. God's promise to us is our cleansing from all sin. But notice what it takes to make this agreement work: "the blood of Jesus His Son." This blood, which Jesus said was the cup of the Lord's Supper.

DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Since Jesus called the bread and cup of the Lord's Supper His body and blood, does that mean that those who eat the bread and drink the cup are cannibals? An answer to this question is found in Matthew's record of the institution of the Lord's Supper. After Jesus called the cup His blood, He went on to refer to it as "'this fruit of the vine [...]'" (Matt. 26:28-29). Apparently, it had not changed to actual blood, but rather was still "fruit of the vine." Since Jesus spoke figuratively about the cup being His blood, surely He also spoke figuratively about the bread being His body.

The Lord's Supper is not a miracle, but rather a memorial. Concerning the consumption of both the bread and the cup, Jesus made the statement, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24-25). When we eat the bread, we should be thinking about His body that is given for us. And when we drink the cup, we should be thinking about His blood shed to put into effect our agreement with God. When we eat the Lord's Supper we are not cannibals, we are rememberers.

The Lord's Supper is not a time to think about a television show or movie that was watched recently. It is not a time to think about a sporting event that was watched or participated in recently. It is not a time to think about something that happened at work or at school. It is not a time to think about anything but the death of the Lord. While other suppers may be the setting of all kinds of subjects for conversation, the Lord's Supper has but this one subject--the Lord's death.

WHEN YOU MEET TOGETHER...

There is an important lesson that may be too often overlooked concerning the Lord's Supper (and making sure that it is, in fact, the Lord's Supper). We learn this lesson by looking at the church in Corinth.

The church in Corinth was divided (1 Cor. 11:18). In a meal that preceded the Lord's Supper, some people were eating all the food and not leaving anything for others (1 Cor. 11:21). This caused division between the fed and the famished. And as a result, they were not able to eat the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20). It was not that they were physically

unable, but their division made the Lord's Supper not the Lord's Supper. Therefore, Paul told them to examine themselves and the body, that is, the church (1 Cor. 11:28-29). And he told them to wait for each other when they came together to eat, and if they could not do that then to eat at home beforehand (1 Cor. 11:33-34).

We, too, ought to examine ourselves and the church to see if we have been responsible for some division. And if we find that we have, we should do our best to fix it. I say "do our best," realizing that sometimes our brothers may refuse to reconcile with us. But we should give it our best effort, should we not? Only then will we truly be eating the Lord's Supper.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF EVERY WEEK...

When should the Lord's Supper be eaten? Twice a year? Four times a year? At special events, such as weddings and funerals? Wednesday? Saturday? What does the Bible say about it?

Paul said this to the Corinthian church: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Why did Paul tell these churches to do this on the first day of every week? Could it be that the churches were already meeting on the first day of every week to eat the Lord's Supper? It appears that the Corinthian church met together sometime to eat the Lord's Supper but were not able to actually eat the Lord's Supper because of their division (1 Cor. 11:18-20). Then we

have this statement in the book of Acts: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread [...]" (Acts 20:7). Putting these three verses together points to the early churches meeting every first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper.

CONCLUSION

By doing these things--examining ourselves and the church, eating the bread and drinking the cup every Sunday, and remembering the Lord's death while doing so--we will be pleasing to the Lord. The weekly reminder of the Lord's death ought to motivate us to be pleasing to the Lord the rest of the week as well. Remembering His love for us will stir up our love for Him. It is like the words of that beautiful song:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my Lord;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.[3]

ENDNOTES

[1]All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible: Updated Edition.

[2]Lockyer, Sr., Herbert., editor. Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1986), 259.

[3]Watts, Isaac. "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

[4]Thanks to Edwin Jones, whose teaching can be found in this lesson.

GIVING

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most widely accepted practices of the church is the practice of giving of one's financial means. In the churches of Christ, we might debate with denominations about the Lord's Supper, baptism or instrumental music, but one subject that is rarely debated is the matter of the regular giving of financial support to the local congregation. It would be humorous, if it was not so spiritually tragic, that despite the many different ways mankind departs from God's plan for the organization of His church, the

principle of giving is still very much alive and well. The reasons it is tragic are the abuses of the godly principle of giving that can be seen on much of the religious programming on television, in which millions are raked in each year in the name of "carrying out the Lord's work."

However, just because an act is abused does not make it a bad thing, if it is used properly. From a very practical standpoint, it is very necessary for the giving of one's finances to be a part of the regular practices of the church. The reasons behind this are obvious; it takes money to carry out the various works with which a religious group is involved. This includes salaries paid to the local preacher, church secretary, or other personnel hired by the congregation, benevolence, evangelism, educational programs, utilities, and maintenance for the church building. If there were no financial backing for these various aspects of the work of the church, then all activity of the local congregation would cease. While it would seem that this basic reasoning would inspire God's people to give generously and regularly to the Lord's church, unfortunately there are still congregations that have trouble consistently meeting the needs of their weekly budgets.

