



# BEACON

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526

850.455.7595

Internet Web Page: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com>

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## January

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 1

January 1, 2024

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## Is Christ Our Life?

*Mike Demory*

Most of what I have heard, and believe me, I have been there myself, is that few seem to listen, heed the sermons, or read bulletin articles meant to encourage brethren to become more spiritual. Most of the preachers I know did not grow up in the church. They came out of denominationalism (as I) and are not held to the traditional thinking of generational members. When I first obeyed the Gospel, I was on fire for the Lord, wanting to do all I could. I could not get enough of the Word, so I took part in every Bible study. I thought everyone in the church was as eager as I was to learn more about God's will—but it did not take long to discover differently.

I have learned that it is not my job to be a policeman as a preacher. My job, as has been the job of every messenger of God in the past, is to preach the truth. It is then up to every individual to take what is said, study it for themselves, and apply it to their lives. Although I understand my role in God's kingdom, there are times that I do get discouraged. When I study with a non-Christian—why do they not get it as I did? Why are they unwilling to see the truth that there is only one church into which everyone must be added to be saved? Why are relatives, friends, and neighbors so hard to talk to about the Bible? And why are my brethren not as willing to serve the Lord as I have been? As long as I have been a Christian, I have been unable to answer that one. I have always been willing to try anything. I am certainly not the best

singer, but I am willing to lead the congregation in spiritual songs. I do not see myself as the best Bible class teacher or preacher of the Gospel, but I am willing to do my part in teaching the truth and spreading the good news. As the apostle Paul said, “I **can** do **all** things in him that strengtheneth me” (Phi. 4:13).

I am often told of how it used to be in the church when every member knew the Scriptures and was not afraid to tell someone that the church of Christ was the only church approved by God. Or when weekly training classes were used to encourage men and boys to learn their respective roles in the church. Today, we are lucky to get men to attend services, let alone be willing to attend classes to train them to become better husbands, fathers, and servants of God. Do not get me wrong, most men in congregations do take part in public prayers and at the table, and I am delighted for that. But we are still a long way away from what God would have us be.

Think of the parable of our Lord in Matthew 13:44-46. One of the kingdom parables likens the kingdom of God (the church of Christ) to a hidden treasure and a priceless pearl.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who,

when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

Jesus shows us that the kingdom should be so valuable to us that we are willing to give up everything to obtain it. I have had Christian and non-Christian people tell me that you can be too religious. They tell me that God does not expect anyone to spend 24/7 serving Him. People say that God does not expect us to spend more than Sunday in service to Him. Yet, the Bible (God's Word) tells a different story. The apostle Paul exhorted the Christians at Colossae to: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When **Christ**, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:2-4). If that is not clear, then I do not know what is. If you re-read that carefully, you will find that Paul stresses a fact. **When** you make Christ your life, **then** you will appear with Him in glory. Not if, or occasionally, but **when** you make Christianity a daily thing. Why should it be our goal to make Christ our *life*? It would not be because He bought us with the price of His life (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23), would it? It could not be because He took away the sting of the grave and offered us eternal life (15:54; 1 John 3:14-16)? And who cares that Jesus offers to all the opportunity to become an

heir of the hope of eternal life (Tit. 3:7; 1 Pet. 3:7). None of these things should make me do something I did not want to do or even try, should it?

The fact of the matter is that they should. What should motivate us to make Christ our very life is our **love** for God. Remember the greatest commandment of all? "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with **all** thy heart, and with **all** thy soul, and with **all** thy mind, and with **all** thy strength" (Mark 12:30). John said, "whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1 John 2:5). The very gift of God's grace through His Son should cause us to step up to the plate and say, "Here am I, send me!" (Isa. 6:8). His death on the cross for my sins and yours should cause our attendance in every Bible class and worship service to become as natural as breathing. What do we think Heaven will be like, if not praising God 24/7, in the presence of like-minded saints? Remember, this is our proving ground for eternity, and if we do not prove to God how much Christ is our life, do you think we will still be granted our hope? The threat of losing the hope of life everlasting should concern us enough that making Christ are very life is a no-brainer. May, we all focus our attention this new year, on making Christ our life, by truly putting Him first.

*Mexico, MO*

## "You Need to Give Them Roses While They Are Still Living"

*Dub Mowery*

Probably all of us have either repeated or heard the above statement many times. However, too often, we neglect to compliment those who deserve words of praise until the opportunities to do so have passed. It may be that a person whom we admire has moved from our locality, and we have lost contact with them. Or that individual has departed this life. It might be a loved one (such as our spouse or a parent, a sibling, or other relatives), or it could be a brother or sister in Christ, a close friend, or someone else who has done a

noble deed. Everyone, including you and me, needs encouragement and to know that someone cares about them. Words of appreciation will go a long way in human relations. To compliment a preacher is like saying, "Sic 'em" to a dog. It gives him the heart to do his best work. If that has that kind of effect upon a preacher, just imagine the good it will have upon others.

Words of commendation are found throughout the Bible. The apostle Paul praised the church at Thessalonica, saying:

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

He makes a similar statement to the church in Rome (Rom. 1:8). When someone does something worthwhile, then recognize their accomplishment favorably.

After Tabitha died, some of the widows of the city of Joppa sorely missed her. While weeping,

they showed the clothes she had made for them unto the apostle Peter (Acts 9:36-42). Certainly, if a person has lived an unselfish life, full of good works, then mention of this should be included in their obituary. It would also be appropriate to give flowers in their honor at their funeral. Nevertheless, we should let them know of our care and admiration for them while still living. You might even give them roses so they can enjoy them.

*Deceased*

## By What Authority Do We Worship?

*Edd Gaines*

Without a standard of authority, we would have hopeless chaos. An orderly society requires standards. Try to imagine driving your car on the highway without a standard (rules) to go by. There must be a standard of weights and measurements, time, traffic speed, stop and go, and directions.

How About Spiritual Matters?

Did you ever wonder why there are so many different churches, and there is only one source of authority in religion? The Bible! Maybe the same standard is not being used. The Word of God reads the same to everybody. It does not have 500 differ-

ent meanings. Some think they have their own interpretation of the Bible.

2 Peter 1:19-21

The Word of God was never given by the will of man. “But holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 14

Paul is writing to the church at Corinth about the proper use of spiritual gifts. He also addresses the division in the congregation. “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (14:26).

2 John 9-11

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

John 12:48

“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.”

*Clovis, CA*

### A Little More

Do more than exist—**live!**

Do more than touch—**feel!**

Do more than look—**observe!**

Do more than read—**absorb!**

Do more than hear—**listen!**

Do more than listen—**understand!**

Do more than think—**ponder!**

Do more than talk—**say something!**

*Author Unknown*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Karen Diamond

Elaine Brooks

Nelda King

Rheba Stancliff

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Aleacia Godwin

Paulette Born

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## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:**

Paul Brantley

Michael Hatcher

Bill Busch

**Minister:**

Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 2

January 8, 2024

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## Barnabas—That Good Man!

*Bill Jackson*

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting and appealing characters in the New Testament is that good man Barnabas! Many have been the sermons preached on the excellent qualities we are permitted to see in the life of Barnabas, and he indeed is a wonderful man to hold up before others, for he is always found doing good! We want to note some features God points to in this man's life.

(1) In the growth of the Jerusalem congregation, and in the need that brethren share their goods with their fellow saints, such was accomplished in a wonderful way—"they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). It was in this circumstance that we first have mention of Barnabas, a Levite, owning land that he now sells and lays the proceeds at the feet of the apostles (4:36-37). Good men are needed when such needs arise, for they will respond properly, and Barnabas was such a man! We note the stark contrast here, in seeing Barnabas' response and that made by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) to the same appeal!

(2) In introducing the former persecutor, Saul, to the saints in Jerusalem, a good man was needed to pave the way! The church there, knowing of Saul's history, did not believe the report that he was now in Christ (9:26). It would be the word of a good man, and one known and respected by all for that goodness, to provide that Saul be accepted in the fellowship. Barnabas was a good man and verse 27 tells of his taking Saul before the apostles, recounting his conversion! A good man was

needed to provide that unity, and Barnabas was that good man!

(3) When the church at Antioch received the Word in such wonderful fashion, a good man was needed to go there and to teach and encourage them. Barnabas was sent (11:22), and he provided just what was needed, and note what inspiration says of him: "for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (11:24—ASV). Then, the statement is that "much people" were added unto the Lord. With a good man at work, fruits will come!

(4) When other workers were needed at Antioch, and it was known that Saul was in Tarsus, his home city, someone was needed to journey there and persuade Saul to come to Antioch to work. Such exhortation will best be heeded if the man sent is a good man, and Barnabas was such a man! He finds Saul and brings him to Antioch, and he is there for a year (11:25-26). Later, Barnabas and Saul are mentioned, along with others, as comprising the staff of prophets and teachers at Antioch (13:1).

(5) When the church at Antioch gathered the goods they would send to the relief of the Judean saints, good men were needed for such a work of trust. We are told that when the sending took place, the disciples "sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (11:29-30). Repeatedly, we see it: When a work of trust and importance is to be done, and when a good man is

needed, there is Barnabas, and there is Barnabas **at work!**

(6) When the Holy Spirit calls men into missionary activity, obviously, good men are needed. And if an apostle is to be sent to such a work, and if any accompany him, those to aid him should be good men! It is not surprising then that the Spirit told the saints, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (13:1-2). Barnabas then accompanied Saul on that first missionary journey. In passing, we might note that Barnabas spoke up on John Mark’s behalf, being a kinsman (Col. 4:10), when Paul refused to have the young man accompany them on the second journey. These men handled a difference in such a fashion that we have two missionary journeys rather than one. Barnabas was a good man, and it is no shock that Paul mentions him favorably in several letters.

We wish to notice something regarding this good man and to grasp the point that when brethren misbehave, even the best of men may be adversely affected. Perhaps the abundantly good

spirit within them causes them to have such confidence in others that they may move along on a course wholly against their nature. We think of Peter’s hypocrisy in eating with Gentiles and then pretending not to have done so when certain Jews arrived (Gal. 2:11-12). Paul withstood Peter to the face on this matter, and to illustrate the harmful effects of this conduct, he said that others among the Jews were hurt in a harmful way and “that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation” (2:13). Surely the point about Barnabas, the good man, was made to demonstrate the great damaging effect such conduct had upon good men!

Barnabas was a good man, and regardless of the work and the circumstances throughout the kingdom, when a good man was needed, we find him there and involved. In the one instance when we see him in a slightly different light, the action affecting him was initiated by others, not himself! We need many good men and women in the kingdom today—people like Barnabas!

*Deceased*

## Let Us Save Our Own, Too

*Bob Wear*

Many things have been said and written about the number of our young people who lose their Christian faith while students in state colleges and universities. Various percentages (all high) are given to support the claims concerning the number of these young men and women who are lost to the church because of their college and university experiences.

There is a hidden weakness here. Young people on the state school campus will have their faith tested often and in various ways. We, however, are too easily satisfied with the widespread conclusion that the state schools are responsible for most of the significant loss among our youth. We are hiding a weakness that should be exposed. The weakness is in the early training (or lack of it).

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

Louis Cassels of the United Press International has given some significant findings. These come from actual surveys among college students. The samplings’ scope seems broad enough to be indicative, if not conclusive. He writes, “Some young people lose their faith when they go to college. Others become seriously interested in religion for the first time in their lives. The great majority do not experience either kind of religious crisis—apostasy or conversion. They spend their college years in religious hibernation and just don’t think about God.” He supports this conclusion.

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*We are hiding a weakness that should be exposed.*

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Dr. William Hordern visited ten campuses and interviewed students from six others. He said, “The fear often expressed by parents and religious leaders that young people reared in religious homes will turn into atheists in college—is borne out by a ‘small proportion’ of students.”

Another report, published in the book *God on the Secular Campus*, contains another report. His information came from approximately 200 state colleges and universities. He said (Richard Butler), “Many of the students who renounce religion in college are weak in faith and morals when they arrive, if not altogether nominal in their church affiliations.” (I have worked with college and university students for years, and this is the picture I have seen—BW.)

The General Conclusions from these reports follow:

1. “Some faculty members go out of their way to shake whatever faith they may encounter in young people who attend their classes.”

2. “Faculty hostility toward religion sometimes takes the form of an open attack upon a specific religious beliefs but more frequently it takes the form of a rather snide disparagement of religion.”

3. “Tax-supported institutions cannot properly be asked to inculcate religious faith, but they do emphatically have an obligation to be genuinely neutral, and often they are not. Instead they engage in positive indoctrination of students in the dogmas of secular humanism.”

4. More intelligent students **who have had a good background in religious education before coming to college** may see through the professor who tries to peddle his philosophical opinions along with his courses.”

5. “The average undergraduate is vulnerable to brainwashing by teachers who either have a personal antagonism toward religion, or who delight in the destruction of traditional ideas and values.”

6. “One of these reports very strongly recommended ‘Well-located and well-staffed campus religious centers.’” (The Bible Chair concept helps some when it is under the control of the right people).

7. “Some state colleges seem to provide a more hospitable climate for faith than others; and, in any one institution there will be a diversity of attitudes.”

We are grateful for Christian colleges, but most young people do not attend them. Some attend state schools by choice, most by necessity. Our job is to teach and condition them so they know what to expect and be prepared for it. They need this training before high school.

This can be done by Christian parents in the home, with some assistance from the local congregation. Why do we not get busy and do it? This is one of the most significant challenges facing Christians. Indeed, we can do a better job saving our own while trying to save others.

We must not continue deceiving ourselves by trying to shift the blame to someone else.

*Deceased*

## Old-Fashioned

I’m just a bit old-fashioned,  
In spite of modern ways,  
And wish I could have been around  
In the good old-fashioned days.

There’s far more charm in twisted lanes  
Along our country side,  
Than all the modern super-roads  
That stretch so far and wide.

So I’d rather be old-fashioned  
In a few thing here and there,  
And try to keep old  
An everyday affair.

*Author Unknown*

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|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
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| Karen Diamond          | Elaine Brooks      |
| Nelda King             | Rheba Stancliff    |
| Orville & Linda Worley | Carla Burlison     |
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# BEACON

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## Paragraph Sermons

*E. M. Borden*

Did you ever hear of a man praying for faith? “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” (Rom. 10:14). Now, why pray for faith if we must have faith before we pray? Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (10:17). “But these are written, that ye might believe...and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

I preached the Gospel before the First World War, and I preached the same Gospel after that war. All through the years, I have preached the same Gospel. Another World War has just closed, and I am preaching the same Gospel. Why say “postwar Gospel” when it is the same Gospel preached for nearly two thousand years? Kings may lose their power, and the government of many countries may cease to be, but the Gospel remains the same. We will be judged by it on the last day.

Are we so engaged in making money that we have no time to serve the Lord? A little girl once said: “I would rather be the rich man here in this world and Lazarus in the next.” Poor child! Where did she get her idea? I wonder if she got her idea from her father. The rich man may think he is too busy to serve the Lord, but what will he do when he realizes he has no treasures in heaven? The rich man had treasures, but they were all here on earth. Lazarus was poor in the things of this world, but he had treasures in heaven. Lazarus was not going to heaven because he was poor but because he

served the Lord. Some poor people are servants of Satan. A few rich people serve the Lord.

“For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17). If people could only realize the meaning of the above statement, they would be more concerned about their manner of living. Indeed, many will not be able to stand on that day. If this is the last day, how many will be prepared to meet it? The last day is yet in the future (Acts 17:31). “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). It is not everyone that serveth that will meet the favor of the Lord in that day, but those who serve lawfully. The Lord has given us a plan by which we may be saved and stand on that day.

The Jews observed the Sabbath day as a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. They were commanded to keep every Sabbath day. How were they to observe the day? They were commanded to rest from manual labor on that day. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exo. 20:8). The Sabbath commandment is not in the new covenant. We are not commanded to keep it. The Jews kept it as a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Deu. 5:15). The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. Jesus remained in Hades on that day, but He arose from the dead

on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is the day of the new covenant. We observe it by taking the Lord's Supper. Sunday is not the Sabbath but the first day of the week.

"Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages" (Eph. 3:21). So, we glorify Christ in the church. The church is the Lord's institution, greater than the Jewish temple. The Jewish temple was great, and it was a type of the church of Christ, which is greater; for it is to stand forever. The passage also proves that the church will stand

forever. That cannot be said of ordinary denominations or institutions. The church of Christ is here now. It has not left the earth. It was here when Alexander Campbell was born. Alexander Campbell obeyed the Gospel, and the Lord added him to His church. The church will continue as long as time lasts, and then there will be a cleansing period when the unfaithful men and women will be gathered out of the kingdom. Then it will be presented to God as a spotless garment.

*Deceased*

## You Are Not Alone

*Brad Green*

At some point in everyone's life, all have felt alone. All people experience difficulties, pain, sorrow, and sadness that are of such a nature that can instill a sense of loneliness. During these times of trial, it is incomprehensible that anyone could understand how we feel or our immense burden. Though it may be the case that no one close can understand these things, all have been affected by grief and agony and can, therefore, at the least, empathize with those in distress.

Christians are to "comfort yourselves together, and edify one another" (1 The. 5:11) and "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Whenever we are with faithful brethren, we are not alone. As we faithfully follow God and His Word, we serve one another:

brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (5:13-14).

We must never leave our brethren alone. When we assemble ourselves together for worship, and study of God's Word, we "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Heb. 10:24) and if one forsakes the assembly, he forsakes (or abandons) his brethren and the Lord, Himself (10:25). The apostle Paul recalls,

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10), "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil" (4:14) and "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me" (4:16). Paul could have easily felt alone, but amidst all this, he reminds himself:

Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.... Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve *me* unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom *be* glory for ever and ever (4:11-12, 17-18).

Though Paul had been forsaken by many, he was never alone.

When we feel alone, we must, like Paul, remember that God is with us if we remain loyal to Him. We also have a "high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Jesus came to Earth and lived in the flesh; He knows our pains and sorrows. On the night Jesus was betrayed, He prayed alone (Mat. 26:36-45). On the cross, He alone bore the world's sins (27:35-50). Though He is the Savior

of the world, He knows abandonment: “From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66). Though He, Himself, is forsaken by many, He reminds His faithful, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

We will all experience difficult times that will leave us feeling alone. Let us remember that faithful brethren and the Lord will never forsake us. We are not alone!

*Lenoir City, TN*

## Why the Change

*Tim Smith*

I have noticed that people in the church do not seem to be as “set” for the defense of the faith as they once were. That is certainly not true of all church members, but it is of some. Some who once were most zealous for the right and against the wrong seem to have resigned themselves to failure and are going willy-nilly with the flow. Why is this?

Is it because the truth has changed? No, His Word is settled in heaven, as the psalmist declared, and will never change. If you were for it before and are against it now, or were against it before and are for it now, why the change?

Is it because you were wrong before? If so, then you certainly should change. You should also confess that you were wrong before and indicate your desire to repent to those who knew of your sin. If you were not wrong before, though, why the change?

Is it because you no longer care? If so, then you need to repent and start caring. We are to earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). We are not at liberty to allow someone else to “contend” for us. So long as life is in our bodies and sense in our minds, we must oppose every wrong thing and support (vigorously) every right thing. Put everything to the test of truth (cf. 1 The. 5:21-22), and such things as standing the test are to be held to, and such things as failing the test are to be avoided.

If it was “true” back then, it is true now. If it was “false” back then, it is false now. May God give us the courage and discernment to recognize the truth on every issue and stand faithfully on the firing line doing our duty.

*Deceased*

## Envy

*D. Thomas*

This passion is one of the principalities in the malignant passions of the soul. Like the apocalyptic star called Wormwood, it embitters all the waters into which it falls (Rev. 8:11). Socrates has said: “Envy is the daughter of pride, the author of murder and revenge, the beginner of secret sedition, and the perpetual tormentor of virtue.” It was envy that murdered Able and dyed the earth with the first blood of innocence. It was envy that plotted against Joseph, consulted to put him to death, sold him into bondage, dipped his hated vest in blood, and presented it to the eyes of his distracted parent. Envy delivered the Lord of glory, the Prince of life, to condemnation and death. If we cannot help being its objects, let us beware of being its subjects.

*Deceased*

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# BEACON

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4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
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## Tithing vs. Biblical Giving

*Mike Demory*

How often have you heard preachers stand before a congregation and berate them for robbing God of tithes and offerings? Taking Malachi 3:8-10 entirely out of context, today's denominational preachers are fleecing congregations around the world under the pretense of being cursed with a curse. While it may be true that some preachers honestly believe what they have been taught concerning tithing, the fact remains that most are in it for the money and could care less what the Bible says about giving. Sad but true, John Hagee pleads for people to send him their tithes to get himself out of the red. Then he offers his listeners his latest videotape set for \$60 on "How to Stay out of Debt."

The apostle Paul warns us of men and women who will use the Gospel for their material gain: "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:17). On any given Lord's Day morning millions of gullible people grudgingly cast ten percent of their paychecks into a basket, then, after counting the tithes, should the preacher not think it enough, the flock is shamed even further into giving more. Sound familiar? Why is this phenomenon so prevalent in the religious world today? I believe the three most common reasons are: (1) Misuse of Scripture to defraud the flock for sordid gain, (2) There is no faith in God's system of giving, and (3) The average *Church* member is ignorant of what the Bible says about tithing versus giving, with the

most often misapplied Scriptures being cited—Malachi 3:8-10, Genesis 14:16-20, Hebrews 7:1-10, and Matthew 23:23.

We find several commonalities in each passage of Scripture that speaks of tithing.

- Only the Levites could collect tithes from the people.
- Their tithe was collected as payment for services rendered unto God in the Tabernacle and later the Temple.
- The Levites were required to tithe to the High Priest from the tithes given to them.
- Only food products were tithable.
- Money was **never** given as a tithe.
- The tithe was given to the children of Israel (the Jews) under the Law of Moses.

Neither the tithe nor the Law of Moses were given to the Gentiles. All the statutes, judgments, regulations, and feasts of the Law of Moses have been done away—including tithes (Col. 2:14). Both Jew and Gentile are now required to obey the Law of Christ (Eph. 2:13-16). Does God require people today to give a tenth of their income? No! The command to tithe was required of the Israelites only. The purpose of the Law of Moses was to teach the Israelites proper godly social, trading, religious, governmental, and health practices. They had lived 215 years in a pagan society that knew nothing of godliness. Therefore, the Law was meant to train the Israelites to become the

perfect example of true righteous living (Gal. 3:23-25).

God was clear that the only acceptable form of worship required conforming to His instructions alone: “Ye shall,” “Ye shall not,” and “take heed” (Deu. 12:6, 8, 13). Not until men acknowledge God’s sovereignty will they obey His commands and express their gratitude for His goodness through sacrifice. The tithe was intended to teach men to recognize their duty as true worshippers of God. The Old Testament law of tithes, sacrifices, and offerings expressed thanksgiving unto the Lord. Although tithing is no longer valid, living a sacrificial life still is.

Many who have been burned by the false concept of tithing have turned to the other extreme, thinking that God expects nothing from us at all. Although tithing was never required of all people (only the Jews) and has since been nailed to the cross, sacrificial giving is still due to God. Keep in mind what Paul said concerning the Law of Moses, “the law is become our tutor *to bring us unto Christ*” (Gal. 3:24). Paul also reminds us, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4). Therefore, the Law of tithing was meant to teach us how to express our gratitude to God for His goodness and mercy. Christianity itself was founded upon sacrifice:

## Life

Forenoon and afternoon and night,  
And day is gone,  
So short a span of time there is  
'TwiXt dawn and evensong.  
Youth—Middle life—Old age,  
And life is past,  
So live each day that God shall say,  
“Well done!” at last.

*Author Unknown*

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

To coerce men and women into giving back to God through unscriptural means is, in itself, robbery! Demeaning and fraudulent motives prevent the true child of God from spiritual growth, as God intended. God’s plan for giving is stated briefly but clearly:

Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come (1 Cor. 16:2).

The Holy Spirit has given us every detail for our giving back to the Lord—when, who, and how much.

Some say that Paul did not say “every” first day of the week. Did not God tell the Jews to keep “every” Sabbath day holy, yet we, as well as they, understood God to imply “every” Sabbath (Exo. 20:8). Therefore, Paul implies “every” first day of the week (Sunday) is when we are to give back to God sacrificially. “Each one of you” means every child of God. Everyone must share the burden of supplying money to the treasury so the widows and fatherless may be fed and the church bills paid. As for how much we are to give, the Holy Spirit said, “As he may prosper.” Unlike the Old Covenant, which required a tenth of one’s increase to be given to the Levites (food products, that is), God has not set a certain amount for us to give today. However, we must remember certain Bible principles to help us determine how much.

He that giveth, *let him do it with liberality* (Rom. 12:8).

But this *I say*, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. *Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver* (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Remember that God requires the first fruits of our harvest, the very best He has put into our care since we are only managers of what we have because everything belongs to God who gave it (1 Cor. 10:26).

The proper standard of giving is not the tithe but voluntary and sacrificial, as did Abraham. Make sure that we are cheerfully and willingly giving back to God, who so richly blessed us with

every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). As we grow spiritually, we will learn that it is better to give than to receive, thereby giving more and more. Many have no faith whatsoever in God's plan, so they depend upon the inventions of men (tithing) to support the works of the church. Remember that God loves the cheerful giver.

*Mexico, MO*

## "We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight"

*Bill Jackson*

Paul begins 2 Corinthians 5 with a point on what **we know!**

For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (5:1).

Here are some things we **know**: We know that our earthly existence will end. We know that God exists. We know that God has another existence for us. We know this new existence will not be material (spiritual, eternal, incorruptible, glorious, powerful—1 Cor. 15:42-51). We know that this new existence is in the heavens.

Paul continues with another matter we know: While we are in this physical body, we are absent from the Lord (who is in the heavens—Heb. 8:1). And, upon our death, being in the Christ, we are then absent from this earthly existence, but **present with the Lord!** (2 Cor. 5:6, 8). We **know** all of this by **faith!** "For we walk by faith, not by sight." And faith comes by hearing the **Word of God!** (Rom. 10:17).

Is not constant study of the Bible so critical, then? Faith is essential (Heb. 11:6), and we gain it only by the Word!

*Deceased*

## Beatitudes for Married Couples

1. Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate, and loving after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.
2. Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.
3. Blessed are they with a sense of humor, for this attribute will be a handy shock absorber.
4. Blessed are the married couples who abstain from alcoholic beverages.
5. Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world and joyfully fulfill their marriage vows of a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness.
6. Blessed are they who remember to thank God for their food before they partake of it and who set aside some time each day for the reading of the Bible and prayer.
7. Blessed are they who attain parenthood, for children are a heritage of the Lord.
8. Blessed are those mates who never speak loudly to each other and who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word."

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## Die to Live and Bear Fruit

*Charles Pogue*

Jesus said:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

Oh, the applications of that verse!

First, we understand how what Jesus said is true in the physical world. Lay a kernel of corn or wheat up on a shelf, and just lay there is all it will do. But plant it in the ground, where there is soil and moisture, and it will germinate. It will grow into a corn stalk with at least two whole ears of corn, maybe more than two.

Jesus came to this world to die for man's sin. Without Jesus going to the cross and dying for sinful men, He would have returned to heaven with the result of no man having forgiveness. There would be no fruit for His journey. Yet, the Lord died. He was planted in the ground and rose again, and through the preaching of the Gospel, many have heard, obeyed, and had their sins washed away. The Lord has borne much fruit by means of His death.