Often people will have much in the way of financial security, but will give little of their resources to support the work of the local church. A congregation that I was part of a few years ago once lost several prominent and wealthy members because of division in the congregation, and yet the amount of contribution that was received weekly changed very little after they left. Other people came in over the

next couple of years and replenished some of the number in attendance that had been lost. These new additions to the church were not people of great financial means, yet the contribution rose by several hundred dollars above the level it had been before the division took place. Imagine if those who had much from which to give, gave as those new members did how much more would be available in the church treasury from which to do the Lord's work. It is with these thoughts in mind that this study of giving should be read, and special attention paid to the heart-set that should be involved with one's personal giving to the local church.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GIVING

Giving begins with God. During the first week of time, God created a utopian world for man in which he could live (Gen. 1:1ff) and gave him access to immortal life (Gen. 2:9). Although man's fall from favor with God caused him to lose his access to immortality on this earth (Gen. 3:22) and brought problems into the natural processes of the once-perfect world (Gen. 3:17-19), God has still continued to bless mankind with all the things that he needs to survive, both spiritually and physically (Matt. 5:45; Phil. 4:19). In Jesus' talk with Nicodemus, we read that, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). In fact, God gave us this gift from the foundation of the world, because in the mind of God, Jesus' mission on earth was already accomplished before He even came to earth (1 Peter 1:20). Jesus Christ also, in conjunction with His Father's giving nature, willingly

gave Himself in an ultimate demonstration and example of giving. The apostle Paul spoke once on a portion of Jesus' teaching on giving: "I have shown you in everyway, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Search as one might through the New Testament, this particular statement of Jesus can not be found in any of the Gospel accounts, or the book of Acts. It must be remembered that the Gospel accounts do not contain a complete and exhaustive record of Jesus' life, as the volumes needed to do so would be too cumbersome to ever be learned or efficiently used by anyone (John 21:25). The "lost proverb" of Christ, that Paul quoted, was much in keeping with Jesus' personal ministry on this Earth, both in His actions and His teachings.

Jesus' ministry was a giving of Himself for the sinners of the world. Therefore, within the context of what Jesus did for the world we should meditate on this question, "Which is a more blessed act, Jesus sacrifice for us or our acceptance of His sacrifice?" When put within the framework of Christ's gift to us it becomes much clearer how great a thing it is to give.

If we are going to conform ourselves to Christ (Rom. 8:29), then we are going to be a people that are known for the giving of much, even to the point of giving our lives, just as Christ was willing to give His life (1 John 3:16). Whether it is the giving of one's finances (Rom. 12:13, 1 John 3:17), giving of one's respect to fellow Christians (Phil. 2:3), the giving of one's obedience to those in authority (1 Peter 2:13-

18, 3:1-6), or even the giving of one's life, the Christian life is to be one that is characterized by giving.

In the first epistle of John, the principle is presented of meeting the needs that one has knowledge of from one's material resources. "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). With ability comes responsibility, and if on has the financial ability to do something, than one should do so. Therefore, with the knowledge that the local congregation needs money in order to carry out its work, comes the responsibility on the part of every Christian to contribute to that need. The same amount of money would not be required of each individual, but only from what God has blessed one with will one be held accountable (Matt. 25:14-29). In fact, to neglect to take care of needs, as one is able, is to show neglect to the Son of God (Matt. 25:41-45) and the love of God will not abide in us (1 John 3:17).

EXAMPLES OF GIVING IN THE BIBLE

We see in the book of Genesis some very early examples of the giving of one's material possessions. We are all familiar with the sacrifices that were apparently required by God in the Patriarchal Age (Gen. 4:3-5; 8:20; Job 1:5). We also find examples in the book of Genesis of the giving of material goods for other than sacrifices. The first example of tithing (giving ten percent of one's possessions) is not found in connection with the Law of Moses (Lev. 27:30-32), but rather in the story of the war of the kings (Gen.

14). In this account, we see Abraham giving a tithe of what had been plundered by the invaders to Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God (Gen. 14:16-20; Heb. 7:1). The Hebrews writer tells us of this in connection of the act confirming Melchizadek's higher position than Abraham (Heb. 7:4-9). The tithe was apparently given because Melchizadek "*was* the priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18). Therefore, it was not that Melchizadek was anything great of himself, but because of Whom he represented. What we have presented to us is an example of the giving of one's finances within a religious context, and not simply the giving of alms or other such giving within the realm of the secular.

The concept of giving is also seen within the Old Testament records of the children of Israel. We see an inspiring example of a spirit of generosity in the story of the building of the tabernacle. In this account, we read that Moses actually had to issue a commandment for the people to stop bringing materials for the building of the tabernacle (Ex. 36:6). How many congregations do we hear of today in which the elders have to tell them to stop giving because the people are giving to much money for the congregation to efficiently handle? On a more negative note, how many churches do we hear of that have to reduce or cut off financial support to a mission work because weekly contribution has fallen short of the monthly budget.

The early church is also full of examples of the willingness of God's people to give of their material blessings. The man named Barnabas sold some property that he owned and gave the proceeds to help

the young church at Jerusalem with the daily distribution (Acts 4:36-37). The Phillipian congregation helped the apostle Paul at least twice financially (Phil. 4:16). At times Paul supported himself while he was in the mission field as an example to the congregations that he worked with (Acts 20:33-35), even though he had the right to accept support. Many other examples could be given both from the Bible and non-canonical sources in regards to the giving nature of God's people, but one thing is clear, God's people are a giving people.

SOME SPECIFICS CONCERNING GIVING

In times past, God gave a specific amount that His people were to give of their material resources (Lev. 27:30-32). However, the Law of Moses has been done away with (Col. 2:14) and it was under this Law that the specific of tithing was given, although it was not a new concept when God commanded it of the nation of Israel (Gen. 14:16-20). It does seem that the giving of ten percent of one's resources is a reasonable amount to give or else why would God have required it of His people under the Law of Moses?

Specifics of the heart and not of the amount are given to God's people today when it comes to giving. *So let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). The specific context of this verse is in connection with the collection for the saints with which Paul had some oversight. However, in giving instructions for this collection, Paul presents some principles to be abided by. Giving is to be

"purposed." This indicates that some forethought and planning needs to be given to one's giving. To often one's contribution to the church is a last minute consideration, with the decision for how much one is going to give being decided as the collection plate is being passed. One is to give because of one's generosity (2 Cor. 9:5-6) and not because one feels obligated to do so. To give should not be done "grudgingly," but should be done cheerfully. To have the opportunity to give to the Lord's work is one way that one plays a part in the greatest work on earth and to be able to do so should give one much joy.

Concerning how often one should give, Paul's instructions in his first epistle to the Corinthian saints must be considered.

> [1]Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatians, so you must do also: [2]On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come
> (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Paul instituted an organization for the giving of the church. Imagine if every time there was a need, one of the deacons had to go from house to house collecting money from all of the members in order to take care of that particular need. Notice that the money was being stored up in such a way that there would be no need for a collection from the Christians at Corinth. This implies that there was a church treasury into which the money was being kept. Also

notice the regularity that was to be involved with this laying aside of ones resources. If one looks at the original Greek text of verse two, it will be found that they were to store up this money every first day of the week. This would have been when all the saints would have met together in order to worship, therefore it would have been and it still is an advantageous time in which to give of one's financial means. Considering that the only example that we have in the New Testament of a specific time to give is the first day of the week, then we would be wise to abide by this practice and each of us to give every first day of the week. While some may say that this was only given to the churches mentioned in the text and is only applicable to them, such reasoning would also necessitate that other instructions are only applicable to the churches mentioned, such as the warnings against divisions (1 Cor. 1:10-16) or the instructions concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-29). This does not preclude giving from being done at other times, unlike the Lord's Supper, which could only be taken scripturally on the first day of the week, but it would mean that one needs to specifically give on the first day of every week.

As to the question of whether or not giving should be considered an act of worship or not, we will have to consider a few facts that deal with worship and even then the answer will probably be one of semantics. The definitions of worship are as follows:

1. To make obeisance, do reverence to
2. To revere
3. To honor religiously

4. To serve, to render religious service or homage
5. To act piously towards (1.686).

Notice the plurality of definitions because there are several different words that are translated as worship in our English Bibles, thereby not giving us the clear-cut definition that we might like to have for worship. The act of giving can be defined terms of most of these definitions. Let us remember to that the Bible never labels any of the acts of worship that we perform, such as singing, partaking of the Lord's Supper, or praying, as being worship. However, because of their nature and what the nature of worship is we recognize that there is worship involved when we participate in these things. Therefore, because of the service to others and the obedience towards God that is involved with our regular giving to the Lord's body, it would seem that giving is to be considered an aspect of our weekly worship to God.

CONCLUSION

God has given us as Christians the things that we have need both spiritually and physically. In a shadow of this, we should be regular givers of ourselves and our financial means, so that the Lord's work can continue on this planet. Let us always strive to have the proper attitude of heart and mind as we give back to God as we have been prospered, remembering that ultimately it is the giving of our lives to Him that will keep us in His light.

ENDNOTES

[1] All scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version, ©1982 Thomas Nelson, Inc.