If a man hears the Gospel but does not obey it by believing the Word, repenting of sins, confessing Christ, and then dying to sin, being buried in the watery grave of baptism, he cannot rise from the dead unto eternal life himself, nor take the same Gospel to others, thereby bearing fruit unto the Lord.

The concept is true with the Gospel message itself. Unless that Word goes into the heart of a person, convicts him of sin, thereby slaying him, and again, him being buried in that watery grave of baptism, the Word will not have borne fruit.

It is absolutely the case that there cannot be life without death. If the child of God did not die physically, then how could he come forth from the grave, be given a new and incorruptible body by God, and live eternally? It could not happen.

This concept, among other things, brings us to the absolute truth that a person must die to sin. "For the wages of sin *is* death" (Rom. 6:23), but one can defeat that wage. How? By dying! Not the death that is the wage of sin, but dying to sin itself. Peter states the entire process in these words:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:24).

When one emerges from the grave of baptism, to set himself to the task of bearing fruit, he must not let the sin come back to reign in his life. Sometimes, something is wrong with a kernel of corn, and when the farmer plants it, it does not grow, and there will be an empty spot between one plant and the next. We must not let sin contaminate us again after dying to it. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18). Just a few verses later, Paul continued, "But now being made free from sin, and become

servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (6:22). Following that verse of promise comes the declaration that the wages of sin is death. We see then that if, when we depart this life, to have the hope of eternal life, our lives must bear the fruit of righteousness, then death will spring up to a home in heaven that will never end.

Have you died to sin that you might live? If not, please do not put it off any longer.

*Deceased*

## Recipe for a Happy Day

1 cup of friendly words,  
2 heaping cups of understanding,  
4 teaspoons of time and patience,  
A pinch of warm personality,  
A dash of humor.

*Author Unknown*

## Wrong Direction

The story is told of a woman with a baby in her arms who told the conductor to be sure to stop the train at a small station. The station was just a shack on the plains, not far from her home. A blizzard was in progress outside the train; with blinding snow, she could not tell where the train was.

Finally, the conductor said, “Well, this is your stop.” Gathering her baby to her bosom, she got off. Later, communicating with the engineer, the conductor learned that the train had stopped because of brief mechanical trouble. He had put her off at the wrong place.

Still later, a searching party found her still and covered with snow, with her frozen child held close to her breast.

Who was to blame? The conductor was honestly mistaken. He gave her the wrong direction. The woman, following wrong directions, not only went to her death but also carried her baby child with her.

In religious matters, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Pro. 14:12). With your salvation at stake—be sure you follow the right way.

*Author Unknown*

## Silent City of the Dead

*Johnny Ramsey*

During a Gospel meeting in a small town in West Texas, the local preacher took me out in the country to an old cemetery near the ruins of a once-booming community. He explained that when the railroad moved elsewhere a century ago, the promising village faded, and even a new college decided to close its doors and find another location. The shell of a once magnificent college auditorium stood as a stark reminder of misplaced goals and shattered ideas. Indeed, the best plans of mortal minds are often frustrated. Splendor can turn into dust in such a short period

of time, but in the meantime, we face reality. “For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again” (2 Sam. 14:14).

The visit to that cemetery, and the college, reminded me that the foundations of grand schemes decay, and buildings are never finished in the shifting sands of earthly lore. That college was to be a leading conservatory of music. Twenty grand pianos had been brought there by wagon train from St. Louis. But today, only the hull of the campus building echoes the futility of

human minds and grandiose dreams. At the gate of the nearby cemetery is a Texas State Historical marker with this poem on the marble slab:

As fades the leaf and morning flower  
So fade our lives each passing hour,  
As dews melt before the sun  
So pass our lives one by one

It was evident from the tombstone that both rich and poor were buried there. Some elaborate memorials were as fancy and expensive as anyone could see among the elite. Others were simple reminders of poverty and loneliness. Death plays no favorites, and the upper crust of society is often interred beside the very people they scorned in life. As Edgar Guest wrote, so it truly is:

One day we will all stand  
With empty hands,  
And wonder what we are worth.

Balaam desired to die as a righteous man (Num. 23:10), but he died as he lived. So shall we. A professional preacher may “preach us into heaven,” but he will not oversee our destiny. Only those who live in Christ are eternally blessed by God (Eph. 1:3). Only those who live in Christ can die in Christ and walk the golden street of glory (John 8:21; Rev. 14:13). Whether rich or poor, black, or

white, educated or not—the Word of the Lord will reveal our future (John 12:48).

As I left that journey into the past and observed the decaying remains of an old college and the solemnity of that rural graveyard, I recalled the vivid truth that our life is just a vapor that swiftly fades into nothingness (Jam. 4:14). Why, then, do we put so much emphasis upon houses, clothes, cars, jewelry, social pressure, and other vain matters? Why can we not learn?

Did not Solomon, in his pomp and glory, admit such lifestyle was “vanity and a striving after wind” (Ecc. 2:11)? Remember the rich man in Luke 16, who fared sumptuously in life and was in despair and torment thereafter? The rich fool of Luke 12 never got to enjoy the productivity of brilliant plans for materialistic pleasure! In Nehemiah 2:20 and 13:31, we have two contrasting epitaphs. Which one will adequately describe our status on Judgment Day? What phrase would best describe our marker?

“You have nothing precious to remember.”

Or

“Remember me, O my God, for good!”

The way we live now will determine where we will spend eternity.

*Deceased*

## The “Not-Hole”

When you order a suit, do you say, “Don’t send sizes 32, 34, 36, 40, 42? And don’t send cotton, silk, rayon, or leather?” Of course not! Instead, you tell them what you want, automatically eliminating the rest.

And yet, people often do not understand this in religion. They say, “But God did not say **not** to use instrumental music in worship.” Or, God did not say, “He that is **not** baptized shall be lost.” Or, “He did not say **not** to gamble, or **not** to do the modern dances, etc.” Or, “He did not say **not** to smoke or chew tobacco.” Or, “He did not say **not** to use alcohol as a social beverage.” Or, “He did

not say **not** to dress in immodest apparel and **not** to go mixed swimming.”

No, that is right, but he **did** tell us **what** He wanted (Eph. 5:19; Mark 16:16; Eph. 4:28; Gal. 5:19-24). God tells us to “abide” in the things that are taught in the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14) and that “whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 John 9). Let us resolve to do the exact will of God without addition or subtraction and without trying to pull anything in through the “**Not Hole**”!

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## By Which Door Would You Leave

*Darrell Debo*

The events of history many times can teach valid and cogent spiritual lessons; and spiritual lessons can determine the destiny of the human soul. Only when the spiritual lesson is based on and established in divine wisdom and truth will it affect the desired result—salvation of the soul.

An interesting event took place on November 18, 1809, near Tompkinsville in Monroe County, southern Kentucky, among those desiring to go back to the “ancient order of things” and the restoration of the Christianity one finds in the pages of the New Testament. The historic meeting occurred in a log meeting house at what was known as the Mill Creek Baptist Church where John Mulkey was the preacher. The earliest minutes of this congregation go back to 1798.

Mulkey, previous to this day, for some time had begun to question Baptist doctrine and to believe the need for all time was to return to what he termed “New Testament Christianity.” As Mulkey’s sermons began to espouse these sentiments more and more, the congregation tried him for heresy, after Baptist custom, on three different occasions and each time found him innocent. The area Baptist Association was brought in on one occasion to conduct his trial.

On the above named date approximately 200 had gathered in the old log structure, and John Mulkey made the following proposal: “Now all you who believe as I do, follow me out the west door.” More than 150 went out the west door with him,

and it was agreed that the larger group would retain the meeting house. The minority who went out the east door continued as the Mill Creek Baptist Church. The New Testament-led congregation used the old meeting house until 1856, when they began meeting in the basement of the Monroe County courthouse where they became known as the Tompkinsville church of Christ. Today, more than 200 years later, there are more than 20 congregations in the Tompkinsville, Kentucky, vicinity, reflecting on the growth of the church in that area throughout the years.

What caused the split in the old Mill Creek church? What caused three-fourths of the gathered people to follow Mulkey out the west door, and what did Mulkey believe that prompted them to do so? We have already ascertained that it was his dedicated desire to return to and uphold New Testament Christianity in its very pristine nature. Since the Bible teaches “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17), one would have to logically assume that those who left by the west door in order to walk by faith would have to be guided by the Word of God alone, while those who walked out the east door would continue to abide in the covenant and creed of the Baptist denomination. What would have happened if both the “west doors” and the “east doors” had agreed to go by the Bible and the Bible alone? No division! All would have gone out the same door.

---

“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep... I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:7, 9).

---

Suppose a similar occasion would occur today in some of the modern-day congregations? Metaphorically speaking, Jesus Christ is the correct door (John 10:7, 9). Only through the correct door and into the fold is salvation possible, and the only way to the Father is through Christ. Now suppose the preacher espoused the doctrine that salvation was available outside the fold and in some other place? After all, he says, Christ’s fold is just another kind of fold among many, and there’s nothing unique about it. With the passing of time and the

preaching of more and more sermons containing increasingly unscriptural doctrines and erroneous propositions, the congregation finds itself in a dire spiritual condition with either ungodly division present among the members or complete apostasy from the truth. Suppose some brave, courageous, and faith-filled elder, deacon, or just a Christian member proposes, “All who believe as I do, desire to walk by faith rather than by the desires and dictates of men, and who are determined to walk in the ‘old paths’ follow me out the side door?” How many do you think would follow him today? I’m sorry to say that I’m afraid it would be a small remnant who would have continued to love the truth, rather than the majority, like in 1809 at Mill Creek. The majority would leave by the front door, no doubt, and keep the building! **By which door would you leave?**

*Burnett, TX*

## A New Name

Names are important to God. The change of Abram’s name to Abraham (Gen. 17:5) and Jacob’s to Israel (32:28) are significant. The name of John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the name of Jesus, the son conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, were divinely chosen (Luke 1:13-14; Mat. 1:21). In Isaiah 62, God’s Messianic prophet predicts God’s people “shalt be called by a new name” (62:2). Isaiah announces four glorious truths about this new name (i.e., Christian) in this chapter. These include:

### Its Timing

For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, And for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, Until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, And the salvation thereof as a lamp *that* burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, And all kings thy glory: And thou shalt be called by a new name (62:1-2).

When the proclamation of righteousness and salvation heralds forth, and the Gentiles have

heard it, a new name will be given to the people God calls His own.

### Proclamation of Salvation

The proclamation of salvation (i.e., the Gospel) to anyone who calls on the name of the Lord began in Jerusalem ten days after the resurrected Christ’s ascension into heaven (Acts 1-2). The first Gentiles taught the Gospel were Cornelius, his kinsmen, and near friends (10:24). Shortly thereafter, the Lord Jesus was preached in Antioch of Syria to the Jews (11:19), and Gentiles (11:20), and a “great number believed, and turned unto Lord” (11:21). With the conditions of Isaiah’s prediction met, “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (11:26).

### Its Source

“And thou shalt be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD shall name” (Isa. 62:2). Isaiah could not be clearer as to the source of this new name. It is God Himself. Many a

denominational writer misrepresents this truth when commenting on Acts 11:26. A. T. Robertson, for example, writes:

The name was evidently given to the followers of Christ by the Gentiles to distinguish them from the Jews since they were Greeks, not Grecian Jews (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 3:160).

Considering the partisan, carnal, and sectarian mindset that every denominationalist has, such erroneous thinking about the name Christian is not surprising.

#### Its Prestige and Value

“Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isa. 62:3). Those wearing the divinely given, glorious new name are victors and royalty. They are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37); they are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9). No earthly crown can compare to the prestige, value, and pricelessness of an incorruptible crown of glory (1 Cor. 9:25). The crown of spiritual victory blesses its recipients with righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8), life (Jam. 1:12), and glory (1 Pet. 5:4). To those who have been given this prestigious and invaluable new name, Jesus declared:

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him my new name* (Rev. 3:11-12).

#### Its Significance

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; Neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: But thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah [“My delight is in her”], And thy land Beulah [“married”]: For the LORD delighteth in thee, And thy land shall be married. For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *So* shall thy sons marry thee: And *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *So* shall thy God rejoice over thee.... Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end

of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; Behold, his reward *is* with him, And his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: And thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken (Isa. 62:4-5, 11-12).

What weighty significance is found in the new name: divine pleasure or delight, marital betrothal, salvation, sanctification and holiness, redemption, persevering companionship. How richly these wonderful themes are explored and explained in the New Testament epistles! The revelation of the Gospel, which makes known God’s eternally purposed plan of salvation and the new name it contains, was according to God’s good pleasure (Eph. 1:5, 9). Within the divinely given name is the name of Christ, the bridegroom, head, and savior of all who wears it (5:23).

- The new name affirms the truth that there is no other name under heaven given among men in which salvation can be found (Acts 4:12); no one comes to the Father but by Christ (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).
- The new name reflects the One in whom the saved are sanctified and called to be saints (1 Cor. 1:2).
- The new name honors the Redeemer through whose blood the redeemed have the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7).
- The new name highlights the One who declared, “lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world” (Mat. 28:20); He will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5).

Though despised by the ungodly, the new name ought to be prized by the godly. In fact, “if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:16).

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## Studying God's Word

*Matthew Aaron*

First, let me ask, what does it mean to study? Studying is more than a reading of a few passages from the Bible here and there. Studying involves a definite purpose, a desire to learn, and willingness to apply what we have studied to our daily lives. *Study* can be defined as: “the act of studying as by reading, observing or research, a work resulting from studious behavior, a state of mental absorption, to give careful thought and to contemplate or ponder.”

From our definition we see that studying is not skimming a few passages, but observing and thinking carefully about what you are reading. From our Scripture reading: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), we see that we study to be approved of God, to be a confident workman of God, and to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

In the Bible we can find examples of people who meditated on the Word of God, which means to think about, to reflect, or to consider. We see in Joshua 1:8 that when Joshua became the leader of the children of Israel after Moses' death, he was told:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

We also see in Psalm 1:2 when describing the blessed man, the writer said: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; And in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

Why is it that some people decide not to study God's Word. Some may say they do not have time, and others just may not care. Hebrews 4:12 states:

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

So, I ask, how is it possible that people not have the time or not care to study something described in such a way?

There are some people who try and change God's Word, but what does Revelation 22:18-19 say about these actions:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book

My family knows that when I am putting something together I do not like to look at the directions, but I look at the box the product came in and try to make it similar to what the picture on

the box looks like. For example, last summer we got a new lawnmower and once I got it out of the package, I threw the directions aside, and began to put it together based on the picture on the box. When I was done, Dad came out of the house and closely examined the lawnmower and he pointed out numerous mistakes that I had made all because I did not read the instructions.

Sadly, that is what some people try to do with the church today. They put the Bible aside and try to come up with something similar to the church, but if their actions are examined closely by the Scriptures, then they will notice that there are numerous differences between what they want the church to be and how the church should

really be. All of this could be avoided if the Scriptures are studied and applied how they should be applied.

An unwillingness to apply God's Truth leads to a number of serious problems. That is why it is very important to not only study but also apply what we study to our daily lives. Jesus said: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Yes, we will be judged in the last day. Thus, I would ask: Are you studying and applying God's Word to your life like you should?

*Belevedere, SC*

## Could You Be Stingy with Such a Savior?

He who is the bread of life began His ministry  
hungering.

He who is the water of life ended His ministry  
thirsting.

He who was weary is our true rest.

He who paid tribute is the "King of kings."

He prayed yet hears our prayers.

He wept but dries our tears.

He was sold for thirty pieces of silver yet re-  
deemed us.

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter but is the  
Good Shepherd.

He died and gave His life and, by dying, destroyed  
death for all who believe.

*Author Unknown*

## "Full of Sap"

Nowadays, if someone should tell you that you were full of sap, you might not feel so complimented, but that expression was used in the Bible as a metaphor to describe the health, vigor, and activity of older people in service to God. It comes from Psalm 92:12-15:

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree:  
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are  
planted in the house of Jehovah; They shall  
flourish in the courts of our God. They shall  
still bring forth fruit in old age; They shall be  
full of sap and green: To show that Jehovah is  
upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

A tree without sap is either dead or dormant, neither of which represents the ideal of the faithful, righteous person who ages gracefully in the house of Jehovah. To grow old as a saint of God is an honor. Abram was promised to be buried in a "good old age" (Gen. 15:15). Moses died at 120, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deu. 34:7). David "died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor" (1 Chr. 29:28). It is proper that children should be taught to respect old age.

A favorite example of a man "full of sap" is old Caleb. He was one of the 12 spies sent into Canaan, one of the two who brought an encouraging

report. He was promised a land allotment by God. It was not a retirement home. Caleb did not expect to be fixed up with a chaise lounge and a shuffleboard court. While in his 80s, he said to Joshua:

As yet I am as strong this day as I as in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, and to go out and to come in. Now therefore give me this hill-country, whereof Jehovah spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and cities great and fortified: it may be that Jehovah will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as Jehovah spake (Jos. 14:11-12).

Joshua still served God even into old age. He would die serving God.

Even in modern times, some who are elderly do not think about advancing years. We have known many who have done mission work and, rather than retire, die in the work they have loved their entire lives. Others who retire from their occupations use their retirement years to go on mission trips. Their idea of *fun* is to teach the Gospel and to win souls.

Elderly saints love the Lord and love the Gospel. They want the next generation to be grounded in the faith. Psalm 71:17-18:

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Yea, even when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, Until I have declared thy strength unto *the next* generation, Thy might to every one that is to come.

Psalm 78:4-7:

We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah, And his strength, and his wondrous works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which he commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; That the generation to come might know *them*, even the children that should be born; Who should arise and tell *them* to their children, That they might set their hope in God,

And not forget the works of God, But keep his commandments.

Even from a nursing home bed, Oscar Correll gave insight to a young preacher on what it means to regard not this earth but heaven as the saint's true home. He did not cry as some poor, demented souls do for a childhood home but joyfully spoke of heaven as "home." In his case, not even pain and suffering was wasted.

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; 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. 4:16-18).

Paul saw that older women ought to be used.

He said:

that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; 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. 2:3-5).

Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day (1 Tim. 5:5).

If a godly woman who had served God faithfully in her younger years should be given the work of prayer for the saints, what a source of power and encouragement. This is no *busy work* responsibility.

This comes from one who routinely receives senior discounts without asking: do not lay your Christian armor aside. God needs you in His service. Young people need you. They need your teaching, example, faith, generosity, compassion, and wisdom.

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## God's Blueprint for Religious Unity

*John Chowning*

The divine plan for unity has two equally important components. For matters of doctrine, there must be conformity. For matters of opinion/conscience, there must be liberty. In matters of faith, there are seven essentials:

*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:4-6).*

- **One body** provides unity of **organization**—the church, Christ's only bride (5:23-25).
- **One Spirit** provides unity of **truth**—the Spirit of truth (John 16:13) has revealed all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).
- **One hope** provides unity of **destiny**—the hope of eternal life in heaven (Tit. 1:2; John 14:3) as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Holy Scriptures.
- **One Lord** provides unity of **authority**—our Savior is also Lord of lords, King of kings, the only Potentate (1 Tim. 6:15).
- **One faith** provides unity of doctrine and practice—the once-delivered-for-all-time faith reveals the common salvation enjoyed by all (Jude 3).
- **One baptism** provides unity of **conversion**—the universal way in which all who call upon the name of the Lord and have their past sins washed away (Acts 22:16) and

put Christ on (Gal. 3:27).

- **One God and Father** provides unity of **worship and inheritance**—the Deity who re-generates us into newness of life (Rom. 6:4) also makes us His sons and heirs (8:16-17).

This component of God's blueprint for religious unity is perfect. It needs neither addition nor subtraction, just implementation. Therefore, every Christian must endeavor or make every effort or give eager diligence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). The truth must be believed and spoken in love by all (4:15). In matters of conscience there are four authoritative principles given in Romans 14:1–15:13. These are:

- **The strong are to receive those who are weak in conscience** (14:1-13). Since I am not my brother's ultimate judge, he and his conscience are not something I should dispute. We shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged individually by Him (14:10). Because every one of us shall give an account of himself to God, my job, as a brother in Christ, is **not** to be his judge but to make sure I do not put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his way (14:12-13).
- **My focus is not to be upon judging my brother but rather helping him go to heaven without asking him to violate his conscience** (14:14-23). Since the kingdom of God is not about carnal matters like food

and drink but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (14:17), I need to follow the things that make for peace, righteousness, and joy so my brother may be edified or built up in the most holy faith (14:19).

- **The strong are to bear with the infirmities or scruples of the weak and not focus on pleasing themselves** (15:1-6). This is the example Jesus set (15:3). This is the timeless testimony of those things written in the Scriptures aforetime for our learning (15:4). When we imitate the example of God's patience and consolation by being like-minded in our forbearance of one another, God is truly glorified (15:5-6).

- **We are to receive each other as Christ has received us** (15:7-13). Whether our conscience was strong or weak or our spiritual heritage was of devout service to God or utter heathenism, Christ receives all who obey His Gospel from the heart. Since a servant is not above his master (Mat. 10:24), can we do less than our Lord?

This component of God's blueprint for religious unity is perfect. It needs neither addition nor subtraction, just implementation. In matters of conscience, there is liberty. Therefore, every Christian must endeavor, make every effort, or give eager diligence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

*Cookeville, TN*

## Are You Afraid of the Truth?

Jesus stated, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Think about what that statement says.

**First, we can know the truth.** Jesus said so. Some people think that truth is relative. They believe truth changes based on time, circumstances, personal feelings, and interpretation. They see truth as fluid, constantly adjusting and changing. What is true today may not be true tomorrow, and it may be true again next week. Jesus, however, settled the matter. His statement is unequivocal; we can know the truth!

**Second, it is the truth that will make us free.** How odd that so many people see it exactly the opposite. They are afraid of the truth; it scares them. They believe what they believe, and they are happy with that belief. Any substantive examination of what they believe makes them extremely uncomfortable. Putting their understanding of truth under a microscope of analysis is taken as a personal threat to them. Often, they react to the prospect by simply shutting down the process. They will not allow the examination of what they

believe to be the truth. However, Jesus said, "the truth shall make you free!" Learning the truth should set one's mind free, and it should be liberating. Going through the process of gaining knowledge of truth is what education is all about. Studying is aimed at searching for truth. Knowing the truth equips a person to deal with whatever situation might confront him successfully.

**Third, some points of truth can be inconvenient, even painful.** Even in those cases, the truth is still the truth. Running from it, pretending it does not exist, and refusing to believe it does not change the fact that it is the truth.

**Denying** the reality of truth in a situation ultimately makes it harder to deal with that situation. A person who is injured from a fall, is examined, x-rayed, and subsequently diagnosed with a broken leg can refuse to believe that his leg is broken. He can even refuse to see a doctor for fear of the truth. However, that will not change the fact that his leg is broken. Denying the truth and refusing to believe it will make his life more difficult. Many people **refuse** to accept the truth that their

spiritual lives are a mess. Their defense mechanism is to simply not think about it. But not thinking about their spiritual state and refusing to deal with it realistically will not help them—“For the wages of sin *is* death” (Rom. 6:23). The only thing that

will help you get your life in order is to get into God’s Word, search out the truth, and properly apply it to your life.

*Author Unknown*

## Let Us Get Our Focus Right

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10—NKJ).

A commodity that ranks high on the *need list* in our society is simple contentment. In our “pursuit of happiness,” we have become engulfed in discontent and frustration. We chase after success, popularity, money, and power. Yet, perplexities and distresses have built up such pressures that heart attacks and nervous breakdowns have become commonplace among us. Nearly all these agencies of unhappiness and even death stem from discontent. Our discontent has its origin in a lack of faith in God.

The Bible says:

and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing *unto him*; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that seek after him....the righteous shall live by faith.... In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 1:17; Phi. 4:6-7—ASV).

Let us get our focus right. The *rat race* may be fine for rats, but not for people. The laying up of

riches on earth or “looking out for number one” does not make for contentment or peace of mind. Jesus warns us, “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). All the experiences of this life demonstrate the eternal truth of that statement.

*Author Unknown*

## We At the Church of Christ

*Tim Smith*

We at the Church of Christ stand ready at any time to study with you the Word of God and His requirements for our lives. We want to go to heaven, and we have set ourselves to helping as many other go as we possibly can. Only one thing can keep you from going—your sin. Only one Being can let you in—the One Who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (Jesus—John 14:6). Coming to the Father through Him involves hearing and believing the Gospel (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6), repenting of sin (Luke 13:3), confessing faith in Jesus (8:37), being immersed properly (Acts 22:16), and being faithful even to the point of death (Rev. 2:10). Are you ready? If not, call on us and let us study with you these matters of eternal import. Thank you and may God bless you as you study His Word.

*Deceased*

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Take time to work—it is the price of success;  
Take time to think—it is the source of power;  
Take time to play—it is the secret of perpetual youth;  
Take time to read—it is the foundation of wisdom;  
Take time to worship—it is the highway to reverence;  
Take time to be friendly—it is the road to happiness.

*Author Unknown*

### Sick

Remember in your prayers:

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
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| Nelda King             | Rheba Stancliff    |
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# BEACON

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## What Did the Resurrection Mean for Christ?

*Charles Cash*

Jesus performed many marvelous signs and wonders while on earth! The apostle John gave the following reason for writing his Gospel:

Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30-31—NKJV).

These miracles were for the express purpose of proving that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ. Yet, the greatest miracle of all, the one that gave vindication to all the other miracles, was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

This is the way the apostle Paul said it: concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:3-4).

His resurrection from the dead was the crowning and eternal proof that He is the Son of the Living God. By the resurrection, He is alive; He lives!

The cross on which Jesus shed His precious blood for our sins should always remain central in our minds. Yet, is there not a valid point in Michelangelo's indignant protest against his fellow painters:

Why do you keep filling gallery after gallery with endless pictures of the one ever-reiterated theme of Christ in weakness, Christ upon the

cross, Christ dying, and most of all Christ hanging dead? Why do you concentrate on that passing episode, as if that were the last word and the last scene, as if the curtain dropped upon that horror of disaster and defeat? At worst, all that lasted for only a few hours. But to the end of unending eternity Christ is alive; Christ rules and reigns and triumphs.

In the same vein of thought, I have heard teachers of very young children say: "In teaching the story of Jesus, never leave Him hanging on the cross."

Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it *are* the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, And perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, And let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, And let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: Remove thy foot from evil (Pro. 4:23-27—KJV).

What does the resurrection mean for Jesus? He is the Christ, the Son of God, and He lives!

**What Does the Resurrection of Jesus Mean for the Christian?**

First, the resurrection of Jesus guarantees us a resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is a part of the good news, the Gospel message. Paul told the Corinthians that the Gospel he had preached to them, by which they were saved, consisted of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-3). God lifts it above the level of news and

makes it a pledge. Paul tells us: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (15:20). Speaking of the resurrection of Christ, one preacher said: “In that mighty act God has planted the rose of immortality upon the bosom of every grave.” Jesus Himself said:

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).

Second, the promises of God are vouchsafed in and guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ. God’s promises are “exceedingly great and precious” (2 Pet. 1:4). God makes a promise; faith believes it, and hope anticipates it.

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 (1 Pet. 1:3).

Third, Christianity rests upon the resurrection of Christ. Paul wrote:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God,...For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable (1 Cor. 15:13-19).

There you have it! If Christ has not been raised, all the dominos fall, and nothing is left!