[2] Vine, W. E., Unger, Merrill F.& White Jr., William. Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)

"ADDING THE CHRISTIAN GRACES"
2 Peter 1:5-11

MICHAEL WYATT

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INTRODUCTION

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

> Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-11).

CONTEXT

Second Peter has as its theme: **Spiritual Growth**. Chapter One gives us the **INGREDIENTS** for spiritual growth. Peter tells us to form Christian character (vv. 3-4). He also tells us that God has given all that we need to help us form such character. In verses 5-9, he tells us HOW to form Christian character by adding and abounding in seven Christian graces. And also informs us what will happen if we do add and abound in such graces (vv. 8,10-11); and what happens if we do not (v. 9). Peter wants to put them in "remembrance" of such things, even though they already knew them, and hoped to stir them up through such remembrance. No doubt Peter had a heavy heart in considering his responsibility in their teaching and growth, and that his time was coming to "put off this my tabernacle" (v. 14). He wanted to do all he could to help them remember these things even after he had passed on.

Peter reminds them in this next section, both beginning and end, that these were not his words or the words of "cunningly devised fables," but that he was an "eyewitness" of the majesty of Jesus Christ.

He wanted them to remember that their spiritual growth would be built upon the knowledge and remembrance that Jesus is coming (v. 16); He is God's Son (v. 17); God is sovereign (v. 18); and His Word is certain (v. 19). No, it was not Peter's interpretation, nor Luke's, or Mark's; "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (v. 21).

Chapter Two continues with the theme of Spiritual Growth, but as to **OPPOSITION** to such growth. Such opposition as: 1. False teachers (1-9); 2. False attitudes (10-17); and 3. False living (18-22).

Chapter Three discusses Spiritual Growth and its **NECESSITY AND MOTIVATION:**

(1) The Lord is coming (1-8);
(2) If you are lost it will be in spite of all God has done (9);
(3) When He comes the earth will be destroyed (10);
(4) Since that is true, "what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (11);
(5) God's people will have a new abode (13);
(6) You knew these things so be diligent (14-15);
(7) There are those who will lead you away by twisting and perverting the Scriptures (16);
(8) Beware, lest you fall away (17);
(9) Therefore, GROW (18).

GENERAL LESSONS

We took the time to look at the context of the passages under consideration because of the importance in seeing the magnitude of the seven Christian graces' influence upon spiritual growth. We have also looked at God's part in our salvation. God has provided all that is needed; that is all that we need, that we could not provide for ourselves. As we look at the Christian graces we are seeing man's part of his salvation. I have heard others preach that there are five steps to salvation (hearing, believing, repenting, confessing and baptism), and seven steps to heaven (these 7 virtues). Though God's part is far, far greater, man's part is absolutely essential.

Now we will look at some **GENERAL LESSONS** concerning these graces.

Peter sets before us what we sometimes call the "Seven Christian Graces." He instructs us to add these to our faith, and that we should grow as Christians and mature to the point in our faith where we abound in these virtues. If we will thus grow, then the promise of the inspired apostle in verse 8 will become a reality: "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is possible, as Peter mentions several times, for one to become a Christian by being baptized into Christ, based upon one's faith,

repentance and confession of Jesus as the Christ, but then to forsake the way of truth or neglect to add these qualities and fail to grow spiritually. Peter also gives us the sad picture of the sorry child of God who might choose this path in verse 9, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

He then encourages us all in verses 10-11: "Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This should be the hope and end of us all. But, it will not happen automatically. We must work diligently to add these things to our faith in order to obtain the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord. Each of these "graces," or "virtues," must adorn our character, as Christians, in order for us to be found approved of God in the final day.

TWO IMPORTANT POINTS need to be made about these seven graces. **FIRST** of all, we must add all of them to our faith. Some may have the mistaken idea that they will add one or two to their lives, and just let someone else take care of the rest. That is not what the inspired apostle Peter said. All the graces are to be added and abound in our lives. No single "grace" will make a complete Christian. We cannot abound in just one of these to the neglect of the others. Nor can one be completely added at a

time - there must be a blending of all in our character in order for us to be balanced spiritually.

SECONDLY, these Christian virtues are to be added and to be lived in all of our lives. There is not a single Christian who is not to add these virtues or abound in them. From the youngest to the oldest Christian, all are to add and abound. And so, ALL of the Christian graces are to be added by ALL Christians; and ALL Christians are to add and abound in ALL the Christian graces. There is no picking and choosing. There is no excuse for not adding and abounding in these graces. ALL seven virtues are for ALL Christians!