Would it not be tragic to come to the end of life’s way and have as our epitaph the words of the ancient Omar: “There was a door to which I found no key.” That does not have to be! Jesus made this striking announcement:

I am the First and the Last. I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (Rev. 1:17-18).

Praise be to God for the resurrection of Christ!

*Copied*

## Death Confessions?

### *Dub Mowery*

A deathbed confession is generally understood to refer to a person who is near death and feels the need to confess their sins to God. In determining whether or not a deathbed confession is an acceptable means of obtaining forgiveness of sins, let us analyze the inspired Scriptures. First, we ask, is the person who confesses their sins while dying an alien sinner or an erring child of God? Alien sinners are those souls accountable to God who have never obeyed the Gospel of Christ. These individuals are not in the spiritual family of the heavenly Father. An alien sinner is a person without Christ, God, or hope of eternal life (Eph. 2:12). Erring children of God are those who have obeyed the Gospel but have become unfaithful.

There are two laws of pardon under the New Testament. One avenue of pardon is for the alien sinner, the other for the erring child of God. Since an alien sinner is not in the spiritual family of God, they need to “be born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5). This is accomplished when a person obeys the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; 6:17-18). In obeying the Gospel to be saved, every alien sinner must receive the Word of God by either hearing or reading it (Jam. 1:21; Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31), believing it (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6), repenting of sins (Acts 17:30-31), confessing his faith in Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Mat. 10:32-33), and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). No one can bypass this

law of pardon for the alien sinner, either by attempting to “pray through” for salvation or by any other means.

The erring child of God must repent, confess their sins, pray to God for the forgiveness of sins, and resume faithfulness unto the Lord (Acts 8:18-24; 1 John 1:8-9; Rev. 2:1-5). No one should wait until dying before turning to the Lord. We should devote our lives to Him (Ecc. 12:1, 13). What motivates a person to do otherwise? One cannot look into the spiritual heart of a dying person who confesses his sins.

Nevertheless, it is dangerous for any person to procrastinate until death is imminent to turn unto God. There is the danger that a person’s heart will have already hardened (i.e., with a “conscience seared”) because of his continually rejecting the will of God (Heb. 3:13; 1 Tim. 4:2). It is true that some in the sunset years of their life obey the Gospel. However, a “deathbed confession” is not a substitute for obeying the Gospel of Christ (2 The. 1:7-9).

*Deceased*

## Have You Ever Felt Like a “Gril”?

*Paul Vaughn*

It is said that once, a young man made a sign and displayed it by a busy road. He wrote on the sign, “I like grils.” Another young man came by and struck a line through the word “gril” and wrote, “It is not grils but girls.” Soon after, someone came by and wrote, “But what about us grils?” The third writer was implying that sometimes one may feel unwanted, unloved, or unappreciated. Have you ever felt like a “gril”? Maybe you are not the one chosen to be on the ball team or invited to dinner. Perhaps, all of us, at one time or another, have felt like a “gril” concerned that no one loves us or cares for us.

The Scriptures teach that Jesus loves us and cares for us. He wants us on His team. The Lord said:

Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light (Mat. 11:28-30).

There is no reason why anyone should feel like a “gril.” The Lord invites all to come to Him. Come to Jesus when you are downtrodden. Come to Jesus when you feel as if you are unloved. Come to Jesus when you feel unwanted. You are somebody in the eyes of the Lord; He died for you. And come to Jesus when all is going great. Perhaps that is when you need Him most of all.

No one should feel like a “gril” because God has often demonstrated His love for mankind. Sadly, most go through life never understanding or seeing God’s powerful love for them. How do you feel? Is it like a “gril”? Or do you realize that the Lord loves you? Jesus said:

Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you (John 15:13-14).

*Hopkinsville, KY*

### In Remembrance

We do not lose the ones we love;  
They only go before,  
Where there is everlasting life,  
Where sorrow is no more;  
There the soul will always live,  
And peace is everywhere;  
We do not lose the ones we love—  
God takes them in His care.

*Author Unknown*

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## Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Louise Billiot in the death of her sister, Elaine Brooks, on February 24. Please keep Louise and Elaine's family in your prayers.

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Karen Diamond                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Rheba Stancliff

Carla Burleson                      Aleacia Godwin

Dale Cunningham

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## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:** Paul Brantley  
Michael Hatcher

**Minister:** Bill Busch  
Tim Cozad



# BEACON

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## Work for All to Do

*Bob Wear*

Much is said about involvement, and much of it refers to work or activities that may or may not be what God expects of us. Often, the reference is to special activities not essential to spiritual life or salvation. There may be nothing wrong with the program for those who wish to participate, but when efforts are made to impose the program upon everybody, it may cause distress to those who cannot be involved for one reason or another. This causes a very hurtful and unjustified feeling of guilt. It usually leads to some degree of strife, and the strife may become harmful to the congregation.

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*It is encouraging and helpful to know that God's established order for life in the church provides the kind of involvement in which all persons can participate.*

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Then, there is another attitude among people of the church about involvement. It is found in the statement, "They never give me anything to do." This attitude comes out of faulty notions about being involved. There seems to be too much loose thought and talk about involvement.

It is encouraging and helpful to know that God's established order for life in the church provides the kind of involvement in which all persons can participate. There is work for all to do. This is accomplished without extra human structuring, including human devices and inventions. The

essentially humanistic way detracts from God's way.

There is work for all to do, service for all to perform, and God-approved participation (involvement) for all.

Christian living is the work God wants to be done. Therefore, we can be working and serving when we are home with our family, performing our jobs in the business and professional world, interacting with our fellowmen in our social life, and alone while we study and meditate. Thus, we are involved.

We are also doing God's work when we are faithfully keeping divine appointments in attending the public meetings of the church and in our worship and all that it includes (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 20:7). We are not spectators, but participators. We are involved in a God-ordained way.

We are doing God's work when we are doing good. "And let us not be weary in well doing:... As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good [in every way good can be done] unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith [the church]" (Gal. 6:9-10). This is God-approved involvement.

Practicing "pure and undefiled religion" is work that God expects us to do and work that all of us can do as obedient members of the church (Jam. 1:27). This is involvement.

Our personal growth in "faith," in "love," in "knowledge," and in "God's favor" (2 The. 1:3;

2 Pet. 3:17-18) is certainly work for all to do. This may be the most neglected work and involvement God desires and approves.

In the church, as baptized believers, all of us can be pleasing to God by doing the work God has given us to do. “Be steadfast, unmoveable,

always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). “We are always abounding in the work of the Lord” when we are living the life of obeying God’s Word.

*Deceased*

## Consequences of Not Practicing Self-Control

Many passages teach that a child of God can fall from grace. Among them is 1 Corinthians 9:27, which says, “But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” Paul is saying he had to practice “self-control.” If he did not, even after he had preached to others, he would end up being “disqualified” (KJV “a cast-away”).

The word in Greek (*adokimos*) translated as “disqualified” means “to not stand the test or to not be approved.” The KJV translates the word as *reprobate* in various passages, such as Romans 1:28, which says, “And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” Please read the context of this verse in Romans and see if you think it refers to

the saved. If Paul became a “castaway or disqualified,” he would surely be lost.

Some argue that all Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 9:27 is that he feared he might do something which would cause his brethren to reject him and not allow him to preach to them, i.e., they would cast him aside as a preacher. A person who would say this is not very knowledgeable about Paul. In Galatians 1:10, he said, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” Further, in this context, Paul talks about an “incorruptible crown” for which they were striving. This prize awaited them at the end of the Christian race.

Thus, if someone does not consistently practice self-control, the person will be lost even after being a faithful Christian for many years.

*Author Unknown*

## The Godhead

*W. R. Craig*

### Introduction

Three times in the New Testament, *Godhead* is used to describe Jehovah God, His nature, or Godhood. That God has revealed Himself in the Bible is accepted by all who believe that the Bible is of Divine origin. The Bible tells Him that He made Himself known to man through the material creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1) and “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are

made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

In addition to setting forth that truth, the Bible tells Who God is and gives as much information about Him as He wants men to know. With that thought in mind, our lesson intends to call attention to some of the things the Bible says about; without such information, we can never know Him (cf. 1 Cor 1:21).

### The Threefold Character of God

Carefully considering the divine record will reveal that God appears before the universe in a

threefold attitude: Creator, Lawgiver, and Redeemer. Each of these relations reveals and involves many of His excellencies, but three are most conspicuous in each department.

1. As the Creator, we have wisdom, power, and goodness.
2. As the Lawgiver, we have justice, truth, and holiness.
3. As the Redeemer, we have mercy, condescension, and love.

It should be further observed that He is infinite, immutable, and eternal in all these attributes.

#### Unity and a Plural Manifestation

The unity of God is affirmed in many parts of the Bible, for example, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD” (Deu. 6:4). Yet, in this sublime and incomprehensible unity, a three-fold personality is also embraced. In Genesis 1:1, *create* is a singular verb, that while the name *God* is **plural**, and it may be here, that the Holy Spirit is endeavoring to guard the readers of the Bible against the extremes of polytheism and unitarianism.

The Divine nature is essentially and necessarily singular while at the same time plural in its personal manifestations. Thus, we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all possessing the same nature.

Some conceive of God as a mathematical, and since a thing cannot be both mathematically singular and plural—one and three at the same time and in the same sense—they accordingly deny the true and proper Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This is the dispute that resulted in the Nicene Creed. That view is not in harmony with the Scriptures (Col. 2:9; John 1:1; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; Mat. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 9:14).

#### Some Characteristics of God

1. Creator (Gen. 1:1).
2. Spirit (John 4:24).
3. Omniscient (Acts 15:18; Rom. 16:27).
4. Omnipotent (Gen. 17:1; Rom. 16:27).
5. Omnipresent (1 Kin. 8:27; Psa. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17: 27-28).

6. Abundant in loving kindness (Exo. 34:5-7).
7. Will not justify the wicked (Exo. 23:7; Heb. 2:1-3).
8. No respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).
9. Looks to the poor and contrite (Isa. 66:2).
10. Uses wicked men to destroy His enemies and to punish the unfaithful (Isa. 10:5-7; Jer. 51:20; Psa. 76:10). Jehovah is not dependent upon men’s willingness to obey Him in carrying out His purposes and in accomplishing His ends upon the earth, as these passages very clearly indicate.

#### Some Inferences and Conclusions

God makes no experiments, and He never repents as men do (1 Sam. 15:29). Therefore, He is never disappointed in any issue or contingency that can arise. It follows that when God is said to repent, it is only by a figure (anthropopathy) in condescension to man’s imperfections (Gen. 6:6).

His nature is the constitution of the universe, according to which all things were created and all laws enacted. The **principle** underlying the **laws** by which He governs the world is immutable as the nature of God and as enduring as His eternal throne. The **principle** is the fundamental basis which determines the nature of anything. In its ideal form, the **law** is the statement of a principle of right in mandatory form by a competent authority, with an adequate penalty for obedience.

**Law** is the medium through which a **principle** is applied. The law is enacted and can be repealed, and the **principle** is eternal and immutable. So, God’s will is the only proper standard of rectitude (John 4:34; Mat. 7:21).

#### Sin Cannot Approach God

Since sin entered the world, God has only dwelt on earth, sanctified in a temple and places of worship (Exo. 20:24; Deu. 12:5; Eph. 2:19-22). Only those, then, who are sanctified can rightly hope to be saved (Heb. 12:14; John 17:17; Eph. 1:13; Mark 16:15-16; Eph. 5:25-27; Mat. 5:8).

*Deceased*

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## Placed Membership

Pete Maldonado placed membership with the Bellview congregation on March 3.

Please keep Pete in your prayers and offer him encouragement. His address will be posted on the bulletin board.

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Karen Diamond                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Rheba Stancliff

Carla Burleson                      Aleacia Godwin

Dale Cunningham

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# BEACON

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## The Unknown God and the Unknown Church

*Lester Kamp*

When Paul arrived in Athens on his second mission trip, he was distressed that the city was “wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). Athens was the “intellectual capital” of the world. Yet, their ignorance of the true and living God was evident. They had fashioned two to three thousand idols to worship with their own hands. To prevent the possibility of offending any other deity by omitting one, they had inscribed under one idol “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (17:23). Paul’s words to Rome also apply appropriately to the Athenians, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things” (Rom. 1:22-23). In Athens, there was an abundance of religion, resulting in much confusion—and God was unknown.

To these people, Paul was given the opportunity to set forth the reality of God, the God of the Bible, and to refute their false notions about Him. His sermon on Mars’ Hill powerfully exposes the foolishness of their current conceptions of deity.

**First**, the Athenians’ believed that deity was man-made. They thought they could make their gods look like they wanted them to look and be what they wanted them to be. Paul proclaimed, “**God made** the world and all things therein” and is not dependent on man for His existence (Acts 17:24-25, 29). **Second**, the Athenians’ believed that deity was a multitude of idols. These gods

varied in number and kind from one to another. Paul proclaimed that God was one and that His sovereignty was over all people, all nations (17:26). **Third**, Paul observed that their ignorance, which was even self-acknowledged by the inscription “**TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**,” was primarily responsible for their false concepts of God and their evil practices (17:23, 30).

Today, many in the world are plagued by the same conceptual problems observed among the Athenians. The modern, popular concept of the “church of God” is so muddled that the church of the New Testament is **virtually unknown**. In the world, there continues to be an abundance of religion, resulting in confusion. Because of this, many do not know nor recognize the true church, the blood-bought body of Christ. Let us note, therefore, how modern thinking about the church parallels the Athenians’ erroneous concepts about deity.

Today, most people believe the church is man-made. We hear such statements as “Join the church of your choice” and “It doesn’t matter what we believe and practice.” Both statements reflect that the church can be anything and everything that man wants it to be. If we can’t find a church that is to our liking, it is suggested that we just start one that does reflect our thinking and desires.

But the truth is that **the church is God-made** and **not** man-made. Jesus said, “I will build my church” (Mat. 16:18). This church was built on

Pentecost in Acts 2 and respects the sole authority of Christ (Mat. 28:18) and the preeminence of Christ alone (Col. 1:18). The church of God was “purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). According to the Bible, it **does** matter what we believe and practice. To accept as “doctrines the commandments of men” makes our worship vain (Mat. 15:9). God has written, “my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Neither *are* your ways my ways” (Isa. 55:8). The church does not belong to us to change it as we please to please ourselves, but the church belongs to God, and it must remain as He made it.

Another popular concept of the church is that it comprises all denominations. For these people, there are many churches—all equally acceptable. According to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, at least 33,000 Christian denominations exist in the United States. According to popular belief, all 33,000 would be considered just different representations of the church. But God states emphatically that this concept—though popular—is **false**. According to Ephesians 4:4, “*There is one body.*” That one body is the one church, as defined in Ephesians 1:22-23. Jesus built “my church” (Mat. 16:18)—**not** “my churches.” Jesus also prayed fervently for His disciples’ unity (oneness) (John 17:20-21). The presence of a multiplicity of churches claiming to be the church (or part of it) is in direct opposition to the truth. The con-

flicting, contradictory doctrines and practices of these religious groups conflict with the explicit Biblical instruction “that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Clearly, the church is not many, but **one**.

Ignorance of spiritual matters in our “enlightened age” is evident and inexcusable. God has revealed the truth, which can free us from sin (John 8:32). We can **know** it! The Word of God (truth, 17:17) “is profitable for doctrine” and provides that which is necessary that we “may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Copies of the Bible are abundant, but many are unwilling to study and obey it. They remain ignorant. To be saved, we must know the truth and obey it (1 Pet. 1:22). God will not excuse ignorance (Acts 17:30). Those who were saved in the First century were taught the truth (2:38) and were obedient to it (2:41) were added by the Lord to the church (2:47). We **must** do the same.

Paul’s declaration of the truth about God in Athens received mixed responses. Some ridiculed it, some desired to hear more, and others became obedient believers (17:32, 34). Those who hear the truth about the church will react in similar ways. What is your response?

*Aurora, CO*

## “We love because he first loved us—1 John 4:19”

*Ken Chumbley*

So, read the portable noticeboard outside of the local Roman Catholic Church. I do not know whether such was done deliberately, accidentally, or out of ignorance of what the Scripture actually reads, “We love him because he first loved us.” One little word, “him,” but it changes the whole meaning of the passage.

We are not suggesting that we are not to love others or that such love is motivated because He (God) first loved us, for clearly such is taught

within the pages of the Holy Writ. Let us note one Scripture from John in that same chapter, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (4:7-8).

However, in context, in 1 John 4:19, John is speaking about God’s love for us and the response that is found from the saints of God to His love for us. Let us look at the context,

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us (4:10-19).

Here, John, under inspiration, is speaking of the love that we have for God is motivated by the fact that God first loved us (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). It is then, as John also shows in the same chapter, an outgrowth of this love that we have for God that we love others,

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21).

This illustrates an essential point about Scripture. Words are important. They are there for a reason. When the inspired writers penned Scripture, their words were given for a reason. Remember,

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).

Our Lord told His disciples,

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you (Mat. 10:19-20).

They would be taught how and what to speak. That is “verbal inspiration.” The very words were inspired, not just the thoughts. Thus, when John wrote, “We love him, because he first loved us,” he meant what he wrote. The children of God love God because He first loved them.

*Deceased*

## Pass It On

When the Lord has given blessing by a tract or little book,  
Do not leave it idly lying in some soon forgotten nook;  
There are others to be watered and hungry souls to feed,  
So seek to spread the blessing that has reached you in your need.  
With its freshness yet upon you ere the first glad glow has gone,  
Let your heart look up for guidance that your hand may pass in on;  
And the one from you receiving, blessing gaining just like you,  
Can keep that blessing flowing and pass it on anew;  
And when “the day declares it,” and you hear the words,  
“Well done,”  
How sweet to know the Lord was pleased—you have read this, “Pass it on.”

*Author Unknown*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Karen Diamond                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Rheba Stancliff

Carla Burleson                      Aleacia Godwin

## Please Remember

March 17

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

March 31

Fifth Sunday Dinner; singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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# BEACON

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## Heaven and How to Miss It

*J. D. Tant*

The voice of mourning and the day of sorrow come to the happiest homes. But we have the promise of no sorrow in heaven. The fond mother and the devoted father often must say farewell to the child they love dearer than life, but in heaven, there is no disunion, no sad farewells.

Today, we hear the voice of joy and laughter, but sad and bitter tears are shed before the sun goes down. John tells us that God will wipe away all tears (Rev. 21:4). This life is filled with disappointments, but in heaven, we shall be like Him, and disappointments will be unknown.

In many homes, sickness is from the cradle to the grave, but no one is sick in our Father's home. Finally, death will come to claim all, but we are taught that no death will enter the city of our God, for it will be life eternal, and we shall serve Him forever and forever.

All these blessings held out to intelligent men and women should create a desire for heaven to be their home. If this is the home that God has promised to those who love Him, how is it possible for me to miss it?

### **By Indolence**

Many times, in the Bible, we read the warning to heed how we hear. Many hear with a lingering thought that someday they will accept the Lord, and all will be well. They put off the matter from time to time until death may come and find them unprepared.

### **By Neglect**

God calls, but, like the indolent, they neglect that call until it is too late.

### **By Morality**

Perhaps this is the greatest drawback to Christianity in the religious world. They hear it from every pulpit: "Just as good people in one church as in another." "Good and bad in all churches." "Many good people outside all the churches." Then, they conclude that as men are good, they will be saved. Yet, they forget that God never promised salvation to man because of his goodness. Jesus says, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Yet, the new birth is not considered by many in our time. People only look at a man's goodness. There are just as good people in heathen nations as in nations professing to follow Christ. Among infidels who do not believe the Bible, you often meet good, honest, and truthful men. If God saves a man because he is good, why not save infidels?

There are just as good men outside the Masonic Lodge as in it, but do Masons bury a man with Masonic honors because he is good or because he is a Mason? [editor's note: There is no authority for the Masonic Lodge and it is, thus, sinful.] It matters not how good a man is. The law does not force him to support a woman he is not married to.

There is a spiritual law that makes men and women Christians. It is called "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2). In obedience to this law, we become children of God. Nothing short of obedience will free us, regardless of the idea of goodness (6:17).

### **By Fear of Persecution**

We can miss heaven by fear of persecution. We learn that while Jesus was here in person, many believed in Him, but for fear of persecution, they would not confess Him because “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43).

### **By Procrastination**

Many of us are like Felix in Acts 24. We say, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25).

### **By Vain Religion**

Many religious people will never reach heaven. They worship all the time, but Jesus taught that it is a vain worship, because they teach “for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9).

### **By Deliberate Sin**

Jesus taught that certain people desire darkness instead of light because “their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

After looking at these things that can cause me to miss heaven, I ask, “How can I *gain* heaven?”

### **By Diligence**

We must give all diligence to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10).

### **By Remembering God In One’s Youth**

Timothy had known the Scriptures from youth, which were able to make him wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Solomon says, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Ecc. 12:1-2).

### **By Spirituality**

Religion is not always Christianity. The Spirit of God leads a child of God through the words the Spirit revealed (1 Cor. 2:9-13). Men and women should not be led by their feelings or the doctrines of men but by the Spirit-inspired Word of God, the Bible.

### **By Living As a Child of God**

Do not grow weary in well doing or persecutions (15:58). We are taught that no man lives a godly life in Christ without persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

### **Accept His Offer Now**

“Now *is* the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 3:7) is a warning from God. We can gain heaven only by following the Christian religion, and that is done by doing the following:

1. Hearing Christ in all things (Acts 3:19-21)
2. Believing with all our hearts that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31)
3. Repenting of our sins, as commanded by Christ (Luke 13:3; 24:27)
4. Confessing that Christ is God’s Son (Mat. 10:32; Rom. 10:10)
5. Being baptized for the remission of sins, as found in Acts 2:38
6. By enduring faithfully to the end (Rev. 2:10).

If these simple rules give us a home in heaven where neither sickness, sorrow, nor death will ever come, why should we not all strive to enter there?

*Deceased*

## **Fear Him!**

*Chuck Taylor*

What do you fear? Do the military threats from the Middle East cause you to pause and in trepidation? How about the financial collapse of our currency? What about health problems? Do they scare you? Fear is a natural response to those frightening things within our deepest thoughts.

Notice what God encourages regarding fear. “You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear

Him” (Deu. 13:4). He is the one to whom fear is due. That carries the idea that all else can be discarded. Psalm 25:14 says, “The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him.” It is important that we, as humans, be in reverence in the presence of the Lord. It is not necessary to fear things on this earth because God is in control of it all. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 10:28: “And do not fear those

who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” If God holds heaven and hell in His hands and then promises to take care of us through it all, then why worry in fear of what man can do? What man can do is limited to this world. God promises us rest beyond this world.

If we truly trust Him, then what is there to fear? In Psalm 145:20, God makes a promise, “The LORD preserves all who love Him.” When you think about it, how can we be in fear of war, financial woes, or health problems? Our God has control of it all!

Solomon had wisdom, wealth, and fame. After seeing life and what it brought to him, he had a conclusion which he had drawn. This he exclaimed in Ecclesiastes 12:13: “Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all.” Since God gave us life and sustains life, should we not trust that He will provide us with life after this life? Should we not fear Him and do His will, looking for the fulfillment of His promises? Do not fear the news broadcast, the boss, or the police. Fear God! Think about it.

*Copied*

## The Greatest Mathematical Miracle in the World

Moses and the people were in the desert, but what would he do with them? They had to be fed, and feeding two or three million people requires a lot of food. According to the Quartermaster General of the Army, it is reported that Moses would have to have 1,500 tons of food each day. Do you know that two freight trains, each a mile long, would be required to bring that much food daily?

Besides, you must remember they were out in the desert, and they would have to have firewood to use in cooking the food. This would take 4,000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day. And just think, they were forty years in transit. Oh yes, they would have to have water. If they only had enough to drink and wash a few dishes, it would take 11 million gallons each day and a freight train with tank cars 1,800 miles long just to bring water!

Then another thing: they had to cross the Red Sea in one night. If they went on a narrow path, double file, the line would be 800 miles long and require 35 days and nights. So, there had to be a space in the Red Sea three miles wide so they could walk 5,000 abreast to get over in one night. Then another problem: Each time they camped at the end of the day, a campground two-thirds the size of the state of Rhode Island was required, or a total of 750 square miles. Think of it! This space is just for nightly camping.

Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? I think not! You see, Moses believed in God. God took care of these things for him. Now, do you think God has any problem taking care of all your needs?

*Author Unknown*

### The Cross

It is a ladder to the skies,  
On which a mounting soul may rise.  
It is a signboard on the road  
To cheer man with his weary load.  
It signals to the human race  
That God in mercy offers grace.  
Dragged as a plowshare through the heart,  
New furrows cause the grain to start.  
It is a tree upon the hill,  
Whose fruit the hungry heart can fill,  
The cross is such a simple thing  
And yet it touches everything.  
We cannot feel that such a sign  
Is other than a power divine.  
It is a beacon ever lit,  
By one identified with it.

*Author Unknown*

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Remember in your prayers:

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Rheba Stancliff                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Carla Burleson

Aleacia Godwin

## Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family of Karen Diamond, who passed away on March 14. Please keep her family in your prayers.

## Please Remember

March 31

Fifth Sunday Dinner; singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

## Weekly Services

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Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

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# BEACON

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## “It Seems to Me I’ve Heard That Song Before”

*Gary W. Summers*

“It’s from an old familiar score, I know it well, that melody.” Harry James, born in Albany, Georgia, made this million-selling song popular. When he was eight, his family moved to Beaumont, Texas, the home of the world-famous athlete “Babe” Didrikson Zaharias. James and his orchestra, who began playing in 1939, continued for nearly five decades. “I’ve Heard That Song Before” (1942) was preceded by another million-seller, “You Made Me Love You,” in 1941. The concept of thinking that a tune seems familiar is one we all share; in fact, it is such a common experience that we use the phrase to refer to an old story—or perhaps an old excuse someone has revived. Some rationales never die; they just become recirculated.

The following information comes from pages 182-84 of the book *Long Legs and Short Breeches* by Earl Kimbrough.

It concerns F. B. Srygley (1859-1940), who wrote many articles for the *Gospel Advocate*. He highlighted the life of pioneer preacher John Taylor, who had contended for the faith (Jude 3) on certain occasions by debating various denominational spokesmen. Such discussions were common during this time. Srygley, however, received a curious reply from his second cousin. Although this relative praised the value of setting forth the biography of good men, he complained about the portion dealing with denominations. “Fussing at

the Baptists and Methodists does not get us anywhere. They are here and always will be.”

Has anyone heard this song before? It is an old one, and the melody is familiar. Some do not like it when we point out errors that various religious groups teach, yet truth never shines brighter than when contrasted with the darkness of error. Do people not understand that false doctrine leads to death? For that reason, Jesus taught His disciples to beware of the doctrine of the Sadducees and Pharisees (Mat. 16:12). Paul commanded Timothy to take heed to what he taught so he could save both himself and others (1 Tim. 4:16). Paul delivered to Satan those who taught error (1:19-20).

When one reads, “They are here and always will be,” one thinks of sin. Prostitution, adultery, fornication, drunkenness, covetousness, and pride will always be with us; does that mean they should not be opposed, either?

So, how did Srygley answer his cousin, Armstrong? He said, “The devil is here and always will be, but that does not prove that one should cease to fight him.” Srygley also showed the irony of his cousin telling him what he thought was an error on his part—but did not want him to expose the error of false teaching in others.

In fact, John Taylor had debated a Baptist preacher named Rawhoof. Taylor “was so logical and severe on Rawhoof that the debate closed at the end of the first day.” Then, the Baptists found a man named Alexander, and Taylor debated him.

One of those who became convinced of the truth in those debates was the father of F. B. Srygley. That's right. His very salvation may have resulted from John Taylor's debates.

Srygley wondered how many others owed Taylor gratitude for not growing up in religious error. Srygley said of his second cousin that if he were the only one endeavoring "to stop men from contending for the whole truth, I could more easily afford to allow it to pass, but this disposition is entirely too common." Srygley was hearing that song way too often. And how many times do we

hear that melody today? Some have the attitude, "We just should love everybody," which is true—but that includes warning those who abide in an error of what awaits them—not ignoring them. It is not **love** if we pretend everyone is all right. Jesus did not take that approach (Mat. 7:13-14; 21-27).

Everyone probably does not, but everyone ought to agree with Srygley's conclusion: "It is a pity that some brethren have no word of encouragement for a brave man who is fighting for the truth."

*Winter Park, FL*

## Demas Forsook Me

*Guy N. Woods*

The place was an underground prison not far from the Roman Forum. The time was shortly before the apostle's execution. The occasion was a missive to his "son in the gospel," the evangelist Timothy. Loneliness enveloped him like a shroud through the long, weary hours; his body was scarred and weakened from the brutal beatings he often received, he shivered from the chill of an Italian winter, and he longed for the comfort and consolation of a devoted and faithful friend. "Give diligence to come shortly unto me," Paul wrote Timothy (2 Tim. 4:9-10). Most of his fellow workers were on missions of importance, errands most likely suggested by Paul himself. Crescens had gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, and Tychicus to Ephesus. Only Luke was with him. An associate of earlier days, Demas, was neither there nor on a tour to preach the Gospel. "For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica" (4:10).

From this, we may gather that the apostate disciple was formerly of Thessalonica and to that city returned when his interest in the Lord and His cause waned. His defection was, therefore, even more blameworthy; he had forsaken Christ in forsaking Christ's faithful apostle, and he did so when Paul needed his help, encouragement, and pres-

ence most. The reason assigned is that he "loved this present world." By *world*, it means the things peculiar to the material existence rather than those of a spiritual and eternal nature. He loved its pleasures, allurements, attractions, and sins. All these he loved more than he loved the Lord.

Did Demas persist in this course until death and was lost eternally? We do not know. It is possible that he later came to himself, recognized the senselessness of his choice, and, in penitence, returned to the Lord. However, if so, there is no record of it. He passes out of history and from our sight as an apostate, a faithless friend, and a failure.

There is some reason to conclude that Demas lacked moral and physical courage and that the occasion of his fall was first fear and then love for

When you feel angry, you would do well to follow God's lead. Ask yourself, why? Think of the consequences of your usual course of action before you act. Then, choose to act in a way that will heal, not destroy. God made us capable of experiencing anger and choosing wisely how to express it (Eph. 4:26, 31-32).

*Author Unknown*

the world. In the context from which we first learn of Demas' defection, we read from the apostle's pen: "At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me" (4:16). Inasmuch, as the same word *forsook*, is used, it is possible that his faith weakened as his fear of consequences strengthened and that he did not identify with Paul because of cowardice. The courage of Paul in confronting physical and moral evil is in sharp contrast with the disposition of Demas, which ultimately led to apostasy.

Here, as often elsewhere in the history of men, this contrast is clearly observable. Often, the results are wholly different among members of the same family, having been subject to the same teaching and moral influences about them. Two sons, for example, grow up together, they hear the

same teaching, they are subject to the same patterns in life, they experience the same discipline, one of them to bring honor and joy, the other to break their parents' hearts and to die in shame and disgrace. Heredity is a significant aspect of our lives, and environmental considerations are important, but using these influences becomes the determining factor in life. Sailboat hobbyists understand the **same** breeze will make the vessel go in **opposite** directions, **depending on the set of the sail!** Everyone must ultimately direct his course in life; some from the most unfavorable circumstances triumph over them; others favored and fortunate in life, turn away from its highest ideals, and, like Demas, disappoint and fail those who loved them most.

*Deceased*

## Something to Think About

It is common for Christians today to become **discouraged** when facing hardships and **wonder** why God has not helped them. In Psalm 77, the writer seems to be facing this situation in dealing with some very distressing circumstances. It is uncertain what the troubling problem is, but clearly, he is in despair. He **knows** that God has helped him in the past and cannot understand why the Lord is not **helping** him now. In this Psalm, the writer expresses his feelings and frustrations frankly and forthrightly, pointing out that although he had prayed and wept throughout the night, he still did not receive help from God and **felt** Jehovah had deserted him. However, he travels a journey in the Psalm from **hopelessness** to **happiness**—from **despair** to **determination**. The Psalm tells us how we may obtain comfort and peace in times of distress. In the early part of the Psalm, the writer is full of doubt; it seems he is on the verge of completely losing his faith. Then, starting with verse 10, **his outlook begins to change**. What caused this? How did he deviate from his doubts? The change occurred when he began using his **mind** instead of simply his **emo-**

**tions**; he began to think and became determined. In verses 10-12, with resolve, he said "I will" three times. He **remembers** God's great works, which gave him confidence for the future. These remembrances and others, illustrating God's power and His care for His people, **invigorated** the writer's faith. Finally, he caught **hold** of himself and is no longer the **victim** of his feelings and emotions. We need to think about this in our time of discouragement.

### One More Thought

It is not uncommon for people to speak about how much better they feel after praying—they experience a **peaceful assurance**. For example (Psa. 3:4), after talking about people who said it does no good to pray, David responded, "I cried to the Lord with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill." He then cites what God has done and calls Him his shield, sustainer, and deliverer. Yes, God does hear His faithful, and we should not doubt that! Keep praying, brethren. He is listening.

*Author Unknown*

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If we work upon marble,  
it will perish;  
If we work upon brass,  
Time will efface it;  
If we rear temples,  
they will crumble into dust;  
But if we work upon immortal souls,  
If we imbue them with principles,  
With the just fear of God  
and love of fellowmen,  
We engrave on those tablets  
Something which will brighten  
all eternity!

*Author Unknown*

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Nancy Travis           | Bill & Peggy Crowe |
| Rheba Stancliff        | Nelda King         |
| Orville & Linda Worley | Carla Burleson     |
| Aleacia Godwin         |                    |

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# BEACON

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## “Not by Faith Only”

*Brad Green*

The inspired James writes, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not** by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). This is the only verse in God’s Word in which the phrase “faith only” occurs and it is preceded by the word *not*. It is, therefore, inexplicable to attempt to proclaim otherwise. Man is saved by faith (Acts 16:31), but **not** by faith only. Faith is necessary for one to be saved—“without faith *it is* impossible to please [God]” (Heb. 11:6). However, to teach that man is saved by “faith alone” means that there is absolutely nothing else that can save. The Bible stands opposed to any such teaching, as is readily evidenced. Consider the following.

**Man is saved by grace, but not by grace only.** God says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). If it is the case that man is saved by grace, then man cannot be saved by “faith only.” Concurrently, since man is saved by faith, man cannot be saved by “grace only.”

**Man is saved by the blood of Christ, but not by blood only (Rom. 5:8-9).** It is God’s love, mercy, and grace that motivated Him to give “his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Without Jesus’ voluntary sacrifice, and the blood which He shed, there would be no “remission of sins” (Mat. 26:28).

**Man is “saved by hope,” but not by hope only (Rom. 8:24).** Because of God’s grace and the blood

of Christ, man can have hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:2). That hope is necessary for salvation because it motivates us to endure “persecutions and tribulations” (2 The. 1:4), “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3), and to be faithful to God even if it hastens our death (Rev. 2:10).

**Man is saved by the Gospel, but not by the Gospel only.** The inspired Paul writes, “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1-2). The Gospel is necessary for salvation because in God’s Word is found God’s plan to make man righteous (Rom. 1:16-17). It is the Truth (John 17:17) by which one can be free (8:31-32). It is also the only instrument God provides today by which a man can attain soul-saving faith—“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

**Man is saved by works of obedience, but not by works only (Jam. 2:24).** Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). It is through works of obedience that man exhibits his love to Christ (John 14:15). Jesus says, “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” (Mat. 7:21). It is essential to distinguish between works devised by man (Eph. 2:9) which cannot save and works commanded by God which

are necessary for salvation. The New Testament is explicit about these God-ordained conditions.

- Man is saved by faith, which is “a work” (John 6:29).
- Man is saved by repentance (Acts 17:30).
- Man is saved by confessing the deity of Christ (Rom. 10:9-10).
- Man is saved by “water” in baptism (1 Pet. 3:20-21).

The New Testament reveals that man’s salvation is dependent upon many things and not any one

thing alone. Seeing that man is saved by faith, grace, the blood of Christ, hope, the Gospel, and works of obedience, it is impossible to honestly claim that man is saved by “faith only” or “grace alone.” It should be our desire to study **all** of what is necessary for salvation and, for our soul’s eternal sake, be obedient to what God says. Let us include all of what God includes regarding salvation and leave nothing He commands undone (cf. Mat. 16:19).

*Lenoir City, TN*

## The Significance of Small Things

“Success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in and day out.”

After the Hebrew people had spent seventy years in Babylonian captivity (c. 606–536 BC), according to the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11), some 50,000 began a migration homeward to Canaan. Their leader was Zerubbabel, a prince of Judah. Haggai and Zachariah were contemporary prophets at this time. Haggai’s mission was to encourage the Israelites to rebuild the sacred temple in Jerusalem that the Chaldeans had destroyed in 586 BC. Zachariah’s prophetic task was to invigorate the spiritual lives of his Hebrew kinsmen. In a series of eight symbolic “visions,” the prophet brought his burning message to a listless people who had been remiss in divine responsibility.

In the fifth of these “visions,” Zechariah sought support for Zerubbabel’s effort to complete the work on the temple (an effort which had fallen on hard times for the sixteen previous years). Some (possibly a small group) complained that the work was too difficult for them or that the project was insignificant compared to the original temple (cf. Ezra 3:12-13). Hence, Zechariah rebuked his people for having “despised the day of small things” (Zec. 4:10). The prophet reminded the discouraged Hebrews that it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my [Jehovah’s] Spirit” that great things may be accomplished

(4:6). Bible history is punctuated with examples of how the Lord’s people, with divine help, have achieved the greatest of goals with but *tiny* means at their disposal.

- Jochebed saved the life of her baby (Moses) and thus delivered a nation of slaves using a small basket of woven reeds (Exo. 2:3). Later, her illustrious son, using a simple rod, would part the waters of the Red Sea (14:16ff), allowing the Israelites to cross over into Sinai en route to Canaan.

- When Israel was about to enter the promised land, spies were sent to survey the hostile territory. Rahab, a woman of faith, received the spies and hid them. Using a small cord, she assisted their escape, thus facilitating that preparatory phase of the unfolding plan of redemption (Jos. 2:15; cf. Heb. 11:31; Jam. 2:25).

- In the days of the “judges,” Samson, by wielding the mere jawbone of a dead donkey, saved his people from the hostile Philistines (Jud. 15:14ff).

- When rebel Jews threatened Paul’s life in Damascus, the apostle was delivered—not by powerful military intervention—but by a plaited basket in which he was lowered from an opening in the city wall (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor. 11:33).

One should never disdain the small because the Almighty frequently chooses such to accomplish great ends (cf. 12:9).

*Author Unknown*

# Three Views of Life

*Charles R. Brown*

In the parable of the good Samaritan, we find expressed three different views of material possessions, their acquisition, and use.

- The thief's philosophy: "What is yours is mine, and I will take it."
- The priest's and the Levite's: "What is mine is mine; I will keep it."
- The Samaritan's: "What is mine is the Lord's; I will share it with you."

Which of these is your philosophy of life?

*Deceased*

# The Dissatisfied Man

*F. F. Conley*

Have you ever known a dissatisfied man? If you have, then you know what I am going to write. What are some things that make up the dissatisfied man's character?

1. He is selfish. This man has never learned to be unselfish. He believes that people should do things for him. He has never learned to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus said, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

2. He thinks he knows more than anyone else. He is puffed up unless he is consulted about every situation that in any way involves him. This man has deceived himself into believing he knows more than those who have been in the church for several decades. This man finds fault with:

- a) The elders. They do not do things to please him. He believes that he could do far greater work than any of them.
- b) The song leader does not please him. His voice was too weak, too strong, too thin. He sings too much or too little.
- c) The preacher. He talks too long. He stays longer in one locality than he thinks he should. The preacher talks

too much about financial matters and worldliness in the church.

3. His is self-indulgent. He gives free course to his passions, desires, and inclinations. He does as it pleases him.

- a) He prays but little. When he does pray, he complains to the Lord about his brethren or his lot in life.
- b) He gives but little. Yet he thinks that everyone should listen to him when it comes to planning the work program.
- c) He stirs up strife among the church members and fosters dissatisfaction.

The dissatisfied man has never learned to give himself wholeheartedly to the work of the Lord. Because he has not lost himself in the work of the Lord, he finds places to criticize where there are none. He sees problems where there are none. He creates problems with his dissatisfied attitude.

The dissatisfied man is always absorbed in self. He is constantly craving attention. He is always unhappy. Nothing is just as it should be. The dissatisfied man is never happy, for happiness comes from thinking of others.

*Deceased*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Carla Burseson

Aleacia Godwin

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## Bellview Church of Christ

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Michael Hatcher  
Bill Busch

**Minister:** Tim Cozad



# BEACON

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## In What or Whom Do Ye Glory?

*Marvin L. Weir*

Three times in Jeremiah 9, God calls attention to the fact that His people refuse to glory in Him. Jehovah is the Creator and sustainer of life and should be the sole object of man's glory and honor. Let us now observe these three instances where God reminds His people of their negligence:

“And they bend their tongue, *as it were* their bow, for falsehood; and they are grown strong in the land, but not for truth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith Jehovah” (Jer. 9:3).

“Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith Jehovah” (9:6).

“[B]ut let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah” (9:24).

### What Some Glory In!

Three areas of worldly glory have a stranglehold on most people. Each area has the power to destroy one's soul easily. The **wise** encounter a great temptation to glory in their wisdom. Worldly wisdom is a most sought-after commodity, and rare is the person not adversely affected by such wisdom. God has stated, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath

not God made foolish the wisdom of the world” (1 Cor. 1:19-20)?

The **mighty** are tempted to glory in their might! When God's people of old demanded a king to be like the other nations, God permitted their request but with some restrictions. One restriction read, “Only he shall not multiply horses to himself” (Deu. 17:16). The warning against multiplying horses on that day references trusting in military might. God's people were to trust in Him—not themselves! How quickly can one be brought to his knees, who trusts in his own power! This is true of an individual or a nation.

The **rich** are tempted to glory in their riches! Jesus taught, “It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:25). Wealth is not inherently evil, but the “love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). It is trusting in wealth that is the downfall of many; one must not become high-minded or have his “hope set on the uncertainty of riches” (6:17). Riches can become one's idol, and in so doing, make God much less important than He might otherwise be. The bottom line is that “no flesh should glory before God” (1 Cor. 1:29).

### What We Should Glory In!

Jeremiah had it exactly right—“let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me” (Jer. 9:24). One can **know** God in only one way—through the revelation of

His Word. The Scriptures teach, “So belief *cometh* of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17). All other glorying shall one day be put to shame. The Corinthian brethren were reminded, “that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31).

Jeremiah gives three reasons for glorying in God:

**His Lovingkindness!** God has long exercised “lovingkindness” toward His people. He continues to do so even now (Jer. 9:24). God’s “lovingkindness” is “precious” and encourages people to “take refuge under the shadow of thy [His] wings” (Psa. 36:7). Jehovah’s great love is seen in the giving of His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Let us not take God’s longsuffering and kindness as tolerance for sin because He is “not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any

should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

**His Judgment!** The Psalmist declares, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne” (Psa. 97:2). God supports righteousness but opposes wickedness wherever it is found. We should glory in God’s judgment of sin and the sinner!

**His Righteousness!** Jehovah is the “righteous Father” (John 17:25). The Lord is the “righteous judge” (2 Tim. 4:8). **All** of God’s commandments are righteousness (Psa. 119:172). We glory in God by first seeking His kingdom and righteousness (cf. Mat. 6:33).

In what or whom do you glory? The salvation of your soul will depend on the answer to this question. Glorying in self or others will cause one to miss that “house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

*Blossom, TX*

## Trust in the Lord

*Charles Pogue*

In a powerful Psalm, David expressed the distress we all feel at times and gives us the encouragement that we need to endure:

Fret not thyself because of evildoers, Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed (Psa. 37:1-3).

No one who seeks to please God with every fiber of his being can miss how wicked the world about him is. As Paul described it in his day, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16). It is hard to live in a nation where God was once honored by the average person but has now decayed to the point that evil is exalted, and righteousness debased.

David knew in Psalm 37 how much the wicked detested the holy and that his despite for the just

led him to plan evil against him. “The wicked plot-teth against the just, And gnashed upon him with his teeth” (37:12). You and I are treated the same way by the wicked today.

The message of David in this Psalm, though, is “do not despair.” God is on the side of those that love Him. After those frightening words in verse 12, the Psalmist wrote, “The Lord shall laugh at him, For he seeth that his day is coming” (37:13). The wicked would be cut down like the grass; he would draw out his sword, but it would enter his own heart.

The wicked may seem to have the upper hand at times, but the righteous will prevail in the end. “The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: And their inheritance shall be forever” (37:18).

David reminds us that God orders the steps of a good man, and though he might occasionally

fall, he will not be cast down because the Lord will hold him up (37:23-24). On and on, the psalmist goes, rejoicing over the victory of the righteous and the judgment of his oppressor. He concludes this powerful Psalm by saying that the transgressors shall be destroyed together, but the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord (37:38-39).

All around us, it is evil, all the way from despising the public servants in blue, whose difficult job it is to uphold the law, to the unbelievable

wickedness now declaring that a baby is not a human being even after he is born until he reaches a certain age. It is not easy to deal emotionally with such situations. Still, we must not let it destroy our faith because, in the end, the wicked of our day, just like those of David's day, will be destroyed, and the righteous of every age will enjoy that eternal inheritance of which David spoke. Take heart, and trust in the Lord!

*Deceased*

## "The Way"

(Isaiah 35:1-8)

*Thomas A. Willess*

"The highway of holiness" was foretold of old,  
Through Isaiah the prophet; by the Spirit he was  
told.

"The Way" to heaven is a way that is strait,  
Which signifies the entrance is through a small  
gate.

Many men try to broaden the narrow way,  
But they'll receive their reward on Judgment Day.  
The Lord paved the way for man to live,  
And the authority to change it He did not give.

Oh, that all would come to know His will,  
And travel "The Lord's Way" up life's hill.  
"The Way" is not easy and free from care,  
But God wants to help us our burdens to bear.

His love was expressed on Calvary's tree,  
To pave the way of life for you and me.  
Saints have traveled this way before,  
On their way to that eternal shore.

The unclean shall not travel on this way,  
Nor shall the fool along it stray.  
Only the taught of God that received His light,  
Shall travel "The Way" to the heavenly flight.

This light is shed through God's Holy Word,  
Revealing the story of love, the most precious ever  
heard.

But men grope in darkness day after day,  
Trying to get to heaven by another way!!

"The Way" to heaven is as plain as your hand,  
So simply stated that a child can understand;  
Because God doesn't wish for any to be lost,  
As on life's sea we are tempest-tossed.

The Word of God is a beacon from above,  
To guide lost souls to that home of love.  
Darkness can not enter, neither can care,  
For it is only day and no tears over there.

Why would any travel any other way,  
Than the road that leads to eternal day?  
Sad but true that many will take,  
The way that leads to the fiery lake.

Let us look to our souls that we may not miss,  
The highway of holiness to eternal bliss.  
If we walk in "The Way" and truly care,  
We'll have our friends on their way there.

Won't it be great to rest in that land,  
Being prepared by His omnipotent hand!!  
Let us travel "The Way" and pass the test,  
That we might all enter that eternal rest.

*Deceased*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
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| Rheba Stancliff        | Nelda King         |
| Orville & Linda Worley | Carla Burleson     |
| Aleacia Godwin         | Pam Busch          |
| Paul Brantley          |                    |

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## Paragraph Sermons

*E. M. Borden*

Selfishness is one of the common sins of this day. When we see ourselves drifting in that direction, we should fight against it. Let us curb the nature that will lead us to selfishness.

When people do not desire to obey the truth, they sometimes offer to compromise and obey a part of the truth. There is a choice of two sides—right and wrong—and no middle ground exists. That which is supposed to be a compromise is wrong. If a man is right, let him stand for it, even though he is in the minority. It is better to be right and stand alone than to be wrong and be popular. If what we stand for is worthwhile, why should we step aside to please someone who does not want the truth? Let us be firm and stand for the truth.

The Jews gave a tenth of their income for a certain purpose, but that was not all they gave. The Jews were not all faithful. Some Christians are not faithful. “Will a man rob God?” Then He said, “Ye have robbed me.” “How have we robbed thee?” we might ask. The answer comes: “In tithes and offerings” (Mal. 3:8). We are commanded to give as we have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2). Are we obedient children? The Jews gave a tenth and more than a tenth. Did the Jews give more than they were prospered? Is it possible for us to give more than we should? Let us think on these things.

Every person who has obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine is a member of the church of Christ, the one you read about in the New Tes-

tament (Rom. 6:17). The Lord added him to the church (Acts 2:47). All who have obeyed the Gospel are not true to the Lord, for many have turned away. Some have gone so far away that they have forgotten they were purged from past offenses. Some have laid aside the slogan: “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; and where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” Some have added things that are not in harmony with the Bible. The Lord asks the wanderers to return and drink from the great spiritual fountain again.

The first congregation of the Christian dispensation was the one in Jerusalem. It was also the beginning of the kingdom of Christ on earth. This congregation had existed only a short time when persecution began. The disciples were scattered. Wherever they went, they told the story of the church of Christ. They told of the resurrection of Christ. Before the first century had ended, the message of the Messiah had gone into the world. The first sermon in the Christian dispensation was delivered by Peter on the day of Pentecost when three thousand people accepted the truth. Five thousand came later. The apostles preached to them and baptized them, but the Lord added them to the church (Acts 2:47). I can preach and baptize, but the Lord still does the adding.

The Lord has commanded us to be baptized in water. We cannot substitute sprinkling for baptism and be pleasing to the Lord. Water is the element.

Nothing else will do. The Lord has allowed us liberty regarding where we are baptized, just so there is enough water to perform the act. The ocean is not too large, and a pond of water is not too small if it is large enough to baptize a person in the likeness of the burial of Christ. The Lord has set the day on which we are to commemorate the death of Christ or His burial and resurrection. Baptism pictures His burial and resurrection, and when we eat the Lord's Supper, we picture His body and blood. We are allowed to choose the place for our convenience. The unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine must be used. In that, we have no choice. The Lord has told us the kind of music we should

have in the church, so we have no choice about that. In the music department, we teach, admonish, and give thanks (Eph. 5:19). Instrumental music cannot do that; therefore, we find no place for it.

*Deceased*

Wise *men* lay up knowledge:  
But the mouth of the foolish *is*  
near destruction (Pro. 10:14).

## Why Should You Attend Church Services?

Why should Christians attend the worship services of the local church? How important are worship, Bible study, teaching, and learning? What influence does our example have on others, and what can we learn from Jesus and His apostles? What can we learn from Bible teaching about priorities and devotion to serving God?

Many New Testament passages describe local congregations of God's people conducting regular meetings to worship God and study His Word (Acts 20:7; 11:26; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 14:1-40). These meetings are intended to provide blessings and opportunities that benefit those who attend. Occasional emergencies may make it necessary for us to miss, but we should **diligently** try to avoid such hindrances so we can be present, if possible. There are many reasons we need to attend all services, but let us look at just one essential reason you should attend all local church meetings.

### To Worship and Praise God

God wants Christians to worship Him. God seeks worshipers to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). He has commanded five activities by which we ought to praise Him: prayer, singing, Bible study, the Lord's Supper, and giving

(Acts 2:42; 20:7; 11:26; 1 Cor. 14:15; 16:2; 11:17-34; Eph. 5:19). All God's servants ought to praise and worship Him (Rev. 19:5). God intended, not just for some of His people to worship Him, but all of them (Rom. 15:9-11).

The Bible **clearly** teaches that Christians should attend church meetings to accomplish these purposes (Acts 11:26; 20:7; Heb. 10:23-25; 1 Cor. 14:1-40; 11:17-34). Some of these activities (prayer, singing, and Bible study) should also be done at home (Acts 17:11; 16:25; Jam. 5:13; Deu. 6:6-9; Psa. 1:2; 1 The. 5:17). But the Scriptures previously listed show that church meetings are also essential. Private worship is not enough, and public worship is not enough. Both are required.

### Christians Should Desire to Worship God

We should attend worship assemblies because God wants us to and because **we** want to. The greatest command is to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Mat. 22:37-38). We should love God above all because He sent His only begotten Son to die to save us from eternal torment and offer us eternal life (Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:8-10,19; John 3:16).

Some think, "I don't have to come every time." But why would someone who **loves** God want to

do something else instead? If your child or loved one were sick or hurt, would you say, “You can’t prove I have to help them”? If you **love** them, do you not want to help them? So, when you **love** God, you will **want** to worship Him. Failure to glorify God is ingratitude, which is the first step into apostasy (Rom. 1:21). A person who **could attend** but simply chooses not to do so simply shows a **lack of love** and gratitude for what God has done. It is a sign of serious spiritual disease (2 Tim. 3:2). When people truly **appreciate** God’s love, they want to express their thankfulness in praise and worship (Heb. 13:15; see also Col. 4:2; Psa. 100:4; Eph. 1:5-6). God has chosen us to be

His special people so that we might proclaim His praises (1 Pet. 2:9).

Giving honor and glory to God is the **purpose** of our salvation (Psa. 1:2; 119:97-99; 122:1). Righteous men **desire** to meditate on God’s law because they delight in it and love it (Jos. 1:8). They honestly say, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” We will all have this **attitude** when we truly learn to love and appreciate God and His Word. **Is this your attitude?** Acceptable worship must come from a proper attitude. People with this attitude will **not** try to avoid worship; they will **want to** go at every opportunity the church provides.

*Author Unknown*

## They Lost the Book An Irregular Ode to “Someone Else”

*H. L. Gradowith*

THEY lost the Book, those foolish Jews,  
THEY failed to mind their “p’s” and “q’s”;  
THEY chose darkness instead of Light,  
THEY chose the wrong over the right;  
THEY lost the Book that was His Voice:  
Surely, we’d not make such a choice...

The Weeping Prophet spoke His Word,  
He, Who was their Savior and Lord;  
A dying man to dying men:  
‘Come unto Him, Turn from your sin...’  
From early morn to late at night:  
‘Turn from the darkness to the Light!’

THEY lost the Book, those foolish Jews,  
THEY failed to mind their “p’s” and “q’s”;  
THEY chose darkness instead of Light,  
THEY chose the wrong over the right;  
THEY lost the Book that was His Voice:  
Surely, we’d not make such a choice...

Into a pit they cast him down...  
Left him for dead...but he was found!  
But even then, he would not quit:  
He knew his job and stuck to it!

From early morn to late at night:  
‘Turn from the darkness to the Light!’

THEY lost the Book, those foolish Jews,  
THEY failed to mind their “p’s” and “q’s”;  
THEY chose darkness instead of Light,  
THEY chose the wrong over the right;  
THEY lost the Book that was His Voice:  
Surely, we’d not make such a choice...