Notice that there are seven different and yet interrelated graces given by Peter. The number seven in Hebrew numerology denoted perfect or complete. This suggests to us the concept that these qualities, when we incorporate all of them together in our spiritual lives, will help us to be complete and perfect before God, as verse 8 also shows that we will not be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of God if these things abound in us. Not, that these are all inclusive of the graces which should adorn the life of the Christian, but that these are certainly highly significant to our spiritual well being, now and eternally.

One last point, as far as a general lesson, is found in verse 5: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith [[...]]" Brother Guy N. Woods, (A Commentary on the New Testament

Epistles, Volume VII, Peter, John and Jude, pgs 149-150) wrote:

> An exhortation based on premises drawn from verse 4. "Because of the precious and exceeding great promises which are yours, be adding on your part all diligence." "Adding on your part" translates a remarkable word (*pareiseneqkantes*) occurring nowhere else in the Greek Testament, and meaning, literally, "bringing in by the side of." The term indicates the comparative unimportance of man's participation in his salvation by suggesting that his part is merely contributory, "brought in by the side of what God does," and yet is absolutely essential, since God's part is done only on condition that man complies with his. In view of the absolute necessity of man's contribution by the side of what God does, Peter admonishes "all diligence." "Diligence" is from *spoude*, to hasten. All children of God are thus exhorted to hasten to bring in their part, though small and insignificant compared with what God does for us, in order that they may avail themselves of the blessings which the Father has made available to them. That in which diligence is particularly enjoined follows.

"ADD TO YOUR FAITH"

There are those who say that there are eight of these virtues, and that would be true by counting faith along with the others. But I have not counted faith along with the others for this reason: Faith is to already be present in the life of a Christian while the other virtues Peter lists may not. Faith is the part that brings a person to Christ. Faith is that which causes a person to repent of their sins, confess the name of Jesus, and be baptized for the remission of their sins. "But without faith it is impossible to please him [[...]]" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is the foundation of the Christian life. It is the source from which all other Christian virtues spring. That is why Peter says that these seven graces are to be added to that which should already be in our lives - Faith.

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

1. "add to your faith VIRTUE [....]"

A. Virtue Defined. If we simply go to the English dictionary for our definition of this word, it leaves us far short of its Biblical meaning. Most dictionaries define "virtue" as "any admirable quality or trait" or "the practice of moral duties and abstinence from immorality." While these may be included in the definition of "virtue" they fall short of what the word actually means in this passage.

Young's Analytical Concordance defines the Greek word translated "virtue" as "Force, strength (of mind or body)" (p. 1026). It is used to refer to "Moral

Courage" or the ability to stand for what is right and stand against what is wrong. This strength, force or moral courage, is based upon the truth of God's Word to direct us in what is right and wrong. Virtue then is not simply courage, but moral courage: the ability to discern right from wrong, and the strength of character to stand up for the right in opposition to the wrong. This is the type of "virtue" we must "add to our faith."

B. Virtue Enjoined. There are several encouraging examples of virtue set before us in the lives of God's servants, both in the Old and New Testaments.

In the Old Testament after the death of Moses, we see the Lord speaking to Joshua, enjoining upon him, moral courage. In Joshua 1:6-7:

> Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Joshua was faithful to this charge and as he neared the end of his earthly life, he stood as with

true virtue and encouraged the children of Israel in Joshua 23:6-8:

> Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside there from to the right hand or to the left; That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

In the New Testament we see virtue enjoined upon His disciples by Jesus in Matthew 10:28 where Jesus told them, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Furthermore, the apostle Paul enjoined moral courage in at least two of his epistles. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." And in Philippians 1:27-28, he wrote,

> Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one

> mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

C. The Results of Virtue. It should be obvious that adding "virtue" to our faith will very likely get us into trouble here in this world. However, if we stand for what is right, it will prove our sincerity to others. This was the case with Peter and John as the council examined them in Acts 4:13: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

But, most importantly, as in the case of Stephen, we know the Lord is One whom we must please and who beholds how we conduct ourselves in this life. If we stand for the right and are found faithful, then we can expect the crown of life. Jesus said to the church at Smyrna in Revelation 2:10, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Our moral courage to stand up for Jesus.

Let us diligently add to our faith virtue, so that we can grow spiritually and be prepared to do those things which please God in teaching His Word,

defending the faith, and living the kind of lives He would have us to live now and eternally.

2. "and to virtue KNOWLEDGE [...]"

A. Knowledge Defined. The root Greek word translated "knowledge" in this passage is *gnosis*, which is defined by Thayer (p.119) as, "the knowledge of God, such as is offered in the gospel, ...moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living, 2 Pet. 1:5."

Obviously, from these definitions we are not speaking of just any type of knowledge. For instance, one may have a great deal of knowledge about things of this world, but be quite ignorant of God's Word. Although any knowledge without a knowledge of God's Word is lacking. In fact, one is not truly educated until he has a knowledge of God's Word. Paul spoke of some who thought they knew a lot, but were in fact opposing true knowledge, in 1 Timothy 6:20. There he warned Timothy, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called."