He never turned to left or right,  
A ‘burning fire’ his inner light!  
He held before THEM God’s own Word:  
Yet THEY, his preaching, just ignored...  
From early morn to late at night:  
‘Turn from the darkness to the Light!’

THEY lost the Book, those foolish Jews,  
THEY failed to mind their “p’s” and “q’s”;  
THEY chose darkness instead of Light,  
THEY chose the wrong over the right;  
THEY lost the Book that was His Voice:  
Surely, we’d not make such a choice...

*Deceased*

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Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Aleacia Godwin

Paul Brantley

Pam Busch

## Please Remember

April 21

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

## Weekly Services

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Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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# BEACON

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April 22, 2024

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850-455-7595

## The Word Divided

*Foy E. Wallace, Jr.*

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The divine injunction couched in the inspired aphorism, “Preach the word,” is commonly called “Paul’s charge to Timothy.” But, fundamental to this charge and certainly of equal importance is the admonition to divide the Word rightly. And prefatory to both is the command to study the Word. The charge to Timothy, then, is composed and delivered in three parts—study the Word, rightly divide the Word, and preach the Word. The solemn charge was not meant for Timothy only. We, too, should study to rightly divide the Word of God, prompted by the holy purpose enjoined “to show thyself approved unto God.”

### Handling the Word

The caution to rightly divide or handle aright the Word of God implies that it may be subjected to a wrong division or improper handling. Indeed, some men in the apostles’ day were charged with perverting the Gospel (Gal. 1:7), corrupting the Word (2 Cor. 2:17), making merchandise of the truth (2 Pet. 2:3), wresting the Scriptures (3:16), and of handling the Word of God deceitfully, in craftiness and dishonesty (2 Cor. 4:2). A perverted gospel cannot save. Jesus declared that the knowledge of truth, not the belief of error, makes men free (John 8:32). Though a perverted gospel may have all the elements of the true Gospel, its power to save is lost in perversion. Bread is

God’s power to quell hunger, but the admixture of a poisonous element—a spoonful of arsenic, for instance—in a loaf of bread would destroy its power.

Water is God’s power to quench the thirst, but the admixture of salt will destroy the quenching power of water. The Gospel is God’s power to save the soul, but its admixture with error—the doctrines and commandments of men, when heard and believed—destroys its saving power. Hence, Paul’s alarm concerning the perverters of the Word in Galatia:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

Error preached, heard, and believed cannot result in the truth obeyed. No man can accidentally obey God. The truth preached, believed, and obeyed makes a Christian. Nothing else does. How important, therefore, is the Word of God, and how careful men should be in handling it!

### Rightly Divide the Word

In the third chapter of Galatians, the right division of the Word is based on the three grand divisions of the Bible, commonly called the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations, but Scripturally known as the promises, the law, and the Gospel. The promises were to Abraham. The law came 430 years after, through Moses, and was

“added because of transgression” until Christ should come. The law was not added to the promise God made to Abraham—it “came in besides”—that is, between the promise and its fulfillment. The promise was that Christ, the seed of Abraham, should come, and through him, all nations be blessed (Gal. 3:8-14, 17, 19). Since the law was only added until the seed should come, “which is Christ” (3:16), it follows that the law automatically ended with the coming of Christ. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (3:2-25). Upon this plain and proper division of the Word, Paul affirms the abrogation of the law in numerous references. We are not under the law (Rom. 6:14); we are dead to the law and delivered from it (7:6); Christ is the end of the law (10:4); and Christians are not to be judged by the law (Col. 2:14-16). It is in obedience to the Gospel, therefore, that men are saved today. The Acts of the Apostles—their preaching under the commission of Christ—plainly reveal the terms of our salvation.

#### Preach the Word

We do not wonder that Paul’s final charge to Timothy from prison environs was to “preach the word.” But if it is a dead thing, as theology and the creeds teach, and conversion is wrought in some weird and mystic manner, why preach it? God’s Word is not dead. It is the living Word.

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, pierc-

ing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

It is the powerful Word. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). It is the saving Word. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). The Gospel is God’s power to save and God’s power to condemn.

Preach the Word!

*Deceased*

## Possessions of Jesus

In the lifetime of Jesus, we do not hear Him speak of “my house,” “my land,” “my farm,” “my books,” “my business,” “my money.” We do, however, hear Him speak of “my Father” (Mat. 10:33), “my friends” (John 15:14), “my disciples” (15:8), “my church” (Mat. 16:18), “my name” (18:20), “my words” (Mark 8:38), “my sheep” (John 10:27) “my joy” (17:13). It is significant that our example thought more of spiritual possessions than of material ones.

*Author Unknown*

## Genuine Help

*Johnny Ramsey*

The eight verses of Psalm 124 tell us of heaven’s powerful help to faithful children of God. The last verse is a classic reminder of the friendship and fellowship the Lord provides: “Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.” Since Christians are the Israel of God today (Gal. 6:16), we have divine assistance in all that we do in this earthly sojourn that agrees with heavenly

mandates. And as Romans 8:31 relates, when Jehovah is for us, all the world cannot overwhelm us. The hope Christians cherish is an anchor for our souls amid a turbulent world (Heb. 6). An old song by Priscilla Owens states:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul  
Steadfast and sure while the billow roll,  
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,  
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love.

When the wrath of men is kindled against the saints, the psalmist declares, “If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side, When men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick” (Psa. 124:2-3). When it looks certain that the flood tide of sin and shame will stamp out righteousness, our souls will triumph in the shining light of a righteous faith. In other words, we can count on the Master when the storm clouds are dark and threatening. Human friendship often fails at the most strategic moment. One humorist glibly wrote the slogan for a laundry, “We do not tear your clothes with machinery, we do it carefully by hand.” It is a fact that the world’s machinery gets our lives snarled up from time to time. But we can always count on God to do only those things that are for our eternal good. Even good friends in this mundane sphere often mean well but do not have the power or ability to assist us in our hour of need.

Blessed *be* the LORD, Who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: The snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth (Psa. 124:6-8).

In a British newspaper, the following headline highlighted a story: “Woman Hurt While Cooking Her Husband’s Dinner in a Horrible Manner.” When the Lord “sets the table” for our lives, it is always balanced and spiritually strengthening! In Psalm 124:5-8, we have vivid imagery:

Then the proud waters Had gone over our soul.  
Blessed *be* the LORD, Who hath not given us *as*

a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: The snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

When the snares and traps of the devil lurk before us, we have a perfect Guide to see us through the maze of iniquity. The psalmist emphatically proclaims, “The snare is broken, and we are escaped.” Indeed, our sustenance, comfort, and victory are in the God of heaven and earth.

Our spiritual insurance policy is in force in this life and in the world to come (Mark 10:30). Tennyson beautifully wrote:

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell, When  
I embark;  
For tho’ from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have cross’d the bar.

The comfort of heaven’s precepts caused the psalmist to write, “Thy statutes have been my songs In the house of my pilgrimage” (Psa. 119:54). What a balm for weary souls is the everlasting love of God!

#### Works Cited

- Owens, Priscilla J. “We Have an Anchor.” Timeless Truths. <[https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/We\\_Have\\_an\\_Anchor/](https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/We_Have_an_Anchor/)>.  
Tennyson, Alfred Lord. “Crossing the Bar.” Poets.org. <<https://poets.org/poem/crossing-bar>>.

*Deceased*

“For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17). This is a very serious question for those who have been guilty of willful neglect. Is it not dangerous to refuse to obey the commandments of the Lord? “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (4:18). We must not only become Christians, but we must be faithful unto death if we expect to receive a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

*E. M. Borden—Deceased*

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## You Should Know That Baptism Requires

Water (Acts 10:47).

Much water (John 3:23).

Going to the water (Acts 8:36; Mat. 3:5-6).

Going into the water (Acts 8:38).

Burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

Planting (Rom. 6:5).

Washing (Acts 22:16).

Birth (John 3:5).

Coming out of the water (Acts 8:39).

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## The Sin of Adding to the Word of God

*Cled E. Wallace*

The Word of God represents the wisdom of God, the power of God, and the love of God. God has revealed His will to man in the Bible. He has fully outlined and described man's duty to God and his fellow man. No one knows the relationship that man sustains with God as God Himself knows it. To change His Word is to change God's wisdom, will, and power. No sin has been condemned with more frequency and clearness than the sin of changing the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and to change the Word of God is to destroy the testimony of God upon which faith is founded. It is a high crime against God for man to change His Word.

There are different ways man sins in changing the Word of God. A man may add to the Word of God, take from it, and make substitutions of man's wisdom for it. Jehovah gave the warning through Moses to His people and said:

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you (Deu. 4:2).

Again, He said:

What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (12:32).

Again, the Holy Spirit said, through John:

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if

any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

These Scriptures show that man could add to and take from the Word of God. They also teach that it is a fearful sin for man to change the Word of God. The prophet Isaiah warned the people:

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (Isa. 5:20-21).

This shows that man could make substitutions and put evil for good and good for evil, and the wisdom of man for the wisdom of God. Again, the Holy Spirit condemned the sin of substituting something else for the Word of God by saying:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema (Gal. 1:8).

Some think that the quotation from Revelation applies only to that book of the Bible. Indeed, it directly references that book, but it is equally true of all God has said. No one would claim that God has forbidden men to add to or take from the book of Revelation but permits him to add to and take from other books of the Bible. Man is not allowed to touch with profane hands the Word of God and change or modify it in any way. The whole tenor of

the teachings of Jesus warns men against changing the Word of God.

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 who is in heaven (Mat. 7:21).

This means that one cannot reject the Word of God and enter heaven and one cannot please God except by doing the will of God. The will of God stands between everyone and heaven. This will cannot be set aside; it cannot be added to nor taken from. The will of God must be obeyed by all who would journey the narrow way. Jesus warned the people of that generation and all generations when He said:

Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching *as their* doctrines the precepts of men (15:7-9).

Again, Jesus asked the question: “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?” (15:3). This means that all worship is vain, which adds to, takes from, or substitutes anything for the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit said, through Paul:

If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; *but are* not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh (Col. 2:20-23).

This warns us against all the devices and institutions of men, against all changes and modifications of the Word of God. The great end of the Bible is to teach man to give up his ways, wisdom, and will and accept and follow the Will of God. God’s commandments express God’s will and direct man in his worship in the way and wisdom of Jehovah. The teachings of Jehovah all down through the different dispensations have been to bring man under subjection to the will of God and let Jehovah direct his every step in the work and worship of God. When man can learn to love the way of Jehovah, he has learned the way of life; when he shall have learned to follow in humility and reverence the Word of God, he has learned the way of life everlasting.

*Deceased*

## Questions & Answers

*Guy N. Woods*

### **“When, and by whom, was the canon of the Old Testament settled?”**

God directly delivered to Moses the law, commandments, and statutes of Israel (Deu. 5:1ff). When Moses had committed all these matters to writing, this ancient scroll was placed in the ark of the covenant beside that historical document. Conservative scholars think that the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—were all deposited there. At any rate, they are equally inspired. About 547 B.C., Ezra collected and arranged the Old Testament books of his day in harmony with the catalog

acceptable to the prophets, and the canon was complete long before our Lord came to the earth.

### **“On what grounds may we accept the Old Testament canon as accurate and complete?”**

Again and again, our Lord referred to them as being divine and authoritative (John 5:39; 10:35). He recognized and used the division of long prevailing: the law, the prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:44). An analysis also mentioned by the Jewish historian, Josephus, indicating that this was a common and acceptable arrangement. The apostles and other New Testament writers often

cited the Old Testament Scriptures, and they did so in a manner that indicated that they regarded them as having divine origin and authority. Even as our Lord Jesus severely rebuked the Jews for disregarding the Old Testament, He never hinted that they had changed or corrupted the text because they would have regarded such an attempt as a cardinal sin. Most Old Testament books are cited directly or indirectly in the New Testament. The Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek about 285 B.C., and this translation—the Septuagint—contains every book in our Old Testament, thus evidencing the fact that *three hun-*

*dred years* before our Lord came to the earth, the Old Testament books in our Bibles were regarded as canonical. Josephus and many other ancient writers bear testimony to this fact. No event in the ancient past, and no document descriptive of such, can remotely equal the evidence obtained regarding the truth of the events set out in the sacred writings. How very thankful we should be that God, in His goodness, has not left us in doubt regarding these matters so essential to our happiness and well-being here and our salvation hereafter!

*Deceased*

## As Dangerous as Playing Baseball with a Hand Grenade

*Gayle Oler*

God is not the product of religion. Religion is the product of God. It is not for us to figure out a God to please us, but to figure ourselves out to please God.

Instead of a man seeking the church of his choice, it is required that we seek the church of **God's** choice. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Mat. 6:33).

The idea of people following their own choice and joining the church of their preference is as dangerous as playing baseball with a hand grenade.

Yea, they have chosen their own ways, And their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, And will bring their fears upon them; Because when I called, none did answer; When I spake, they did not hear: But they did evil before mine eyes, And chose *that* in which I delighted not (Isa. 66:3-4).

It is pure folly to take a name of your own pleasing and become known and identified by it in religion when you cannot find one person in the church of Christ that name in the New Testament.

It is a fatal blunder to join some church that you cannot read about in the New Testament. If you can read of the denomination to which you belong, where is the passage? What chapter and

verse? If you think it is in the Book, do not stop until you find it, or get your preacher to show you where it is. If you cannot find it, then it is that of which God says, "I delighted not."

How are you going to know what to look for in the Book? Here are some points of identification for which to check:

1. Can you find its name in the New Testament?
2. Can you read about its various organizations in the New Testament?
3. Can you find all the points of worship specified in the New Testament church, including instrumental music?
4. Can you find New Testament Christians wearing the denominational name you are wearing?
5. Can you find the doctrine of "salvation by faith only," separate from obedience to the will of God, taught in the Bible like it is taught in your church if you belong to one that so teaches?

If you cannot find every one of the identifying marks of the New Testament church in your religious organization, then you are not in the church of God's choice.

*Deceased*

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Volumes have been written to diminish the damage worry causes. A man may find more things to worry about, but Jesus alone holds the secret to beat worry. Jesus said that to neutralize stress, one must keep clear spiritual priorities (Mat. 6:33). The Christian is entitled to place his trust in God. Unlike the rest of creation, God gives the faithful disciple the benefits of His protection (6:26). Let God have priority over every problem, and one can live without being crushed by worry.

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## Christ Now Reigns on His Throne

*Flavil H. Nichols*

The prophet Zechariah foretold that Jesus “shall sit and rule upon his throne” (Zec. 6:13). Notice that this is to be “upon **His** throne”—not upon “his **Father’s** throne.” Now, couple with this text the following declaration from Hebrews: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God” (Heb. 4:14). Upon these facts, note this syllogism:

*Major Premise:* Christ is priest now (Heb. 4:14 says so).

*Minor Premise:* But He shall be priest upon His throne (Zec. 6:13 declares this).

*Conclusion:* Therefore, He is on His throne **now!**—**His** throne, not the Father’s.

Lest you think this is based on a misunderstanding of Hebrews 4:14, read again from the same Epistle: “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (8:1). No misunderstanding such plain language!

*Major Premise:* Christ is priest on His throne (Zec. 6:13).

*Minor Premise:* But He is priest in heaven (Heb. 8:1).

*Conclusion:* Therefore, His throne is heaven—not in Jerusalem, nor anywhere else on earth.

Read again from Hebrews: “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law” (8:4). This clearly affirms that if He were on earth, He

should not be a priest at all! Surely you believe this Bible truth.

*Major Premise:* He shall be a priest upon His throne (Zec. 6:13).

*Minor Premise:* If He were on earth, He should not be a priest at all (Heb. 8:4).

*Conclusion:* Therefore, **His throne** can’t possibly be on earth.

Christ is now on His throne, as we have seen. But it is also called “David’s throne.” On the Pentecost of Acts 2, Peter quoted from David (Psa. 16:8-11), he commented as follows:

brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses (Acts 2:29-32).

Inspiration connects this prophecy’s fulfillment with Christ’s **resurrection and ascension**—not His second coming! Hear the inspired apostle Peter as he continues,

Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto

my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet. Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified (2:33-36—ASV).

The reign of Christ began when He began to sit on David's throne after His resurrection and ascen-

sion. David's throne was (past tense) on earth; now it is in heaven. It was transferred from earth to heaven and transformed from temporal to spiritual. The reign of Christ on it is a spiritual reign, not an earthly, material reign.

*Deceased*

## Going Around in Circles

*Bob Howton*

When I was about ten or twelve, my family and I lived in a sharecropper's house nestled way back on the edge of a big woods. A long lane ran from the main road, past our house, and down to the barn. My brothers and I often played in the lane after we got home from school and did our assigned chores.

One of our favorite games was letting one of us curl up inside a big truck tire and allowing the others to roll us all over the place. We swapped out so everyone would get a shot at turning upside down, right side up, around, and around until we were "swimmy-headed." It reminds me of what one can see today in our "religious" society.

There are multitudes who are being turned inside out, upside down, and coerced (even forced at times) into going the way some *Reverend* says they should go. Like us kids, however, these folks are surely moving in some direction, but they have not the slightest idea where they will end up.

The endless tirade of emotional pressure and the desire to be like everybody else often finds them "swimmy-headed," like we were. For the most part, their destiny, like ours, rests in the hands of the one rolling the tire or the one who is ranting from the pulpit. The one being *rolled* usually has very little say as to what direction the tire, or the tirade, will take and even less input on where the tire or the tirade will deposit them.

Now get serious! Speaking of Deity, The Bible says, "Holy and Reverend *is* his name" (Psa. 111:9). But disregarding the Bible for his title, the *Rev-*

*erend* says, "There's nothing in a name," as related to the name of a religious body. The Bible says, however, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The *Reverend* says, "Ask the Lord Jesus to come into your heart and save you." The Lord Jesus, however, says, "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28). It sounds like someone is putting the buggy out in front of the mule, doesn't it? (Someone has things all mixed up, but it certainly is not the Bible!)

The *Reverend* says, "We're all on different roads to the same Heaven. Thank God for diversity!" The Bible, however, says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12). The patriarch, Jeremiah, said, "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *It is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

We are in a society filled with people who have no concern for anything or anyone who cannot serve or please them. Brother E. C. McKenzie, in his book *14,000 Quips and Quotes*, cites a cynic in New Jersey who asked, "If science is so smart, why can't it discover a disease which can only be cured by smoking and drinking?" The apparent humor is lost as we soberly admit that evil thinking can only create evil people. How very sad!

*Deceased*

# Holding Fast

*Bob Wear*

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). Obviously, this is essential instruction, but in some situations, it becomes challenging to obey. Success requires a complete knowledge of God’s Word and great respect for it. Otherwise, there is no way to do the testing.

This is not something that someone else can do for us because it is, first and last, a personal obligation with personal loss or gain. When it is done, it is often a lonely action and may bring much unjustified and unkind criticism. Of course, the wiser we are, the better we can handle the initial action and the immediate consequences. God will be pleased if we do as He teaches. If we fail, God will be displeased.

We must be ready and willing to uphold elders and others abiding by this instruction during events. We must be thankful for such persons and encourage them in every way possible. This is an action that will help maintain God’s revealed truth as the approved standard for worship and service.

Because of the many perverse influences at work, the instruction, “prove all things; hold fast that which is good,” becomes a constant and continuing necessity. Much is being taught and practiced as if God had never given standards and guidelines for us to follow. Some make the situation worse by assuming that there are no fixed laws but that everything is no more than human interpretations. All this and related faulty notions are designed to make it appear that there is no need for testing everything and no way to do so.

Much of the difficulty is found in the unwillingness to accept the responsibility that God places upon people. Many assume a life posture in which they convince themselves they can shift the responsibility back to God. The next faulty step is in the view that God will keep in good order that which He tells us to keep in good order. Nevertheless, our God-given responsibility is to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

Even in the areas of judgment and opinion, what some call traditionalism, serious problems are being created. Of course, we must not make laws where God has made none; however, if we have settled practices that meet all requirements of being used “decently and in order,” there is no reason to change just for the sake of changing. Oftentimes, such unjustified changing causes much confusion and unhappiness. In some instances, this unwise action creates a stumbling block.

From the standpoint of stability, peaceful association, and effectiveness, the ways of doing what we do must not be changed just for the sake of changing. When the ways of doing the God-ordained acts of worship and service are well-established, accepted, and understood by most participants, it is usually wise to hold to them.

With all the growing demand for change, some unchangeable elements of service to God are being caught up in the onward rush toward more humanistic folly. This is perhaps the greatest tragedy of present-day trends.

We should settle down and get busy with the work that God wants us to do.

*Deceased*

Anything cherished in the heart that is contrary to the will of God, let it seem ever so insignificant or be ever so deeply hidden, will cause us to fall before our enemies. Any conscious root of bitterness cherished toward another, any self-seeking and harsh judgments, any slackness in obeying the voice of the Lord, and any doubtful habits or surroundings will cripple, if not paralyze, our spiritual life.

*Author Unknown*

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## “Hold Fast the Profession of Our Faith”

*W. L. Totty*

Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering;...And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb. 10:23-25).

If our faith is not constant and unwavering, it is not acceptable to God.

The above Scripture, no doubt, refers to the meeting together of the saints on the first day of the week to worship God, to break bread, to hear the Word of the Lord, to sing His praises, to invoke His blessings, to express our thanksgiving, and to return a portion of our prosperity to the Lord's work.

In his commentary on Hebrews, Milligan says, “The Apostle refers here, not to apostasy from the Church, as some allege, but simply to the neglect of public and social worship” (283). However, forsaking the assembling and neglecting to be constant in our worship can lead to apostasy because the apostle continued:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,... Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him (Heb. 10:26, 38).

We know that the early church met together upon the first day of the week to break bread as a memorial to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, for we read in Acts 20:7:

And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Undoubtedly, it is the same type of meeting the Hebrews' writer told us not to forsake. We are not living in accord with the Scriptures if we meet only occasionally, for in doing so, we are forsaking the assembly often.

Excuses were readily made in the days of Christ for not receiving His teaching. In one of His parables, Christ taught a lesson on the evils of making excuses:

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come (Luke 14:16-20).

Of course, Christ's parable did not directly refer to our assembling to worship in the church, for the church had not been established at that time. Still, He taught a lesson about making excuses for not doing God's will, and that parable extends to us today, who are in the kingdom when we are

prone to excuse ourselves from keeping His command to assemble upon the first day of the week.

Such excuses as Christ gave in His parable are sometimes heard today from members of God's church. Maybe a man, who is a member of the kingdom of God, does not regularly attend the worship and uses his wife as an excuse, or a woman sometimes uses her husband as an excuse. But, Jesus said:

If any *man* come to me, and hate not [that is, hate not by comparison—WLT] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26).

Matthew expresses it this way:

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Mat. 10:37).

Therefore, we are not justified in making excuses.

What one's wife or son or daughter does or fails to do will not be charged to one's account if that one has faithfully kept all God's commandments. Everyone will be judged when Christ comes, not as a family unit. Only by that which I have done will I be judged. Therefore, we cannot use our fam-

If you know of a skeleton hidden away  
In a closet—guarded and kept from the day—  
In the dark; whose showing, whose sudden  
display  
Might cause grief and anguish and lifelong  
dismay,  
It's a pretty good plan to forget it.

If you know of a thing that would lessen the  
joy  
Of a man or of a woman, a girl or a boy,  
That would wipe out a smile or the least way  
annoy  
A fellow, or cause any gladness to cloy,  
It's a pretty good plan to forget it.

*Author Unknown*

ilies as excuses for not worshiping the Lord acceptably. We must be baptized into Christ individually. One cannot do that for another. We must live the Christian life individually. In all our worship and work in the kingdom of God, we must put God first no matter what the desire of our wife or husband, father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister, might be, or we cannot be a disciple of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews said it was the manner of some to forsake the assembling then, just as it is in our day also. Many people have no justifiable reason to forsake the assembling and to forsake remembering the Lord's death till He comes again by eating the Lord's supper every first day of the week. Also, many who assemble fail to have the suffering and resurrection of Christ in mind when eating the Lord's supper. In doing so, we eat and drink damnation to ourselves. (1 Cor. 11:29). The Corinthians were eating together. Still, they were abusing the worship of God by using that occasion to satisfy their hunger, as we are told in 1 Corinthians 11:20. Thus, when we come together to worship God, we must revere Him, humbly bowing ourselves in obedience to His will, and not walking after the desires of the flesh.

Parents will be held responsible for taking their children regularly to worship the Lord, and by example, they will instill in their minds that worship is to take precedence over world affairs. In matters of less importance, we do not leave decisions to our children's choice, for instance, whether they should attend school, etc.; therefore, why should we think it is best to leave their spiritual training to their choice?

We must "hold fast to the profession of our faith" and constantly try to "provoke unto love and to good works."

*Deceased*

Editor's note: While this editor does not believe Hebrews 10:25 refers to the worship services but to apostasy from Christ, the points made by brother Totty regarding worship are valid.

# Scientific Red Faces

Wayne Jackson

As almost everyone knows, the earth is supposed to be nearly five billion years old, while man has been around only some three or four million years. These estimates are pure speculation, based upon dating methods grounded in evolutionary assumptions. There is **no** hard-core test that can determine the age of the earth. Most believe this simply because they accept what is presented in the media.

Several years ago, some scientists discovered human bones buried under thick mud deposits in California. The bones were submitted to “competent” authorities, who declared them to be about 75,000 years old. Unfortunately, as they dug deeper, they found an old United States Army button. Now, maybe the United States had an army 75,000 years ago—or just perhaps, the scientific dating methods are not all that reliable.

Recently, an archaeological excavation team led by Professor Mitsuo Kawaga of Beppu University discovered drawings on a cave wall on the Japanese island of Kyushu. The excited scientists announced that the drawings were from 10,000 to 30,000 years old. Alas, a life-long resident of the area came forward to confess that he had often scribbled on the cave walls with charcoal when he was a boy. The “scientists” had only missed it by about 99.99%!

Why is it that when *scientists* say that something is billions of years old, the average person believes it as if the object had a date carved on it?

When Christians accept the dates, which are part of the evolutionary system, they play right into infidelity’s hands.

*Deceased*

## The Lord Is My Helper

A little girl, when asked to repeat the 23rd Psalm, said, “The Lord is my shepherd, that’s all I want.” She may have been a little confused about the actual wording, but she expressed a truth that should be the property of every Christian. There is no blessing so valuable as the ability to lean upon the sufficiency of God, to find in Him all that we want. The firm basis of such trust was brought to Paul’s attention when the Lord said to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Consider the unsearchable riches which one possesses when the Lord is his helper.

**There is a feeling of security that transcends social and financial security.** The child of God can be content in all circumstances of life. “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content” (Phi. 4:11).

**There is a peace that passeth understanding** (4:7) and floods the Christian’s life with unspeak-

able joy (1 Pet. 1:8). This peace is greater than all the treasures earth can yield.

**There is freedom from fear of all types.** “So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6). Fear of bodily harm and even death is dissipated when we walk with the Lord. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me” (Psa. 23:4).

**There is a crown of life that glitters through eternity.** “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly” (2 Tim. 4:8). In addition to these wonderful blessings, the Lord promises us what we need physically. Indeed, there can be no want when the Lord is our helper.

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## What's in It for Me?

*Mike Demory*

Have you ever asked someone for a favor and had that person reply, “What’s in it for me?” Most people in the world have learned that doing a good turn for one’s neighbor and even family should come with its rewards. On the other hand, the Christian knows that *servanthood* is only one piece of the spiritual puzzle that leads to eternal life.