In Romans 10:1-3, Paul defines "knowledge" (in this context) both in the negative and positive senses: (1) Negative: Ignorance of God's will, or lack of His knowledge; (2) Positive: Being aware of, submitting to and doing God's will. Thus, no one truly can possess "knowledge" without possessing the knowledge that comes from God's Word.

Further, no one can come to the point in his life where he can say that he has acquired all the knowledge of God's Word (or anything else) there is to know. Thus, there is a constant need for us to continue to study and grow in our knowledge of God and His Word.

B. Knowledge Enjoined. There are several passages that teach, both directly and by implication, that we ought to grow in knowledge.

Knowledge is enjoined by the apostle Peter in our text, and also in 2 Peter 3:18, where he wrote, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ [...]" Further, in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

Knowledge is also enjoined by the apostle Paul in at least two passages: In Philippians 1:9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." And in Colossians 1:10, he wrote that we should be, "increasing in knowledge of God."

C. Things We Need To Know.

(1) The Will of God: Eph. 5:17; Eph. 3:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:4; Matt.13:23; Col. 1:9-10.
(2) The Love of Christ: Eph. 3:17-19.
(3) The Hope of God's Calling: Eph. 1:17-18; Tit. 2:13-14; Heb. 6:19-20.
(4) The Riches of His Glory: Eph. 1:18; Rom. 9:23; Phil. 4:19; 2 Cor. 8:9.

(5) The Greatness of His Power: Eph. 1:19, 20; 1 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 9:22.

D. Why We Need To Know These Things.

(1) Ignorance of God's Will will not excuse anyone from responsibility in the day of judgment. In fact, ignorance will alienate one from God: Eph. 4:18-19; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Thess. 1:8.
(2) Love of Christ begets love for Christ and for one another: 1 John 4:19-21.
(3) The Hope of God's Calling influences us to do that which will please God for we are not as those of the world, who have no hope beyond the grave: 1 Thess. 4:13.
(4) The Riches of God's Glory creates a desire within us to serve joyfully and willingly. Luke 16:11, true riches endure forever.
(5) God's great power keeps us: 1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3.

E. Results of Knowledge. The results of knowledge in our lives, like practically anything else, can be for good or evil. In some cases, such as the church at Corinth, it had a negative effect and some became proud and arrogant (1 Cor. 8:1-2). However, if we apply the knowledge of God's Word in our lives, then we will grow up, instead of puff up (1 Pet. 3:18).

We can know God's Will for us today through a study of His divine Will, the Bible, and specifically for us today, the New Testament.

3. "And to knowledge TEMPERANCE [...]"

A. Temperance Defined. What is temperance? Simply defined it is "self-control." The root Greek word (*egkrateria*) used in the passage is defined by Thayer, "self-control" and then comments, "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites" (p. 167).

Another derivative of this Greek word (*egkrpaeuomai*) is defined: "to be self-controlled, continent; to exhibit self-government, conduct one's self temperately." Thayer comments: "in a figure drawn from athletes, who in preparing themselves for the games abstained from unwholesome food, wine, and sexual indulgence" (p. 167).

Another Greek word (*swphrwn*) is defined by Thayer as: "a. of sound mind, sane, in one's senses [...] and b. curbing one's desires and impulses" (p. 613).

From these definitions, it should be clear that temperance means that we must have a strong or stout enough mind or will to control ourselves in regard to not only those things which are wrong to do, but to control ourselves in things which are lawful within themselves, but can become a distraction to living a godly life. It is having the strength of spirit to

resist the impulses and desires of the flesh which tug at all of us from time to time.

B. Temperance Enjoined. In addition to temperance being enjoined on us in our text by Peter, the apostle Paul enjoined temperance upon several groups in the church, as well as all members of the body of Christ.

(1) On elders in the local church: Titus 1:8.
(2) On aged men and women: Titus 2:2-3.
(3) All those who are Christians should live soberly: Titus 2:11-12.

C. Specific Areas Where We Need to Practice Temperance. Even though all of us are to practice temperance in every area of our lives, there are some specific areas that have been areas of difficulty for many in the past.

(1) With respect to strong drink/alcohol/other drugs: Prov. 20:1; Rom. 13:13; Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:7-8.
(2) With respect to opinions.
(3) With respect to language/tongue: James 3:2, 10; Psa. 39:1; Eph. 4:29; 5:4.
(4) With respect to tattling/backbiting/meddling: 1 Tim. 5:13; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Pet. 4:15-16.
(5) With respect to pride: Prov. 16:18; Gal. 6:3.
(6) With respect to covetousness: Luke 12:15; Rom. 13:9; Col. 3:5.