What many these days refer to as *ministry* or *minister* comes from the Greek word *diakonos*, which means “a servant, attendant, minister, deacon.” Yes, this same Greek word is translated in several ways (deacon, servant, and minister) in our English translations. As a verb, this word denotes action on our part by “relieving the necessities of others” (Luke 10:40; John 12:2), “waiting on tables” (Mat. 8:15), and representing the duties of deacons (1 Tim. 3:10, 13).

It is sad to hear Christians refer to the preacher as “The Minister” when Scripture plainly says that **all** Christians are ministers. Jesus instructed His disciples in the art of *ministry* when He washed their feet at what is commonly referred to as “The Last Supper” (John 13:3-16). In verse 15, Jesus told them He had done this as an example. However, like Peter, most Christians expect others to serve them far more than they are willing to serve (13:9).

Another piece of the puzzle that fits snugly against *ministry* is *agape* love. This love is like no other and is the highest form of love known to man. It is neither selfish nor cares for rewards and always seeks the best possible good for all others

(1 Cor. 13:4-8). It is easy to understand why those in the world want to know what is in it for them, but when a Christian seeks the same answer, one can only pray that they will one day grow up. When Christians decline to do the work of the Lord or seek to stop a good work because they see no reward on the horizon for their efforts, they are no different than the world. Children of the Most High God who will not knock on doors, help others in need, support preachers in other parts of the country or the world, see no benefit in jail ministries or any number of other works, all because they find no monetary reward or increase in body count, stifle the cause of Christ. *Agape* love says that I will participate in serving because it is the right thing to do and because I love God.

What is in it for me or our congregation if we see no reward for our efforts, period? First of all, what is in it for us is the joy of knowing that we can serve our Lord (Rom. 15:13; Phi. 4:4). Jesus reminds us, “For the Son of man also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45—ASV). Remember, He was our perfect example in service, so why should we not be willing to follow Him?

Second, what is in it for us is giving glory to God Almighty in **everything** we do. The Psalmist wrote, “Ascribe unto Jehovah, ye kindreds of the peoples, Ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength. Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name:

Bring an offering, and come into his courts” (Psa. 96:7-8—ASV). To the Corinthians, Paul said, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31—ASV).

Third, what is in it for us is proving that we love God by action and not only by words: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18—ASV). Paul says, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love” (Gal 5:6—ASV). Remember, we said love and service work hand in hand!

Fourth, what is in it for us is that we become a living sacrifice well pleasing unto God (Rom. 12:1-2)!

[F]or the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that herein serveth

Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men (Rom 14:17-18—ASV).

Christians have the false idea that just showing up on Sunday and staying for the potluck is all that Christianity is about. Servanthood is about obeying the Lord by preaching and teaching the Gospel in many ways. Pleasing God is the number one benefit of *ministering*.

Fifth, what is in it for us is the hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:1-2; 3:7; Col. 1:5).

Finally, what is in it for us is that we might grow stronger in the faith (Acts 14:22; 1 The. 3:10-12), become a positive influence on others, and prove that we truly love and care for the souls of others. What is in it for us may not always be readily apparent, but it is not for us to question but simply to obey. The eternal rewards are the ones we should seek, not the temporary ones on earth.

*Mexico, MO*

## Sacred Imagination

*G. K. Wallace*

In telling what the baptism of the Holy Spirit did for him, Pastor A. G. Ward says, “Another blessed result of the coming of the Comforter to my heart has been that I have learned to cultivate the faculty of sacred imagination and to realize the unseen.” We believe that the gentleman is right in one respect, and that is about his imagination. However, it is not the Spirit that creates this imagination; his imagination creates what he believes to be the baptism of the Spirit in his mind and heart. Since the Bible plainly teaches that the baptism of the Spirit was for a specific purpose and that purpose having been fulfilled, it, of necessity, ceased, we know then that the gentleman is overworking his imagination.

To further show you that this is a matter of a perverted brain, please notice the following:

- Joseph Smith, the father of Mormonism, got the Holy Spirit and *imagined* the angel Mo-

roni gave him some plates on which was written the Book of Mormon.

- The Spiritualists claim they talk to the dead by the power of the Spirit. The dead are called up, and with them, they converse face to face. It looks as if someone’s imagination is working overtime here.
- Mr. Nazarene gets the Holy Spirit and jumps and shouts but cannot talk in tongues. He has the same Holy Spirit as Mr. Pentecostal but no tongues. He also says that Mr. Pentecostal cannot speak in tongues.
- Mr. Quaker gets the Holy Spirit and neither jumps nor shouts but only sits quietly. He says all the noise and talking in tongues is not of the Holy Spirit.
- Through what she claims was the Spirit of God, Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, gave to the world Christian Science. This so-called sci-

ence denies that there is anything that is material. Sickness and death, it says, do not exist. This is all an illusion. It seems that when folk get their *imagination* started, there is no end to what they may say and do.

- Charles T. Russell imagined that God had called him to give us his materialistic doctrine.

## Don't Be So Harsh

Pray don't find fault with the man who limps,  
Or stumbles along the road,  
Unless you have worn the shoes he wears  
Or struggled beneath his load.

There may be tacks in his shoes that hurt,  
Though hidden away from view,  
Or the burden he bears, placed on your back,  
Might cause you to stumble, too.

Don't sneer at the man who's down today,  
Unless you have felt the blow  
That caused his fall, or felt the shame  
That only the fallen know.

You may be strong, but still the blows  
That were his, if dealt to you  
In the selfsame way at the selfsame time,  
Might cause you to stagger too.

Don't be too harsh with the man who sins,  
Or pelt him with words of stone,  
Unless you are sure, yes, doubly sure  
That you have not sins of your own.

For, you know, perhaps if the tempters voice  
Should whisper as soft to you  
As it did to him when he went astray,  
'Twould cause you to falter too.

*Author Unknown*

- R. H. Boll, Charles M. Neal, et al. imagined this was all true and have taken up with the same. Jorgenson, Boll, and others say that their theory is not that of Russell, but we are prepared to show that their theories are as much alike as two boys born of the same mother. The theories are that closely akin. Only their fathers can tell them apart.
- Mrs. White says she was called by God by the Spirit to give us Adventism.
- But, alas, our missionaries begin to work their imagination. After using his imagination to understand what the Bible teaches on the question of the Holy Spirit, Virgil Smith got one of his converts—namely Joano Nunes—to the point where he imagined he had the Spirit. This unusual occurrence came after they had spent some time repeating, “The Lord is good—the Lord is good.” Then, some of them talked in tongues. We wish some of these fellows with such good imaginations would show us the Scriptures where God authorized anyone to agonize in prayer for the Holy Spirit. Where is an example of anyone getting down and crying, “The Lord is good—the Lord is good,” or as the Pentecostals do, “Thank you, Jesus, Thank you, Jesus.”

All the above testimonies of the Holy Ghost folk contradict, yet each can prove his point because he has the witness within himself. He feels it therefore, he knows it.

Well, somehow, we believe the pastor mentioned above is right. It is a work of imagination.

God destroyed the antediluvians for the free use of their imaginations.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually (Gen. 6:5).

Moral: Stick to the work of God and quit following your imagination.

*Deceased*

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It will be found that some of the best-known people in heaven filled very obscure places while on earth.

*Author Unknown*

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Nancy Travis           | Bill & Peggy Crowe |
| Rheba Stancliff        | Nelda King         |
| Orville & Linda Worley | Carla Burlison     |
| Aleacia Godwin         |                    |

## Please Remember

May 29

Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 p.m.,  
in the auditorium.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:** Paul Brantley  
Michael Hatcher  
Bill Busch

**Minister:** Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 22

May 27, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
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## Your Soil Analysis

*Lester Kamp*

A good crop depends primarily on the seed and soil condition. Farmers frequently analyze their soil to determine what minerals need to be added so they might have the greatest possible harvest. Then, the soil is prepared for planting by cultivation and fertilization. The seed is planted and watered. Growth is monitored to determine what must be done before the crop matures.

If we examine the parable of the sower (Mat. 14; Mark 4; Luke 8), we realize that the seed that is sown must be the Word of God (8:11). It is the highest quality seed. Anything less will adversely affect the harvest (2 The. 2:10-12). This seed, the Word of God, is all that should be planted. It is enough to complete the harvest (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

This, however, is not simply a parable of the sower but also a **parable of the soil**. We are the soil into which this seed is sown. According to Jesus, four types of soil are possible, and only one gives abundant harvest. The soil must be properly prepared to receive the seed. Herein lies our responsibilities as hearers of the Word. These responsibilities apply to non-Christians and Christians. We should determine the nature of our soil and then take the necessary steps to make our soil “good ground.” Let us examine our soil!

### Is Ours Wayside Soil?

Here is soil so hardened by sin that seed cannot penetrate. It is a condition described in various other ways in the New Testament (e.g., “seared in their conscience as with a hot iron”—1 Tim.

4:2; “hardening of their heart” and “past feeling”—Eph. 4:18-19; “hardened by the deceitfulness of sin”—Heb. 3:13). According to Hebrews 3, it is a condition that can be reached by believers as well as unbelievers. To prevent this condition, we must “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat. 5:6). We must desire to know the truth (1 Pet. 2:2).

### Is Ours Rocky Soil?

Jesus said of this soil, “these have no root...and in time of temptation fall away” (Luke 8:13). Here is soil that seems, at least on the surface, to be good soil, but when temptations come the plants die because the plants have no roots—**the soil is not deep enough**. We are told that with temptations come ways of escape (1 Cor. 10:13), we lack wisdom, and all we must do is ask God for it (Jam. 1:5). This soil lacks depth partly because of a failure to pray. According to Hebrews 5:14, the ability to distinguish good from evil, necessary in overcoming temptation, is obtained from exercising our senses—by “reason of use.” Rocky soil results when we fail to practice what we learn from God’s Word. James says this failure deludes even our own selves (Jam. 1:22).

### Is Ours Thorny Soil?

Here, the seed is choked to death by the “cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life” (Luke 8:14). More seed is allowed to grow here than just the Word of God. Here, we find a divided allegiance between this present world and eternity. Such

division can result only in frustration and failure—we cannot serve two masters (Mat. 6:24). Here are people who place a priority on money, popularity, and earthly things while at the same time attempting to serve Christ—such is spiritual suicide. This condition can be corrected by focusing on Christ and surrendering our lives to Him (6:22-25, 33). This is a process requiring effort on our part. It does not happen accidentally or automatically. We must “seek the things that are above” and set our minds on those things (Col. 3:1-2).

#### Is Ours Good Soil?

This type of soil is the person who has done all that is possible of a preventative nature (i.e.,

desires to know the truth, prays, makes application to his daily life, and sets his priorities on Christ) and, in addition, studies God’s Word regularly, honestly, and diligently (2 Tim. 2:15).

Remember that these soils are found both in and out of the church. Which **of these soils represents you today?** What kind of soil are you becoming? Will you take the necessary steps to become good soil which “beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”? (Mat. 13:23). A good harvest requires constant attention to the soil!

*Aurora, CO*

## “Never give in: Never, Never, Never”

*Ken Chumbley*

These words are words that have often been misquoted and the story behind them embellished. They are the words of a man whose speeches often contained memorable statements, particularly those that were made during the height of the Second World War, by the Prime Minister of Great Britain. He sought to encourage the people of the British Isles during the difficult days of the war, particularly after Dunkirk and the fall of France to the Nazi Third Reich, when Great Britain, with the imminent possibility of a German invasion of their shores, as well as the fighting in Africa against the Germans and the Italians, together with the fight against Imperial Japan in the Far East, up until the time that the United States entered the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

The words, as quoted above, were part of a speech that was made towards the end that time. However, the speech was not made to the nation as a whole but to the boys at Harrow school, the school that Churchill had himself attended and one that stands alongside Eton among the better

known schools of England. Part of that short speech stated the following,

You cannot tell from appearances how things will go. Sometimes imagination makes things out far worse than they are; yet without imagination not much can be done. Those people who are imaginative see many more dangers than perhaps exist; certainly many more than will happen; but then they must also pray to be given that extra courage to carry this far-reaching imagination. But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period—I am addressing myself to the School—surely from this period of ten months this is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never-in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. We stood all alone a year ago, and to many countries it seemed that our account was closed, we were finished. All this tradition of ours, our songs, our School history, this part of the history of this country, were gone and finished and liquidated.

Very different is the mood today. Britain, other nations thought, had drawn a sponge across

her slate. But instead, our country stood in the gap. There was no flinching and no thought of giving in; and by what seemed almost a miracle to those outside these Islands, though we ourselves never doubted it, we now find ourselves in a position where I say that we can be sure that we have only to persevere to conquer (Churchill).

Brethren, there may be times when we think that we are alone, or that we are too small in number for us to gain the victory. However, we need to learn the lesson that Winston Churchill taught the students at Harrow that day. We must not ever give in or yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy. Remember, “If God be for us, who *can be* against us” (Rom. 8:31). Thus, we should always be “stedfast, unmoveable, always

abounding in the work of the Lord” since we “know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Peter tells us that we should “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Brethren, we must never, never, never give up but stand fast for the Lord and His cause.

#### Work Cited

Churchill, Winston. “Never Give In.” The Churchill Centre. <<http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/103-never-give-in>>.

*Deceased*

## Study Some Searching Sayings

*E. L. Edens*

### Poverty

1. If you want to get to the poorhouse, keep right on down Easy Street.
2. There are a lot of families in America so poor that they have only one automobile to their name.
3. If shoes and stockings have a few holes, that is poverty; if they are mostly holes, that is style.
4. To be poor is no disgrace—provided one knows it.
5. The man who feeds a dozen puppies in the kitchen is always too hard up to go to church.

### Preaching

1. Is it fair to expect to get gold out of the sermon when you put coppers into the offering plate?
2. The only sermon the devil really fears is the living one on two legs.
3. The most striking sermon is usually the one that hits the man who is not there.
4. The world looks at ministers out of the pulpit to know what they mean when in it.
5. Preach not because you have to say something, but because you have something to say.

### Selfishness

1. Married folk usually get along all right if only one is selfish and spoiled.
2. The greatest trouble with the world is that people are trying to make something *for* themselves instead of making something of themselves.

*Deceased*

If one is silent when he hears what he knows is not true, if he fails to contradict what he knows is false, he becomes to some extent responsible for the falsehood and helps to give it currency. His responsibility is increased if he is in a position where he is supposed to know the truth, for his silence is regarded as a confirmation of the falsehood.

*Author Unknown*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Carla Burseson

Aleacia Godwin

## Restored

Patricia Grim was restored to Christ on May 26. She also requested prayers on her behalf. Please keep Patricia in your prayers and offer her encouragement.

## Please Remember

May 29

Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 p.m.,  
in the auditorium.

## Weekly Services

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 23

June 3, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

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## The Finality of Revelation

*Guy N. Woods*

In the only recorded instance of a prayer directed to a “saint,” the effort was unsuccessful. The rich man, in Hades, in that portion of the realms of departed spirits where the wicked pass at death to await the resurrection of the body and the judgment day, “cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on 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**” (Luke 16:24). Figures, of which this is doubtless one, are of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures and are employed, not because the reality is less than the figure but greater. It is here taught, and that all the more firmly because, incidentally, that following death, the souls of the finally impenitent suffer as terribly as if a fire were tormenting their bodies.

To the pitiful plea of the tortured man, Abraham replied: “Son, remember.”

Memory is indeed a wonderful and blessed faculty. It enables us to recall the glorious and thrilling moments of a joyous past and experience again the joys that brought delight to our souls. Memory can be, and often is, a tortuous, terrible thing, causing it to loom into our consciousness, which we would gladly give the world to forget. Without attempting to enter the discussion of whether the fires of hell will be literal or figurative, we may be sure that if the only fire that awaits the disobedient is the fire of memory, that will be insufferable enough! When the books are opened

on the judgment day, memory and conscience will be volumes among them. The waters of the river of death are no Lethe, bringing with them the forgetfulness of all past evil. Truly did Tennyson say: “Sorrow’s crown of sorrow is remembering happier things!”

It is not unusual for one, faced with sudden death, to have pass in review, and in minute detail, every act, both good and bad, of his past life. On such occasions, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every action, every design of one’s past life, becomes a part of a giant jigsaw puzzle, each of which fits into and becomes manifest in relation to the whole design of one’s subsequent existence. A man’s forgotten sins are not unlike old, disused coins rusty and illegible—but each with an image and superscription, dates, and symbols full of meaning. In the hands of the assayer, the rust is brushed aside, and the letters again become legible. So, will it be at the last day with the sins long forgotten by men but indelibly recorded in the book of God’s remembrance?

Two reasons are assigned by the worthy patriarch why the rich man’s request could not be granted. The first grew out of the fitness of things. “Thou in thy lifetime...good things,...Lazarus ...evil things.” **He had already received his good things!** Having chosen this life as his portion, he had already received and enjoyed his reward, having used none to make provision for the next life. The inexorable law of compensa-

tion made it inequitable and unfair that he should be allowed to profit in both spheres of existence. (How many of us in the church today need this lesson? How many of us are laying up treasures to ourselves—spending our means for fleshly gratification—and are not rich toward God? As free agents, we may do so, but we should not complain in judgment when we are reminded that we elected to receive our “good things” in this life). A second reason was drawn from the necessity of the case. A “great gulf” had been fixed between them through which it was impossible to pass. The gulf symbolizes the inherent character difference between the saved and the lost. Whatever other fixed gulf there may be, the permanence of character is certainly the gulf of separation. The rich man’s character was fixed in evil; that of Lazarus, in good, and in the world to come, there is no change.

Finally convinced of the awful and irrevocable helplessness of his wretched state, in a glance backward at the earth he had for evermore left, he remembered his five brothers who were living as he had lived and whose destiny would, therefore, be the same as his. “Send Lazarus to warn them,” he pleaded. He imagined that such a phenomenon would influence them to turn from their wicked courses. Abraham reminded him that they had “Moses and the prophets” throughout the Old Testament revelation. It was not that they lacked sufficient warning to keep them from the torment he suffered; they, like him, would not heed what they had. Mindful of his stubbornness of heart and certain that theirs was the same attitude, he felt this was insufficient. He thought that if one went unto them from the dead, indeed, they would repent. He would thus have had a miracle performed to convert his wayward brethren. His followers are legion. Many today subscribe to the same philosophy and, therefore, minimize the importance of sacred writings and seek supernatural portents.

Abraham denied that the results the rich man expected would be obtained in this fashion. In the

dialogue which ensued, we may paraphrase their conversation thus:

The rich man said: “They will repent.”

Abraham replied: “They will not even be persuaded.”

The rich man contended: “If one went to them from the dead—”

With a prophetic glance at the world’s unbelief in far greater matters, Abraham answered: “No, not if one rose from the dead!”

This is, in effect, to say: “A far greater act than you demand would be ineffectual for producing a far slighter effect.” One from the dead might terrify them and fill them with awe, but it would not change their nature nor produce repentance in their hearts.

The rich man’s request contained the veiled charge that God’s revelation was insufficient for the purpose for which it was designed. It implied that the rebellion that characterized his brothers was excusable: if God would provide additional—and, therefore, satisfactory—evidence, they would believe. His implication was false and wicked, a deliberate and highhanded accusation against the goodness and wisdom of the Great Jehovah. The lesson is that if men will not be faithful with the advantages that they have, they will not with greater advantages. Those who reject the revelation given would not surrender to His will were He to make available a thousand additional revelations. There are at least three reasons why this is so: (1) Men would not believe that the messenger came from the dead. Jesus came forth from the dead, and the evidence of this fact is complete and satisfactory, yet men reject it without hesitation. (2) Facts that then existed evidenced the truth of Abraham’s statement. Marvelous manifestations of miraculous power left the hypocritical and supercilious Pharisees unmoved. Soon after the incidents of this lesson, Jesus raised Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, from the dead, and the Pharisees tried to kill both on account of it. The Lord Himself had come from the land on the other

side of death and was at this very time testifying of what He had seen and knew regarding it, but they rejected Him. Afterward, He rose from the dead, but still, they did not believe. (3) Were an additional revelation given, it would have to contain (a) more light, (b) stronger proofs, or (c) more powerful motives.

But, on what subject, about man's duty, does he need more light? The conditions are set forth so clearly that it is impossible to misunderstand them without expert help. As to stronger proofs, if the evidence of the Christian religion is rejected as insufficient, then it is impossible to establish

a historical proposition; we can subsequently be assured of nothing, save that within the sphere of our observation. A new revelation could not provide more impelling motives—hope, fear, duty, and love. We cannot conceive of any stronger degree than in the Bible. There could be no better heaven to hope for, no more dreadful hell to escape, stronger sanctions of duty, or greater love than is found in God and Christ. If men do not surrender to these, no power in this world or the next can make them truly good.

*Deceased*

## The Sin of Silence

*Johnny Ramsey*

God's real servants must never close their mouths when Satan parades before the world, spouting errors of every sordid form. Here are eight great examples of men who did not seal their lips.

1. **Nathan**, the bold prophet, plainly said unto King David: "Thou *art* the man" (2 Sam. 12:7).
2. **Micaiah**, the prophet, withstood Ahab and his 400 wise men and used these words of emulation: "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14):
3. **John**, the Immerser, severely warned the corrupt Pharisees who would have made a mockery of divine truths. Matthew 3 is a tribute to fearless preaching.
4. **Jesus** was uncompromising with a prospective follower when He told the rich young ruler about the challenge of kingdom service. Some of us try to ease prospects in and then teach them duty. Not so with the Master Teacher (Luke 18:18-30).
5. **Peter**, in Acts 5:29, before an aroused Jewish council, frankly, informed them that the apostles would "obey God rather than

men." This is a refreshing change from our halting speech (1 Kin. 18:21).

6. **Stephen**, nearer to death with each sentence, nonetheless spoke clearly of the debauchery and shame of the Jewish leaders. His courage has given us the spark we need to oppose error. Read Acts 7 carefully.
7. **Philip** seized his opportune moment after running to his mission of importance, opened his mouth, and preached Jesus to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-39).
8. **Paul**, before Felix, chose the three most unpopular themes in his repertoire in preaching to his captor: **righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come**. Plain preaching is powerful; even Felix trembled and considered the plea (Acts 24:25).

Brethren, heaven will be too sweet to miss. Yet, we shall miss its glory if we seal our lips when God's truth is burning within our souls. Sinners need it, the world will die and go to hell without it, and our souls will perish unless we open our mouths and speak forth the message of God's resplendent glory.

*Deceased*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

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Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burlison

Aleacia Godwin

## Please Remember

June 16

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

June 30

Fifth Sunday Dinner; singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 24

June 10, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
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## Historic Change

*Brad Green*

We can all think of days throughout history that changed the world and our nation. The signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Cold War, and 9/11 are just a few events that changed history—but one day in history changed the world like no other. “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). God began adding those who believed, confessed, repented, and were baptized (2:36-38) to His church. There is no day in history comparable to the change brought about on this first Pentecost day after the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

### There Was a **Change** in Law

The Law of Moses gave way to the Law of Christ (Col. 2:14; Gal. 6:2). The Law of Christ (the teachings of the New Testament) became authoritative, and God’s plan to save (i.e., “Repent and be baptized”—Acts 2:38) was preached for the first time at that historic day of Pentecost.

### There Was a **Change** in Priesthood.

The Priesthood was no longer a duty of the Levites as under the Old Law (Deu. 10:8). The New Testament Priesthood is a duty of all Christians (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). The High Priesthood had been an office held by Aaron and his sons under the Law of Moses. The New Law brought a new High Priest—Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:17; 4:15).

### There Was a **Change** from the Physical to the Spiritual.

The Physical nation of Israel had served its role in God’s Divine plan to redeem mankind (Mat. 5:17; Col. 2:14). On this historic day of Pentecost (Acts 2), a new, Spiritual Israel (the church of Christ) became God’s chosen people (Gal. 6:15-16). The saved are those who obey God’s New Testament plan of salvation (Acts 2:38, 47).

### There Was a **Change** in Sacrifice.

The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament gave way (Heb. 10:4) to the perfect, sinless sacrifice of the Son of God (9:26; 10:10). The blood Jesus shed on the cross is the only sacrifice that can save man today. God tells us that we can contact that blood in Jesus’ death.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

The Christian’s “walk in newness of life” has replaced the meat and peace offerings commanded under the Old Law and as recorded in the book of Leviticus. Under the New Law, God requires a sacrifice of one’s self by simple and humble obedience to Him.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is*

your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (12:1-2).

The establishment of the church of Christ, as recorded in Acts 2, is indeed a day that **changed**

the world. God has given all men the opportunity and the invitation to be added to that church (John 3:16; Mat. 11:28-30; Acts 2:47). It is now our privilege and responsibility to obey God's plan whereby He may add us to His glorious Kingdom and among the saved.

*Lenoir City, TN*

## Pharisee and Publican

*Batsell Baxter*

The story's narrator was Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. So, we know that the story must have been true to the facts. The place of the story was the temple of God, which was a good place to be. David said: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." The purpose of going was to pray. That was a worthy purpose. We all need to pray. The people were a Pharisee and a publican. Both had a right to approach the throne of God.

### Under the Law of Moses

This occurrence was under the law of Moses. It occurred in the lifetime of Jesus. The law of Moses was in effect at the time. Jesus lived and died under the Law of Moses. In His death, Jesus took the Law of Moses out of the way.

Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14).

Bible scholars, so far as I know, agree that this was the Law of Moses.

### Relation to Christians

So, since this happened under the Law of Moses, it does not mean Christians are to go to the temple to pray. It does not mean that a Jew can pray his way to heaven, even though he is the greatest and best of the Pharisees. The specific items of the law did not apply to Christians. Then what is the application? These things were written "for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:1-12). The general principles are a warning or an encouragement to us.

### The Pharisee, a Favored Man

The Pharisees were favored men in the eyes of most of the Jews. They were the "thus-saith-the-law" crowd. They held themselves up as the appointed teachers of God's law. They felt themselves the chosen and favored men of the entire Jewish nation. They reveled in the claim that they were God's teachers. Jesus struck many hard blows at their pride and hypocrisy. Most of Matthew 23 is given over to God's estimate of these hypocritical teachers of the law.

### The Publican, a Despised Man

The publican was not held in high esteem among the Jews. He was a tax-gatherer. He took their money. That made him unpopular. He also assessed the amount of their taxes and generally got all he could. He turned the greater percentage of what he got over to the Romans. The Romans were the Gentile conquerors of Judea. The Jews despised them. So, the publican was held in very poor esteem among the Jews. *Publicans* and *sinners* were twins in the minds of the Jews. One of their objections to Jesus was that He taught the publicans.

### The Pharisee's Prayer

The Pharisee thanked God. That was a good thing to do. But he thanked God for the wrong thing. He should have thanked God for the blessings God enabled him to enjoy. We read that every good and perfect gift is from God (see Jam. 1:17), but this Pharisee ignored that completely. He thanked God for himself. He paraded his virtues

before God and thanked God that God had such a splendid Pharisee. He had the thing precisely backward.

#### Parade of Virtues

The Pharisee seemed to think that God may have overlooked some of his good qualities, so he named them. He fasted, he gave to the poor, etc. He forgot the law of man's worth:

Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do (Luke 17:10).

But Jesus Christ expressed this law, this bigoted Pharisee may never have heard of it.

#### The Publican's Place

The Pharisee had come up close to the altar. He had felt himself thoroughly worthy of any commendation that could be given him. Not so with the publican. He had no parade of virtues to bring before God. The Pharisee had sneeringly compared himself with "this publican." The publican's only thought was of his unworthiness and his own great need for the mercy of the "giver of all good." He stood afar off in an inconspicuous place. His whole attitude was humble.

#### The Publican's Prayer

The publican's prayer was short. He seemed to know that he had nothing to boast. He also seemed to know he was not to be heard for his "much speaking." But his prayer was straight to the point. And it came from a humble heart. He seemed to realize that "every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). His prayer was, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

#### Justified Rather Than the Other

This publican's prayer did not necessarily come from a more sinful heart than the prayer of the Pharisee but from a heart that acknowledged its sinfulness. That seems to have been the difference. The publican confessed his sin; the Pharisee hid his sin under a cloak of hypocrisy. But God knows the hearts of men. God saw straight through the false robe the Pharisee wore

## What's the Use

*Charles M. Sheldon*

To have "a good time" at the expense of an uneasy conscience for the next morning?

To lose our temper at the expense of losing a friend?

To cheat a corporation at the expense of robbing our souls?

To go to church in the morning if we are planning to go to the devil in the evening?

To have an enemy if we can have a friend?

To sow wild oats if we must buy our own crop?

To spend the last half of life in remorse or regret for the first half?

To be discourteous, irreverent, or cynical?

To give God the husks instead of the heart?

To live at all unless we live for all?

*Deceased*

and saw the hypocrite that wore it. God saw the penitence of the publican and the humble, honest heart from which the penitence came.

#### The Justified Man

Some Scriptures state this principle very pointedly: "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). This is from the very law that the Pharisee claimed to know and to teach. He had overlooked it if he believed it. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (Jam. 4:6). This is also from the law the Pharisee claimed to believe and teach. The publican was justified rather than the other. His prayer and attitude were in keeping with the law of God.

*Deceased*

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June 16

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June 30

Fifth Sunday Dinner; singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

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## The Benefits of an Increasing Faith

### 2 Corinthians 7:1-16

*Kent Bailey*

As Christians, we will always face various problems in life. Our wrongdoing will bring about some of these problems, as personal sin brings problematic consequences from our actions. We also need to remember that sin committed by other individuals brings terrible consequences. Not only do these consequences affect the lives of those who commit such wrongs, but they also influence innocent bystanders.

Despite sin, especially such activity thrust upon us by blatant wrongdoers, such can motivate us to be strengthened by the Word of God and thus increase our faith. A stronger faith enables faithful Christians to attain Heaven as our eternal and final home.

Hebrews 11 provides a tremendous word picture of faithful children of God who not only lived faithful lives before God but who also died in faith and fellowship with God because of their godly and righteous lives:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an

heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (11:13-16).

So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Two crucial concepts are affirmed in both passages. There were those in the Old Testament who were faithful to God. Their faith was increased and brought about a stronger faith. Even though these Old Testament saints were faithful servants of Jehovah God, they died in faith, not having received the promise during their lifetime of a coming savior giving them a promise of Heaven. They waited in faith for this promise, knowing that God would provide them with the promise He had made. Even though they could have been mindful of that country from which they came out, they were far more cognizant of spiritual reality, seeking a Heavenly country where they would live for eternity.

This promise of God was received by an obedient faith, knowing that in a future date, God would keep His promises to them. A proper understanding of the nature of personal faith assists one in seeing that such is based upon adequate evidence. Therefore, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Things that will improve as our faith increases. Growing in the knowledge of the Word of God will bring an increase and improvement

in our lives as Christians. Greater applied knowledge will certainly increase our faith. An increase in our faith will bring about:

- **Ability to discern good and evil.** When we increase our faith, we increase our knowledge of the Word of God. We can discern good from evil when we increase our knowledge of the Scriptures (Heb. 5:12-14).
- **Ability to resist temptation.** One of the great earmarks of growth as a Christian is to reach various points in our lives where we become stronger in opposing the temptations we face in life and not give in to them (Jam. 1:1-12).
- **Ability to forgive.** Even though individuals sin against us, one of the earmarks of Biblical growth is developing the ability to forgive when God forgives (Luke 17:1-5).
- **Ability to live despite opposition.** By this terminology, we refer to developing the ability to live in faithfulness regardless of the opposition to God's truth that we face (Acts 9:22).
- **Ability to cope with decline.** As Christians, we need to face the facts: We are all physically wearing out and will one day experience physical death unless Christ returns in our lifetime. In other situations, we will see a spiritual decline in the lives of

other Christians and within the church (2 Cor. 4:8-5:13).

- **Ability to face death with confidence.** Confidence is another word for that of faith and/or trust. In living faithful as a Christian, we can have assurance of eternal salvation in Heaven (Phi. 1:21-30).

We can and indeed will receive benefits from an increasing faith. Please note the greatness of these spiritual benefits:

- **Such brings about personal godliness.** By the term godliness, we refer to respect for sacred things (1 Tim. 1:15; 4:8; 2 Tim. 3:15-17).
- **Such protects us from false doctrine.** By such, we refer to doctrine that is not only untrue but also doctrine that will lead individuals into sin and out of fellowship with God (Col. 2:8-10).
- **Such is important to Biblical Unity.** By unity, we are not referring to simply union or joining together. By unity, we refer to that of agreement (Amos 3:3; Eph. 4:11-12; Phi. 1:15-17).

Some speak with contempt regarding sound doctrine. When they do, they oppose spiritual strength, godliness, protection from false doctrine, and Biblical unity. Let us speak the words of sound doctrine and increase our faith.

*Calhoun, GA*

## Shoot the Messenger

*Charles Pogue*

When King Ahab insulted the prophet Micaiah, telling him that the Lord had put a lying spirit in his four hundred prophets' mouths' when they told him to go to Ramoth-gilead against the king of Syria (1 Kin. 22:22), he called upon the prophet to be put in prison and to be fed with the water and bread of affliction. Micaiah's message was that Israel would have the victory, but Ahab would lose his life in the process. Despite the message, Ahab

attempted to disguise himself while having Judah's king, Jehoshaphat, adorn himself in royal robes. The truth was clear; Ahab knew that Micaiah had told him the truth, so he attempted to save himself while having Jehoshaphat killed in the battle.

King Ahab, likely the most wicked king Israel ever had, was like many other men before and after him. Some men who do not like the message shoot the messenger. People want to hear what they

want, and even if they know what they are told is the truth, they will reject (shoot) the messenger if they do not like it.

Peter and John went up to the temple, as recorded in Acts 3, and healed the lame man lay there to ask for alms. Peter told him they had neither silver nor gold, but he would give the man what he had. Peter then told him, in the name of Jesus, to rise up and walk. The apostles used this opportunity to preach Christ to the people. The Jewish authorities were very displeased with the proceedings, so they put the apostles on hold until the next day. They could not deny that a notable miracle had been done, nor that if that miracle was performed in the name of Jesus, then Jesus must have undoubtedly been who the apostles said He was, and therefore the message of the Gospel was the truth. However, the Jewish rulers did not want to hear the Gospel truth. It would take away their power. Thus, they threatened Peter and John and ordered them not to speak anymore in the name of Jesus Christ.

There are two things Ahab and the Jewish leaders held in common: they knew that the message they heard was the truth. That is evident in Ahab's case by his disguise (1 Kin. 22:30). It was true in the Jews' case because they could not deny that a notable miracle had been done (Acts 4:16). The

“Order is heaven’s first law.” To be orderly, then, is to partake of some of heaven’s joy. A fundamental principle in being orderly is to put first things in our plans. Bible study is to be classed among the things of first importance. If we take or make time for this, other tasks adjust themselves to the plan. A life of true order keeps a place for Bible study and prayer.

*Author Unknown*

second thing they had in common was not liking the truth, they took their anger at what they were told (the truth) out on the messenger.

It is no different today. For instance, we know that anything that even calls itself Christianity, whether or not it is Christianity as described in the New Testament, is under attack. Our nation is now accepting the sin of homosexuality as a natural thing, claiming people are born that way. If one is willing to stand up for the truth of God, he is labeled a bigot, and in some cases, if he is unwilling to bow to the abomination, he is thrown in jail. Mind you, our government has placed itself in the same position as the Jewish rulers in the day of Peter and John, and hating the truth about the sin, they take their hostility out on the messenger. While we cannot say for sure in the case of the present-day rulers, we cannot help but believe that some of them know that homosexuality is the sin the Bible labels it to be. Thus, they, like Ahab and the Jews, take their hatred for the truth out on those who are willing to defend it. What a sad day!

The same action is true in the religious realm. The New Testament teaches that there is one church (Eph. 4:4). It further teaches that baptism is essential to being saved from sin and added to the Lord's body. But the religious world rejects these truths, and Christians are ridiculed, having it said derogatorily, “You members of the church of Christ think you are the only ones going to heaven.” Or they will say, “You people believe in water salvation.”

The New Testament clearly teaches that only the body of Christ is the saved and that baptism is essential. Anyone who can read and has read the Scriptures has to know these truths, but they reject it and take it out on the messenger.

However, like Micaiah and the apostles, we must stand firm for the truth regardless of the consequences.

*Deceased*

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The world problem is insoluble if we take this world only into account.

*Author Unknown*

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# BEACON

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## Ways We Displease God

*T. Pierce Brown*

There are at least ten different words in the Bible that suggest how we may displease God. Some may call them synonyms, but strictly speaking, they are not, for they mean slightly different things.

First, *evil*, from the Greek words *kakos* and *poneros*, has reference to three kinds of things: (1) Generally, that which ought not to be. (2) Specifically, that which is morally or legally wrong. (3) That which is “troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful” (Thayer 320). Jonah 3:10 states, “God repented of the **evil**, that he had said that he would do unto them [Nineveh]; and he did *it* not.” The third meaning is evident. Of course, God never did, nor planned to do, a wicked thing to Nineveh. This usage is almost the same as speaking of a *bad* cold.

Second, *iniquity*, translated from the Greek words *adikia* and *anomia*, refers to someone without justice or law, either because he is ignorant of it or deliberately violating its principles. There are 16 different Hebrew words translated as *iniquity*, but the one used most often is *avon*, which means “perversity.” Suppose we wanted to make a fine distinction. In that case, we might say that whereas *sin* refers to the action itself, *iniquity* refers to the **character** or **description** of the action, as in Psalm 32:5, where David says, “And thou forgavest the **iniquity** of my sin.”

Third, *offence*, translated in the New Testament most frequently from *skandalizo*, originally had reference to the trigger of a trap against which the

animal strikes, springing the trap. It, therefore, refers to a snare, stumbling block, or occasion leading to sin. We might point out that many brethren seem to think that *offend* in the Bible means “hurt my feelings” or “do something I dislike.” If my eating in a “church building” caused a weak brother to sin by following my example when it violated his conscience, I would not eat in the church building under that circumstance. But, if my eating in the church building simply aroused the ire of my weaker brother, and he tried to make his opinion the rule of my life, I might not forego my right to eat thus.

We need to be sensitive and concerned about the feelings of our brethren. Still, Paul’s admonition about eating meat in 1 Corinthians 8 does not reference the necessity of allowing your brother’s peculiar opinions to determine your actions. If your actions weaken his faith and cause him to sin against his conscience, you have caused him to stumble and should not.

Fourth, *sin* is often translated from *hamartia*, which literally means “missing the mark.” When one’s **aim** is not to center himself upon God, he is led to sin. We may miss the mark in the other nine ways mentioned in this article.

Fifth, *transgression*, from *parabasis*, means “going over” or “going beyond.” When one goes beyond God’s will by doing something not authorized or doing something that is forbidden, he sins. Interestingly, the word translated *transgression*

most often in the Old Testament means “rebellion.” From an observation of the usage in the New Testament, it seems that *transgression* is an **outward** act of rebellion, sin, or disobedience, whereas *sin* might be done in the heart. Also, when we read 1 John 3:4, in some versions, “Sin is a **transgression** of the law,” another word, *anomia*—lawlessness—is used. If one acts without or disregards the law (*anomia*), he sins. Or if he goes beyond it (*parabasis*), he sins.

Sixth, *trespass* comes from *paraptome*, meaning “fall beside.” It seems to differ from *transgress*, not so much in the nature of the things done but in the figure of speech used to describe it. If one is aiming at a target, he misses it (*hamartia*), whether his arrow goes beyond (transgresses) or falls beside (trespasses).

Seventh, *unrighteousness* is often translated from *adikia* and means “injustice.” If one does not do right, he is *unrighteous*. In most cases, it deals primarily with man’s relationship with man, doing what is just and proper, though it does not exclude relationships with God.

Eighth, *ungodliness* is from the Greek word *asebeia* and refers to a lack of reverence toward God. That lack of reverence might be manifested in all sorts of ways, of course.

Ninth, *wickedness* is often translated from *poneros* and is almost synonymous with evil in some of its uses. The distinction in their meaning can probably be seen clearly in Jonah 3:10, as in any other place in the Bible. “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil [*poneros*] way; and God repented of the evil [*kakos*], that he said he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.” Of course, we would not expect to find God repenting of any **wickedness**, for He never planned to do any. But He did change His mind (*metanoes*) about what He would do to Nineveh, for they changed **their** ways.

Tenth, *wrong* is translated from about ten different Hebrew and Greek terms, but for all practical purposes, it is almost synonymous with “unrighteousness.” In English, a man may be said to do or be *wrong* without sinning. As far as we can discover, the word is not so used in the Bible but is always used as an act of unrighteousness.

Although this article is not intended as a scholarly review of these words, it may be helpful for those who care to distinguish between different things and be more keenly aware of how we may fail to please God.

*Deceased*

## Artificial Respiration

*G. K. Wallace*

Artificial respiration is well-known to the average household in America. If heart failure is apparent, artificial means may save a life. How may our spiritual hearts be stimulated? Should we leave the Word of God for man-made procedures? Years ago, I sat in an audience of several hundred brethren and listened to the preacher talk about the Lord’s Supper. He laughed and joked about “three songs and a prayer.”

He ranted about formality, routine, and form. He suggested that worship could be made meaningful by simply changing the procedure. He

thought weak hearts could be revived by artificial means. We know that the routine does not stimulate the Bible heart. I have been taking the Lord’s Supper for over sixty-five years, and it never occurred to me that I might be engaging in a ritual. My mind, at the Lord’s Table, goes back over two thousand years to the death of Christ. It never dawned on me that the order of the worship had anything to do with the solemnity of the Lord’s Supper. For over thirty years, I have visited the graves of my mother and father. I need no artificial means to stir memories at the graveside. It makes

no difference at which gate I enter the cemetery or the direction I approach the graves. The denominations use candles, shout, and burn incense, use quartets and solos, testify, and play the organ. Paul

said, “let a man examine himself, and so let him eat” (1 Cor. 11:28). May God have mercy on us if we must have some “form” to stir our memories.

*Deceased*

## Abortion

### *Edd Gaines*

I was watching the local news tonight and heard that the President is trying to make sure that women can get abortions in all states on demand. Anybody who would vote for this evil man is just as guilty as he is. The following news story covered a garbage bag of kittens that somebody had just dumped. The reporter was very sympathetic to the poor little kittens. Many well-meaning people will rescue these poor little kittens. Who is going to aid these little unborn babies whose little bodies are being thrown into garbage bags in these abortion clinics?

Since January 22, 1973, there have been 59,000,000 babies murdered in the United States of America. Why do the news media not talk about this terrible sin? Why do preachers and other church leaders not speak out and condemn this crime against humanity?

The story proves to me that some people in this country have been corrupted far beyond anyone before. We are living in an ungodly and evil time.

This country has executed people for murder, and now they are encouraging women to murder their unborn babies. Abortion is the work of the devil, and all Americans who agree with abortion (murdering unborn babies) are doing the work of the devil. They place more value on a cat than that on an unborn baby.

The Declaration of Independence says, “we have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” What a joke! The ungodly justices of the “Supreme Court” decided in 1973 that abortion was not cruel and unusual punishment. In 2008 the court ruled that executing a child rapist is cruel and unusual punishment. These judges

will someday stand before God with the blood of these little ones on their hands. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

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.

In Proverbs 6:16-19, the Bible says there are seven things the Lord hates, and one of the seven is “hands that shed innocent blood.”

Some who promote abortion claim that an unborn baby is just a “piece of tissue.” What does the Bible say on this subject? In Jeremiah 1:5, God said to Jeremiah:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Does this sound like a “piece of tissue” God is talking to?

So, when does life begin? Anybody with one eye and half sense knows that life begins at conception. Take another look at Jeremiah 1:5. It says that God formed Jeremiah while he was in his mother’s womb. Look at Psalm 139:12-16. God formed David while he was in his mother’s womb. Unborn babies are real human beings. They have feelings. When an evil doctor jerks them out of their mother, it hurts them.

Shame on any woman that has this done to a baby. Shame on any doctor who performs such a terrible act. God blessed women with the ability to have a child. Abortion should never enter a woman’s mind. God blessed doctors with the ability to save lives, not destroy them.

*Clovis, CA*

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“In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: But the lips of the wise shall preserve them” (Pro. 14:3).

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Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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**Bishops:** Paul Brantley  
Michael Hatcher  
Bill Busch

**Minister:** Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 27

July 1, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
850-455-7595

## Some Thoughts About Freedom

*Wayne Jackson*

Freedom is a word that frequently falls glibly from our tongues. But how often do we take time to reflect upon some of the valuable truths about freedom? Please consider the following observations.

### Freedom Is Often Taken for Granted

If one considers the world's history, one might be surprised to learn that freedom is a rare commodity. Man has enslaved his fellows from time immemorial. The legislative documents of the Old Testament (Exo. 21; Lev. 25; Deu. 15), along with the private and public literature of the ancient Near East, reveal that servitude was a common phenomenon in antiquity. In the Roman Empire, during the New Testament era, it has been estimated that there were as many as sixty million slaves. Even today, in our *enlightened* modern

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The greatest contribution that any person could make toward the freedom of their country would be to maintain and promote the principles of righteousness consistent with the character of God!

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world, millions are enslaved to various forms of tyrannical systems. Unfortunately, it is probably true that many of us in the United States and some Western European countries take our freedom lightly. Almost flippantly, we just assume that freedom is the natural thing. It is not! We serenely assume that we will always enjoy it. We may not! In the past, thousands who have lazily relaxed in

the joys of freedom have been rudely awakened to find it wrested from them! Freedom can be transitory for those who fail to appreciate the responsibility connected with it.

### The Responsibility Connected with Freedom Is Great

One of the Bible's frequently emphasized truths is God's sovereignty over the world's nations. Jehovah rules in the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:17), removing kings and setting up kings (2:21). He is "ruler over the nations" (Psa. 22:28). The inspired Paul affirmed that God determines the nations' "appointed seasons" (i.e., how long they endure) and "the bounds of their habitation" (i.e., the extent of their conquests) (Acts 17:26). Moreover, the Scriptures indicate that the Lord judges nations according to their moral character. The writer of Proverbs declares that "Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people" (14:34). The Psalmist exclaimed, "The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God" (9:17). When a nation upholds Jehovah's principles of truth, justice, and moral integrity, He can grant it freedom and national prosperity. When a country ignores those noble traits that are an intrinsic part of the eternal God and by which He expects men to deal with their contemporaries, the Lord can drive them to their knees by removing their freedom and subjecting them to bondage. Old Testament history is filled with examples of such. The wicked people

of Canaan were dispossessed of that land when the cup of their iniquity became full (Gen. 15:16). The Israelites were delivered from the bondage of Egypt and given Canaan. Still, tragically, they lost it when they departed from the Lord's ways (Jos. 23:15-16). Nineveh was warned of destruction if her citizens did not turn from their evil. By Jonah's preaching, they turned and were spared for another century and a half until they became corrupt again. The prophet Nahum was dispatched to proclaim their "full end" (Nah. 1:8). Who can forget the great lesson of history that, for lack of six righteous souls, Sodom, Gomorrah, and their neighboring cities were burned from the face of the earth? (Gen. 18:20, 32).

The dramatic impression made by these historical facts is this: **The greatest contribution any person could make toward the freedom of their country would be to maintain and promote the principles of righteousness consistent with the character of God!** If there is a truth that literally shouts from the pages of the Bible, it is this: **Freedom is not achieved by military might. The providential care of Almighty God bestows it!**

#### Freedom Has Been Greatly Abused

The First Amendment of the Constitution declares:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The initial design of this amendment, of course, was to prevent the establishment of a state religion and to inoculate against the type of politico-religious despotic systems so prevalent in much of the world. A modern judiciary has, however, given a woefully foreign interpretation to these words, and *freedom* has become a license for every type of wickedness imaginable. Consider these examples: (a) Under the guise of "every woman is *free* to control her own body," some one million unborn babies are annually deprived of "life, lib-

erty, and the pursuit of happiness." (b) Sailing under the flag of "freedom of speech and press," the vilest forms of pornographic books, movies, stage shows, etc., undermine the moral fabric of our nation. (c) A proliferation of "no-fault" divorce laws has ignored God's timeless principles for the home and has promised a new *freedom*, which is *no freedom at all!* (d) "Freedom of religion" is now viewed by many to mean "freedom **from** religion (and morality)" so "no God," "man's naturalistic origin," and "amorality" are now the order of the day in thousands of classrooms across the nation.

All these things, and other such matters, are sterling examples of the abuse of our great freedom bestowed by God. And the bitter fruits of this libertine irresponsibility will inevitably be forthcoming.

#### The Ultimate Freedom That Transcends All Others

God has granted a freedom that surpasses all temporal freedoms, for it pervades man's heart and provides tranquility of spirit regardless of the difficult circumstances in which one may find himself. It is freedom from sin and the clutch of Satan (John 12:31f; Rom. 6:3-4, 17ff), freedom of anxiety over the frail things of this world (Mat. 6:25ff), and freedom from the fear of death and the uncertainties of the future (Heb. 2:14). This freedom no one can take from you; you only can surrender it! May we be thus determined to maintain this sweet liberty for ourselves and point others to it?

*Deceased*

The Jews reject Christ as the Savior of men, and they have never ceased to suffer, being dispersed among all nations of the earth, a homeless, wandering race. But, sinner, you are doing the same thing. How can you hope for a better fate than they? Beware, God's judgments are sure.

*Author Unknown*

# Faithfulness: The Way to Heaven

*Paul Vaughn*

Jesus commanded that Christians must live a life of faithfulness. “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). In the Sermon on the Mount, He said:

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven (Mat. 7:21).

The faithful way of life is the only way to Heaven.

What does it mean to be faithful? It means paying exceptional attention to God’s written Word and obeying it. “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*’” (4:4). The Christian life is the way of truth, being dependable, constant, loyal, and unmovable, specifically in service to God. A good indicator of the faithful life is attendance in worship and Bible study (Heb. 10:25). The mature Christian understands that faithfulness is good for the soul; it is the path of spiritual growth.

The Scriptures teach that God is faithful, for it is written, “God is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9). An impor-

tant question to ask is, “What if God is as faithful as we are?” Each Christian should take time to answer that question honestly. What if God is as faithful to us as we are to Him? Thankfully, God is faithful, and mankind can depend upon Him.

Christians must be faithful because unfaithfulness makes one unfit for Heaven. All who are unfaithful are not prepared to meet God (Heb. 9:27). Every Christian should ask, “Am I fit for Heaven?” “Have I lived a life that glorifies God?” Sadly, time has a way of robbing Christians of their love for God, and without love for God, there is no faithfulness.

Jesus said to him, “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*” This is *the* first and great commandment” (Mat. 22:37-38).

For every Christian who has lost his love for God, there is a way home.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

*Hopkinsville, KY*

## Which Disturbs You Most

By determining what disturbs us we can get a good insight into our interest. It cannot be successfully denied that too many who claim to be Christians today are more disturbed about problems in the material realm than about problems in the spiritual realm. Which disturbs **you** most?

1. A soul lost in hell or a scratch on that new car?
2. A sermon ten minutes too long or lunch a half-hour late?
3. You missing the worship or missing a day’s work?
4. The church not growing or the garden not growing?

5. Your Bible being unopened or your newspaper being unread?
6. Contribution decreasing or your income decreasing?
7. Your children late to Bible classes or late to school?
8. Miss a good Bible class or miss your favorite TV program?
9. Church work neglected or housework neglected?
10. Low attendance at worship or low attendance at a party?

*Author Unknown*

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Remember in your prayers:

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Bill & Peggy Crowe

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## Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem?

*Michael Demory*

With the events that continue to occur in the Middle East, we constantly hear of the ongoing struggle between Israel and Palestine. War and death in the Middle East have been commonplace since 1948 when the United Nations stepped in to grant land to Israel. Land that had belonged to the Palestinians. This was done, we are told, to fulfill the promises given to Israel by God centuries before. Denominations often quote Psalm 122:6, which says, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee,” as if this applies to us today. There is nothing wrong in praying that Israelites repent and turn to God through the Gospel. However, Christians are not to uphold any person or nation that stands in rebellion against the will of God.

The context of “praying for the peace of Jerusalem,” as found in Psalm 122, was given to the Jews by King Hezekiah at a time in history when the twelve tribes of Judah had become divided by Solomon’s son Rehoboam, and Jeroboam, one of Solomon’s servants (1 Kin. 11:26-12:16). Hezekiah was king over the Southern two tribes of Judah and Simeon. The Northern ten tribes mainly had been taken slaves by Assyria years before. Hezekiah encouraged the remnant of the Northern Tribes to come to the city of Jerusalem for Passover (2 Chr. 30:1). They, the Jews, would prosper, who loved the city of Jerusalem where dwelt the house of God. For approximately 250 years, the tribes had been

divided, most of whom had grown up not knowing Jerusalem was the center of the Jewish political and religious economy.

The Northern tribes have been invited, not to be reprimanded for their continued unwillingness to fellowship their brethren of the South, but to unite once again in praise to Jehovah their God. Praying for the peace of Jerusalem has nothing at all to do with Gentiles today prospering because we pray for its peace and protection, but it had everything to do with the Israelites coming back together at that period to lead peaceable lives in all godliness. No one can pray for peace in Jerusalem in the sense Premillennialists seek it as Jews continually rebel against God and Christ! There was a time when the Jews **were** God’s chosen, but that time passed away over 1900 years ago (Psa. 135:4; Acts 13:46).

Concerning the land God promised to give to the Israelites, sadly for them, that time has also come and gone. They received every bit of the land that God promised them as described in the book of Joshua:

And the LORD gave unto Israel **all** the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and **they possessed it**, and dwelt therein (Jos. 21:43),

and

that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you [Israel]; **all** are come to pass unto

you [Israel], *and* not one thing hath failed thereof (23:14-16; 21:45).

Before allowing the Israelites to possess the land God was about to grant them, He issued the Law of Blessing and Cursing:

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;...But **if thine heart turn away**, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, *and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land*, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it (Deu. 30:1-2, 17-18).

Israel did lose their land when taken into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. Only a remnant returned to a smaller portion of the land God initially gave them. God never promised to return the original area of land promised to Abraham; they lost that when they refused to follow God's law (Jer. 3:25). God's only chosen people today are New Testament Christians, members of the church of Christ, which consist of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:24; 2 The. 2:14). John warned there were many antichrists in his day (1 John 2:18), referring to the Jews, Gnostics, et. al. These antichrists (Jews, Muslims, Pentecostals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Church of God, Christian Science, Nazarene fellowship, La Luz del Mundo, et. al.) continue to exist today. We are not to bid God's speed to those who teach another

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).

gospel, especially those who are antichrist (2 John 7-11). Denominationalists, like the Jews, possess a skewed materialist view of end-time events.