(7) With respect to fleshly desires: Rom. 13:14; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 John 2:16; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 9:27.
(8) With respect to anger: Pro. 16:32; Eph. 4:26-27; Jas. 1:19-20.
(9) With respect to revenge: Pro. 24:29; Rom. 12:17-19; 1 Thes. 5:15.
(10) With respect to all things: 1 Cor. 9:25.

Living a life of righteousness and temperance will mean much in the day of judgment. It is something that we will never regret adding to our faith, because it will help us to grow in the faith and enjoy the blessings of the abundant life here and eternally in Heaven.

4. "and to temperance PATIENCE."

A. Patience Defined. There are four Greek words which are translated "patience" (or other variations). Although two of them are only translated "patience" once each and have reference to "holding up under evil" (2 Tim. 2:24), qualification of servant of the Lord) and "yielding, lenient" (1 Tim. 3:3, qualification of elder). The other two are:

Hupomone (the word used in our text) is translated "patience" 29 times and is defined by Thayer as: "steadfastness, constancy, endurance." He comments, "in the N.T. the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings" (p. 644). It is a compound word made up of the preposition *upo* which means "under"

and the noun *mone,* which means "a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode." Thus, together they mean to "stay under" "abide under." Thus, we can see that the root concept is not to give up, but to abide under whatever is being placed upon us without forsaking our duties.

Makrothumeo (*ia*) (used in Heb. 6:12, Jas. 5:10) is translated "patience" 7 times and is translated "long-suffering" 11 times. Thayer defines it (p.387), "to be of a long spirit, not to lose heart; 1. to persevere patiently and bravely [...] in enduring misfortunes and troubles; 2. to be patient is bearing the offences and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; to be long-suffering, slow to anger, slow to punish [...]" This word deals primarily with what most of us think of when we use the word "patient" as the ability to wait for something without anxiety or complaint.

The contrast between the words is that the former (*hupomone*) is "the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering" while the latter (*makrothumeo*) is "the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong." The first is "opposed to cowardice or despondency, the other to wrath or revenge" (Thayer, p. 387).

B. Patience Enjoined: 1 Pet. 2:20; 1 Tim. 6:11; Tit. 2:2-3; Heb. 10:36; Jas. 5:7.

C. Areas Where We Need Patience.

(1) In tribulation: Rom. 12:12; 1 Pet. 2:20; Mat. 5:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:19; 4:12-13; 1 Thes. 1:6-7; 2 Thes. 1:4.
(2) In well doing: Rom. 2:7; 1 Pet. 4:19; Gal. 6:9; 2 Thes. 3:13.
(3) In the Christian race: Heb. 12:1; Mat. 11:28-30.
(4) In vexations of life: 2 Pet. 2:7-8.
(5) With regard to each other: Mat. 5:9; Eph. 4:1-3; 1 Thes. 5:14.
(6) In waiting for reward: Rom. 8:24-25; Jas. 5:7-8; 2 Pet. 3:9, 14.

D. Results of Patience. Patience helps us to be an influence for good here upon this earth. Those who possess their souls in patience can be counted upon to do the work of the church. They will suffer and endure the hardships of being a Christian.

Patience also prepares us for our eternal reward hereafter. We cannot expect God to reward us for partial service, or service which is half-hearted. Neither can we expect Him to reward us for just doing the easy things (or the things we want to do) and forsaking the word when it becomes difficult (or when we do not want to do it).

5. "and to patience GODLINESS."

A. Godliness Defined. The Greek word translated "godliness" in this passage is *eusebeia* (15 times in N.T., all except Acts 3:12 "holiness"). It

comes from the root word *eusebes* which means, "well-reverent, i.e. pious, devout, dutiful, godly." It is a compound word composed of the words *eu* which means "well" (eu-logy to speak good words) and *sebmai* which means "to be devout." It means to have a reverent, devout or "Godward" attitude (Vine, p. 162).

Thayer defines the Greek word as, "reverence, respect; in the Bible everywhere piety towards God, godliness" (p. 262).

Brother Guy N. Woods (p. 151) said, "Godliness is humble reverence and deep piety toward God [[...]] the desire to be godlike is the motive from which all our actions should originate, and without which there can be no acceptable service rendered to God."

B. Godliness Enjoined. Godliness is enjoined by both Peter and Paul. In addition to our text, Peter also wrote concerning the destruction of this world and the coming judgment in 2 Pet. 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."

Paul enjoins godliness in several passages: 1 Tim. 4:7; Tit. 2:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:11. There are many others, but these are sufficient to show the importance of it.

C. Results of Godliness. There are several results of godliness that are revealed to us in the

Scriptures. Some of them are pleasant to receive, others are not.

For instance, if we are truly godly, we can be sure that we will suffer the trials and persecutions which attend those who are living unto God (2 Tim. 3:12; Mat. 5:11-12). But, the results of godliness are not always unpleasant. It works for us, delivering us from temptation (2 Pet. 2:9). Godliness with contentment is also "great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

Godliness equips us for the best possible life now and prepares us for the life to come. Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 4:8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

6. "And to godliness BROTHERLY KINDNESS [...]"

A. Brotherly Kindness Defined. Of course, we focus mostly on our attitude toward our brethren or our attitude and behavior towards those of like precious faith: our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Brotherly kindness is very closely related to brotherly love. In fact the Greek word *"Philadelphia"* from which it is translated is a compound word made up of *"philos"* (to love or like, as friendly love) and *"adelphos"* (brother or brotherly). Thus, together they are defined, "love of the brethren," or "brotherly love."

Thayer defines *philadelphia* as, "the love which Christians cherish for each other as 'brethren'"

(p. 653). Of the other form of noun, he says, "of a Christian loving Christians" (p. 653).

B. Brotherly Kindness Enjoined.

(1) In the Old Testament: Zech 7:9-10; Deut. 22:1-4.
(2) In the New Testament: 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:17; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12.

C. How We Practice Brotherly Kindness.

(1) Through our speech: Pro. 31:26; 18:21; 15:4; Col. 4:6.
(2) Through sympathy: 1 Cor. 12:25-26; Rom. 12:15; Heb. 13:3.
(3) By assisting the needy: Gal. 6:2, 10; Eph. 4:28; Mat. 5:42; Acts 20:35; James 2:15-16.
(4) By restoring those who are entangled in sin: Rom. 15:1-2; Gal. 6:1; Pro. 27:6; Mat. 18:15; 2 Tim. 2:24-26.
(5) By our willingness to forgive: Mat. 6:14-15; Luke 17:3; Mat. 18:23-35.
(6) By practicing the Golden Rule: Mat. 7:12.
(7) By returning good for evil: Mat. 5:46; 1 Pet. 3:8-9; Rom. 12:7,21).
(8) By respecting the conscience of others: 1 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 14:13,21.
(9) By preferring each other: Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:2-4; Gal. 6:10.

7. "and to brotherly kindness CHARITY."

A. Charity Defined. The Greek word translated charity in 2 Pet. 1:7 is *agape* the highest form of love in the Scriptures. Thayer defines it, "1. affection, good-will, love, benevolence [...] 2. love-feasts" (p. 4). He defines the verb form *agapao*, "to love [...] to have a preference for, wish well to, regard the welfare of" (p. 3).

Charity/Love then is to seek the highest welfare of the person or being we love. It transcends the ordinary love of friends (*phileo*) or the love of kin or family (*storge*) or romantic love (*eros*) and extends even to those who are our enemies (Mat. 5:44). It is the type of love that God had for us even when we were His enemies. Further, it is the type of love that can be commanded, since it is not based upon our emotions, but upon our will. We can practice this type of love, even when we may not feel like it.

Some have attacked the King James Version's translation of this word agape as charity. But, as we see from the definition of the word *agape* from Thayer, this is an accurate word. Many people may look at charity as just giving something to someone else – such as donations to some relief society. But, actually charity is much more than this. We may practice charity in giving to help because we are concerned with the welfare of another, but charity is not limited to just this one area. It is the motivating force behind all of our acts of benevolence or good will towards others and towards God.

B. The Importance of Charity – 1 Cor. 13:1-3. Verse 1, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Verse 2, "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Verse 3, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

C. The Characteristics of Charity – 1 Cor. 13:4-8.

(1) Patience – "charity suffereth long [...]" (v. 4);
(2) Kindness – "and is kind" (v. 4);
(3) Liberality – "Charity envieth not" (v. 4);
(4) Humility – "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" (v. 4);
(5) Courtesy – "charity [...] doth not behave itself unseemly" (v. 5);
(6) Unselfish – "charity [...] seeketh not her own" (v. 5);
(7) Good Temper – "charity is not easily provoked" (v. 5);
(8) Justice – "charity [...] thinketh no evil" (v. 5);

(9) Righteousness – "charity [...] rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (v. 6);

(10) A Summary – vv. 7-8 – "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth [...]."

CONCLUSION

After naming these seven virtues to be added to faith, Peter then gives us **two points:**

A. The reward for growing in these Christian graces, vv. 8, 10-11:

> For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ[...]Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

B. The pitiful state of those who do not give such diligence and who lack these virtues, v. 9: "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

In these verses, Peter gives us the challenge as to how "to make your calling and election sure," and that "if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Let us, as Christians, accept the challenge and lay hold on the promises. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v. 11).

ENDNOTES

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