Premillennial doctrine takes passages out of context to defend their support of Israel as God's chosen. However, Christians and those claiming to be should know better! Should we “pray for the peace of Jerusalem?” Yes, we should, but not in the sense of what Psalm 122 speaks about or what Premillennialists teach by misapplying Scripture. Instead, we should not only pray for Jerusalem and its citizens that they find the true peace that leads to heavenly hope, but we should also pray that men and women everywhere find that peace that passes all understanding. There will never be the type of peace men seek in this life because there is sin in the world. We can pray that Israel turns from their wicked ways towards the only peace that God offers through His Son Jesus Christ—the remission of sins (Acts 3:26). When Jesus said He came to bring a sword, He also said that the sword would bring division—a boundary line between those who choose to obey the will of God and those who reject it. The faithful are commanded to have no fellowship with those who reject it (Eph. 5:11).

Refusing to pray for the peace of Jerusalem in the sense that they are still God's chosen is not being hateful or antisemitic. Instead, we should only be praying and hoping the Jews of today will open their hearts and minds to hearing the truth of God's Word and obey it so they may have the true peace God desires for all men and women. The Jewish people have always been stiff-necked (Exo. 33:3; Acts 7:51). The apostle Paul desired greatly that his Jewish brethren would one day be saved (Rom. 10:1). He said they held a zeal for God, which they still do today. However, it is not according to knowledge (10:2), like many denominational and non-denominational people. As always, we encourage you to visit us anytime and freely ask any Bible question you may have, and we will study it together through God's Word.

*Mexico, MO*

# How May I Be Freed from Sin?

*Gayle Oler*

If you are going to break the hold of sin upon your life and clear your record of its blot, you are interested in the answer to the question, “How may I be freed from my sin?” Paul said to the Romans:

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. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

We are free from our sins when we obey the doctrine that Paul delivered. But what is that form of doctrine that man is to obey? In the same chapter—Romans 6—we read Paul’s explanation as to what they had obeyed.

Paul says:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

The form given to us was baptism, in which we have the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

As proof positive that it is in beautiful baptism that a man is freed from his sins, Paul declares that we are baptized into the death of Christ (6:3) and that the death that Jesus died, He died to sin (6:10). As we die to sin in baptism, we die with Christ.

Paul says in Romans 6:7, “For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

But is that all? Valid baptism is always preceded by honest faith in Christ. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). Without faith, it is impossible to please God. And Jesus said, “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

So, the man who is a sincere believer in Jesus must repent of his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38). Have you done this so you may be freed from your past sins?

*Deceased*

## Justification By Faith Includes Baptism

*C. R. Nichol*

“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up” (Heb. 11:29—ASV). The Israelites crossed the Red Sea “by faith,” but they were not on the other side the moment they believed. They spent a night of anxious toil and great fear before they could sing the song of deliverance on the other side. Here, the phrase “by faith” spans the Red Sea and includes every step the people took in crossing it.

Some think that baptism is excluded because Paul says we are “justified by faith” (Rom. 5:1). However, the phrase “by faith,” “instead of excluding the acts of faith, which make faith perfect,

actually includes obedience. It can be plainly shown that “by faith,” in this case, includes baptism. Paul says:

For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:1-2—ASV).

They crossed the Red Sea “by faith,” and in crossing, they were baptized. “By faith” includes what was done in crossing. But in crossing, they were baptized. Therefore, “by faith,” in this example includes baptism.

*Deceased*

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## How to Become and Remain a Christian

*C. D. Plum*

### How to Become a Christian

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6).

According to this, faith is the starting point in becoming a Christian. To put any condition of salvation before faith would be to displease the Lord.

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is the next Scriptural and logical step in becoming a Christian. Repentance is a change of mind or heart, but if one did not first believe the divine Word of God, there would be no sense of reason in changing one’s attitude toward sin. But there is confusion in some minds concerning the truth I have expressed here regarding faith being first and repentance being second. This confusion comes about by misunderstanding the statement Jesus made to the Jews: “repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). This, they think, is just the reverse of what I have said. But what Jesus said to the Jews is wholly true, yet it does not contradict what I said about repentance being second in the New Testament plan for becoming Christians. The idea is this: God’s Old Testament law told of the coming of the Christ and His Gospel. Christ came as promised and taught as predicted. The Jews had rejected Christ. Hence, their first requirement was repentance. The same is true of

the Gentile proselytes. “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). These had to repent—that is, change their minds toward God and the Old Testament law that foretold of Christ and His Gospel that the Jews rejected. Having repented toward God for rejecting Christ, they then could “believe the gospel.” Those who had rejected Christ could not rightly believe His Gospel until they repented toward God and put themselves in a position where they could be right with God and His Son. So, changing their minds concerning God and His Law regarding Christ whom He sent, they placed themselves in a position to believe Christ’s Gospel. Then, the next New Testament step after faith is repentance of one’s sins to become a Christian.

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 10:32). So, for those who have never lived under the Old Testament Scripture, to become a Christian is easy and straightforward—faith in Christ and His Gospel, repentance of sins, and confessing our faith in Christ with the mouth before men. But with all of this, we are not yet Christians. We are one step short of being Christians.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). What is this baptism that puts us into Christ and enables us to become Christians? This is water

baptism. “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?... And he commanded them to be baptized” (Acts 10:47-48). This baptism is a “burial” in water. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the...operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). This baptism is “for the remission of sins.” Note the following language, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). And again, we read, “arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins” (22:16).

Since the believing, repenting, and confessing souls who were baptized according to the New Testament command were by the Lord added to His church (Acts 2:41-47), so we also, by the same Lord, were in the same manner added to the Lord’s church. And since Christians are in the Lord’s church, we became Christians the same way—we became members of the true church.

#### How to Remain a Christian

To remain Christians, we must lead Christlike lives. Our code of morals must be in harmony with him who “spake as never man spake” and “in whose mouth was found no guile.” Our lives must be consecrated to righteousness and spirituality. We must remember that the carnal mind is enmity toward God. The Christian life is a life of sobriety. It is a life of denying “ungodliness and worldly lusts.” It is a life of true devotion. To remain a Christian, one must be faithful in every good work. One must possess the spirit of Christ, which means to love that which is right and to despise that which is evil.

One cannot remain a faithful Christian without faithfully attending church services. Regular worship of God is a spiritual **must** in Christian life. “Forsaking not the assembling,” says the Holy

Are we satisfied with the way we have been living? We are? Is it strange that people should be satisfied with their own lives? “All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes” (Pro. 16:2). “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (16:25). Now, another questions, and the most important one, is: Is the Lord satisfied with the way we have been living? “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (16:7).

*E. M. Borden—Deceased*

Spirit. And how brethren can become so limited in their thinking to think that this service, when we commune, is the only one we are required to attend is more than I can see. If we ate one time a week from our tables, the fleshly man would soon perish. If we feed upon the Word of God, the bread of life, just once a week, we are soon spiritually weak.

I cannot see why we should invest thousands of dollars in a meetinghouse that is only necessary to be used once a week. Nor can I understand how we figure a once-a-week service can be counted as a sacrifice on our part, at least upon the part of most of us. Yet, our bodies must be presented as a living sacrifice.

We cannot remain Christians by serving the Lord only when the weather is favorable. Why do we let cold or heat, rain or snow, mud or ice hinder church attendance? We do not let these things hinder us from our daily labors, but we let them hinder us from church attendance. Why?

We must also share our prosperity with the Lord if we are to remain faithful Christians. We are to “give as prospered upon the first day of the week” and to give “cheerfully.” If brethren were all giving cheerfully, as prospered, there would

be enough money in the church treasury to feed and clothe all our needy and to establish congregations and build meetinghouses wherever and whenever needed.

Too much centralization of power and wealth among the Lord's people is not conducive to real Christian growth. But the sharing, the helping of brethren in places where they need help to get to a better work for the Lord, is more blessed because "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Then, too, to remain a Christian, one must spend much time in prayer. A fish can no more live out of water than a Christian can live out of the atmosphere of prayer. Much time should be devoted to secret prayer. The more we pray, the harder we should work, and the harder we work, the more we pray. Prayer, apart from work, is like faith without work. It is dead. The Lord helps those who work.

*Deceased*

## Making a Stand for the Truth

*Ken Chumbley*

In the fateful winter morning of January 28, 1986, the space shuttle Challenger stood poised for launch. Overnight, the temperature plummeted into the twenties. At liftoff it was a crisp 36 degrees F. Four-foot icicles still clung ominously to the launch tower.

Allen McDonald, an engineer employed by the manufacturer of the solid rocket boosters that straddled the shuttle, shuddered, but not because of the cold. Research had shown that the "O" rings sealing the sections of each booster might be more likely to leak as the temperature dropped. In fact, the rings had never been tested during an actual launch below 51 degrees F.

McDonald stood virtually alone as he steadfastly opposed the launch that icy morning, but he was overruled. The launch went ahead as scheduled, and 73 seconds later six brave astronauts and one enthusiastic school teacher lost their lives when the "O" rings failed.

Was Allan McDonald arrogant when he challenged the decision to launch? Was he intolerant? Any thinking person would say "no." He just was unwilling to see innocent people die because others had ignored or distorted the facts. We would say Allan McDonald knew the truth, and he stood up for it (Mike Bellah, *Truth and Tragedy*).

We live in a day and age when truth, the truth of God's Word, is under attack. Even within churches of Christ there are those who would seek to deny the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. Where do we stand? Are we going to stand idly by, thinking it is not our concern, or are we going to make a stand for the truth, no matter what the cost?

Brethren, if we are going to be true to God and His Word, then we have no option, we **must** make a stand for the truth. We must be ready to answer those who would deny the inspiration and or the authority of the Scriptures. Even though we might stand alone, even though others about us are unwilling to stand for the truth or have turned their backs upon the truth, we **must** take our stand. May the Lord help us to have the courage to take that stand knowing that as we do, we stand with God.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (1 Pet. 3:15). Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that *ye* should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

*Deceased*

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Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Aleacia Godwin

Bill Busch

## Please Remember

July 21

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

July 31

Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 p.m., in the auditorium.

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 30

July 22, 2024

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## Moral Influence of Scripture

*Guy N. Woods*

Methuselah, chiefly distinguished from the fact that his life span was greater than any other mortal, was, at Adam's death, approximately two hundred years old. At the death of that ancient patriarch, Shem, the oldest son of Noah, he was nearly a hundred. When Shem died, Abraham was one hundred fifty years old. Thus, through two people only—Methuselah and Shem—was it necessary for tradition to pass from Adam to Abraham; and yet, during this period, the world lapsed into idolatry, and the light of Monotheism—the doctrine of the one true God—was all but extinguished. Here is a demonstration, often repeated in the history of the race, of the ease with which men become forgetful of Jehovah when they allow themselves to turn away from divine revelation.

---

*The Scriptures not only reveal God to us and exhibit His love, justice, holiness, and purity; they reveal man to himself.*

---

The study of man, when he has lived for appreciable periods without the influence of the Scriptures about him, reveals two important facts. The worship in which he engages tends to make him more wicked. Man is a worshipful creature. Whether in heathenism or civilization, this characteristic is discernible. But this

tendency, instead of elevating him in the absence of divine influence, contributes to his degradation. One has only to dip into the history of Greece and Rome to discover unmistakable evidence of this fact. The worship of heathen deities was often attended by the most enormous crimes and consisted of the vilest and most shameful rites. Purity, chastity, and morality, in general, were unknown. The worship engaged under such conditions contributed to degeneration, and this anomalous condition developed: the more a man honored his gods, the worse he became himself; the oftener he served them, the more wicked and depraved he became. This moral corruption reached its ultimate in the sacrifice of human beings. An ancient historian, Diodorus Siculus, gives a chronicle of two hundred children of the best families of Carthage being burned to death in sacrifice to Saturn, the Moloch of the Old Testament. Because of the influence of heathenism upon the Israelites, Moses needed to issue a decree against it, and in the subsequent history of Israel, instances of its practice are recorded (Deu. 12:31; 1 Kin. 11:7).

A second fact, discernible in the history of man, is that civilization, in the absence of true religion, has offered no check to idolatry, thus demonstrating the truth of Paul's observation: "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21). An analysis of such history reveals that

God his degeneracy is less acute and becomes more so in exact ratio to the passing of time and to the distance he goes. For example, Plutarch reports that Numa, an early Roman ruler, forbade his subjects from representing God as a man or beast and that for one hundred sixty years, the temples of the realm were without images. But in after ages, and during the period of her greater *refinement*, Rome adopted the gods of almost every nation she conquered and opened her temples to the grossest superstitions of the most barbarous people, persecuting none but Jews and Christians, who alone possessed the light of truth.

The latter portion of the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans contains a vivid and accurate picture of men's views of God and their character when they have lost the knowledge of divine revelation. He describes them as "vain in their reasonings," "their senseless heart" being darkened.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,... Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.

For the most appalling description of depravity ever penned, turn and read Romans 1:18-32. This shocking picture of Gentile degeneracy is a portrayal of the inevitable end of man without the influence of the Scriptures.

Those without the knowledge thus obtained are destitute of information on two vital and fundamental matters. First, they are ignorant of the one true God; second, they are ignorant of themselves. The Scriptures not only reveal God to us and exhibit His love, justice, holiness, and purity; they reveal man to himself. Were it not for the information thus vouchsafed, we would not know where we came from, why we are here, or where we are going when we pass from the scenes of this existence. Hence, the Bible reveals man's origin, mission in life, and ultimate destiny. It lifts his origin from the accumulated dust of the ages and presents him with the only plausible and sensible account of his beginning, it unfolds a system of ethics superior to that offered by the earth's wisest philosophers, and it permits him to peer into the future and see outlined his destiny when he has shuffled off the mortal coil. Whenever, in the long and tortuous history of past ages, man has brought his life and conduct in harmony therewith, he has lived on an exalted plane. Failure to do this has quickly plunged him into the most corrupt and depraved paganism. Facts everywhere illustrate the truth that, in proportion to man's ignorance of, or disregard for, the Sacred Writings, the race becomes "vain in their imaginations," and their "foolish hearts" are darkened.

*Deceased*

## The Golden Rule

*Tim M. Smith*

"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" (Mat. 7:12).

Usually, one of the earliest lessons we teach our children is the Golden Rule—do to others as you would have them do to you. It is an excellent lesson to teach, Biblical to the core. A child who has never learned this lesson is usually trouble—

trouble while a child and even more trouble when they grow up. The concept is simple enough—if what you are about to do or say to another is not what you would want them to do or say to you were the tables turned, do not say it or do it.

As adults, this rule of gold is applicable. Its absence in our lives is even more noticeable than in our children's lives. As children, we need some-

one to teach us how to behave; as adults, we ought to know already! I have seen friendships of many years destroyed because one (or both) failed to practice the golden rule. I have seen the cause of Christ suffer in communities because someone in the congregation failed to practice the golden rule—sometimes, the offense was committed before members of the church. Sometimes before the world, and in both instances, the damage was done.

If the thing you are about to say or do is not what you would like to hear or have done to you, **do not do it**. Think it through, determine the consequences, and then act—if and only if it proves to be a thing that will help. I have found through the years that some things just should not be done—judging the intentions of another, insulting another in public (or, in most instances, in private either), etc. If you have a grievance against another, approach it as a grievance. Tell the person about the grievance,

be friendly, try to give them a way to resolve the issue, and then move on. The *end game* is essential—when you raise an issue, ensure you present a way to fix it.

If someone has offended you, call the offense to their attention and be prepared to respond appropriately to their response. If you tell someone of a matter and they apologize to you, forgive them. Otherwise, you become guilty of sin. Bury the hatchet (and not in their back). Leave the matter there, where it died, and move on. How would you feel if you offended someone else and they refused to leave it when it was resolved? I believe that none of us would like that. Why, then, are we prone to treat others so?

Check all actions according to the Golden Rule, and you will find that at day's end, you will at least be able to pillow your head with peace of mind. That may not be “everything,” but it is indeed “something”—something worthwhile at that.

*Deceased*

## “Quite an Accident”

The atheist says:

There is no God. All wonders around us are accidental. No mighty hand made the thousand billion stars. They made themselves. The earth spins itself to keep the oceans from falling off. Infants teach themselves to cry when they are hungry or hurt. Faith is the crutch for the ignorant, the opium of the masses.

Has he examined the evidence? Whose faith is based on fact? Which makes more sense?

- How does the sugar thermometer in the pancreas know the proper blood sugar level to keep us from falling into a coma and dying?
- How does the heartbeat last for years without faltering? It rests between beats! It pumps 800 million times in an average life span, pushing enough blood to fill a string of tank cars stretching from New York to Boston.
- The pattern of a person's fingerprints never changes, and no two persons are identical.

What was “evolution's” purpose in keeping these?

- Kidneys filter poison from the blood and leave those components that are useful. How does the kidney know one from another?
- A brain weighs less than three pounds but directs all thoughts, feelings, and actions. Each cell dials messages to other cells in billions of different combinations. A Cubic half-inch of brain cells contains a lifetime of memories. Who gave the human tongue the flexibility to form words and a brain to understand them but denied it to the brute animals? Who showed a womb how to keep splitting a tiny ovum until a baby has the proper number of fingers, eyes, and ears in the right places and then release it into the world when it is strong enough to live?

*Author Unknown*

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Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Karen Ayliffe

Bill Busch

## Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Aleacia Godwin in the death of her aunt, Sis Pierce, on July 16. Please keep Aleacia and her family in your prayers.

## Please Remember

July 31

Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 p.m.,  
in the auditorium.

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# BEACON

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## The Beginning of the Gospel

*Foy E. Wallace, Jr.*

Thus it is written...that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).

The second chapter of Acts is the hub of the Bible—the contents of the whole Bible center in this chapter. Everything in the Old Testament points forward, and everything in the New Testament points backward, to the second chapter of Acts. In its Old Testament, prophecies and predictions are fulfilled, and New Testament blessings and promises are enjoyed. The second chapter of Acts is called “the beginning” by the prophets and apostles. Isaiah said: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). Quoting in substance this prophecy, Jesus said: “Thus it is written...that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” Several years later, this first Gospel sermon of the second chapter of Acts was preached, and Peter referred to that occasion as “the beginning” (Acts 11:15). Let us observe the notable events of this ever-memorable and eventful day.

### Christ First Proclaimed

First, it was on this occasion that Jesus Christ was first proclaimed the Son of God and the Savior of men. He had been confessed before this time but not preached. In the select group of disciples, Peter had made the great confession, “Thou art

the Christ,” but Jesus quickly charged them that they should “tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.” Also, in the presence of Moses and Elijah, the pioneers of law and prophecy, at the transfiguration of Christ, God declared Him to be His Son. Still, again, Jesus cautioned the disciples to “tell it to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead.” The facts of the Gospel could not be preached before the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Did the church exist before the Gospel could be preached? Then, the house was built before its foundation was laid, for Jesus said: “Upon this rock [Christ, the Son of God] I will build my church.” Hence, not until this eventful day of Acts the second chapter, when Jesus was first proclaimed the Son of God and Savior of men, was the foundation laid and the church built upon it, thus fulfilling the word of the prophet: “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, A tried stone, a precious corner *stone*” (Isa. 28:16).

### The Holy Spirit Begins His Work of Conversion

On this day, the Holy Spirit began His mission of conversion. Of the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said to His apostles: “When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). During the personal ministry of Christ, “the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (7:39). We know that Jesus had the Holy Spirit without measure, but not until the second

chapter of Acts was it given to the apostles to reveal the plan of salvation, or to begin its work of conversion—convicting men of sin (See 16:8). Hence, we can understand why the twelve at Ephesus, who had been baptized unto John's baptism, had not so much as heard that the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 19:2). They had not learned of the Holy Spirit's work in revealing the plan of salvation.

In verse 33 of Acts 2, we read: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted [glorified],...he hath shed forth this [the Holy Spirit], which ye now see and hear." Thus, on Pentecost, in the second chapter of Acts, the Holy Spirit began its work of conversion. If the church existed as an established institution before this day, it was inaugurated without Christ proclaimed and without the Holy Spirit's presence and influence in converting men.

#### The Law of Pardon Announced

In the last commission of Christ to the apostles as recorded by Luke, Jesus is quoted as saying: "Thus it is written,...that repentance and remis-

sion of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). But they were commanded to "tarry ye in the city" until they received "power from on high" and "ye shall receive power," they were told, "when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." The power came, and a Spirit-filled apostle preached the first Gospel sermon. A caustic and stinging conviction penetrated the hearers' hearts and brought forth the harrowing cry of faith: "Brethren, what shall we do?" The man with the keys of the kingdom in his hand announced the terms: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." They "gladly received his word" and "were baptized," and the Lord added them to his newly established church, the first additions, three thousand in number. So came the Power, Spirit, and Kingdom on Pentecost; thus, the second chapter of Acts marks the beginning of the Gospel.

*Deceased*

## God's Sovereignty

Much can be gleaned from Psalms 95-100, about the sovereignty of God and its practical impact upon your life. The fact of God's sovereignty reverberates constantly through these six compositions:

For the LORD *is* a great God, And a great King above all gods. In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: The strength of the hills *is* his also. The sea *is* his, and he made it: And his hands formed the dry *land* (95:3-5).

For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised: He *is* to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations *are* idols: But the LORD made the heavens (96:4-5).

The LORD reigneth;... For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: Thou art exalted far above all gods (97:1, 9).

The LORD reigneth;...He sitteth *between* the cherubims;... The LORD *is* great in Zion; And he *is* high above all the people (99:1, 2).

Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *It is* he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture... For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; And his truth *endureth* to all generations (100:3, 5).

An inescapable, practical impact of God's sovereignty is joyful worship and profuse thanksgiving. This is the only sane and appropriate response any thoughtful person can have to this unchanging truth about God.

come, let us sing unto the LORD: Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

... O come, let us worship and bow down: Let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he *is* our God; And we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand (95: 1-2, 6-7).

sing unto the LORD a new song: Sing unto the LORD, all the earth. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; Shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people.... Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, Give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name: Bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: Fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth: The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein: Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice (96:1-3, 7-12).

sing unto the LORD a new song; For he hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.... Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the

earth: Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the LORD...Make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap *their* hands: Let the hills be joyful together Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: With righteousness shall he judge the world, And the people with equity (98:1, 4-6, 8-9).

let the people tremble: He sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.... Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *For it is* holy. ... Exalt ye the LORD our God, And worship at his footstool; *For he is* holy. Exalt the LORD our God, And worship at his holy hill; For the LORD our God *is* holy (99:1, 3, 5, 9).

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: Come before his presence with singing.... Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: Be thankful unto him, and bless his name (100:1-2, 4).

An enduring motivation for our worship each week ought to be our knowledge and appreciation of God's sovereignty.

*Author Unknown*

## "Choose You This Day"

*A. G. Freed*

The Bible and evolution cannot both be true. A man may choose between the two, but the two cannot be mixed. It is a serious choice and will influence anyone's life. Evolution cannot escape the law of God that declares everything must bring forth "after his kind." A man may turn away from the God of the Bible and accept evolution, but if he does, he is an infidel.

The god of evolution is not the God of the Bible. God said, "Let us make man in our image." He tells us plainly how he made him, but the evolutionist says he made man some other way. He is an infidel. The epithet may not be very pleasing, but he made the choice. The originators of the

theory of evolution were agnostics, higher critics, and atheists—all infidels.

Its adherents are true to type—"everything after its kind." They all want placards removed that say, "Read the Bible," and they object to opening our courts with prayer. All who believe the Bible to be the Word of God are, with them, ignoramuses, and all *wisdom* will die with them.

The theory of evolution is a march toward the jungles. It links man up with the beast of the field and leaves him in death with the same hope as the ox in the stall.

*Deceased*

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“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (Jam. 1:12).

### Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff                      Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley              Carla Burseson

Karen Ayliffe                      Bill Busch

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# BEACON

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## “Baptized for the Dead”

*R. L. Whiteside*

Dear Brother Whiteside: “Please explain 1 Pet. 4:5-6; also 1 Cor. 15:29. I have a Mormon neighbor. I am enclosing her literature which will explain why I want you to explain the above references. They believe in faith, repentance, and baptism, just as we do, but they also teach baptism for the dead. She sent money to their headquarters in Utah and had her deceased mother baptized!”

From the literature sent, I copy the following:

Here the seeker after truth may properly inquire, “If it is necessary for all men and women to be baptized, what will become of the good people who have died without that privilege?” To this the reply of the Scriptures is that the dead who died without hearing the gospel will have it preached to them (1 Pet. 4:5-6). They who obey it will be saved, but they who reject it will be condemned, as though they were in the flesh.

“But the dead person cannot be baptized,” says one. Very true; but God is just. In His wisdom He has provided a way in which the dead can be baptized for, by those who are in the flesh, as shown by the apostle Paul in his question, “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead...” (1 Cor. 15:29). His question plainly shows that “baptism for the dead” was both believed in and practiced by the early Christians.

According to the foregoing excerpt, the dead will have the Gospel preached to them. “They who obey it will be saved, but they who reject it will be condemned.” Then, if a dead person rejects

the Gospel, he will be lost, no matter what is done on earth among the living. Here, then, is a puzzle: How can the Mormon know whether the dead person for whom he is being baptized accepted or rejected the Gospel? Surely baptism for a dead person who rejects the Gospel would do such a dead person no good, for they plainly say that the dead person who rejects the Gospel will be condemned. In trying to solve this puzzle, the Mormon will involve himself in others. But, to the passages cited:

“Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead. For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Pet. 4:5-6—ASV). Macknight gives this translation of verse 6:

Besides, for this purpose the gospel hath been preached even to the dead, that although they might be condemned indeed by men in the flesh, yet they might live eternally by God in the spirit.

It is repeatedly said, as in verse 5, that God will judge the living and the dead, but it is taught that the dead will be raised before they are judged. Peter says the Gospel was preached to the dead. Notice the difference between Peter’s “was preached” and the Mormon’s “will be preached.” What Peter was talking about had already been done. But even if it were said that the Gospel

would be preached to the dead, it would not necessarily mean that the Gospel would be preached to them while they are dead. The dead will be judged, but not till they are raised from the dead.

But the doctrine of preaching to the dead is absurd. Preach to the dead? Who but a crazy person would stand over the graves of dead people and preach to them? “Oh, but the gospel will be preached to the spirits of these dead bodies.” I know what is claimed, but I also know that the spirits of these dead bodies are not dead—the body is dead. Preaching to living spirits is not preaching to dead folks! Peter was talking about dead folks to whom the Gospel had been preached while they were living. The story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) shows that a person’s fate is settled when he dies. There can be no crossing over from the state of torment to the state of bliss.

First Corinthians 15:29 has already been quoted. Paul was proving that there is to be a resurrection of the dead. In this verse, he raises the question, “If the dead are not raised up, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead?” To make it fit the Mormon practice, it should read like this: “If the dead are not raised, what shall the dead do for whom someone has been baptized?” But the question does not concern the dead, but those who have been baptized for the dead—what shall they do? Well, even if the dead are not raised, the Mormons could keep on collecting money for being baptized for them! It appears that that is one thing those who are baptized for the dead do.

The Mormons make a mess of the passage and go contrary to all the rest of the teachings of the Bible concerning baptism. Some of the trouble is cleared away if we notice that the term *the dead* is often used to signify the dead state—that is, death. “Resurrection from the dead” is a resurrection from death—from the dead state. For the Jews to accept Christ is as life from the dead—their state of spiritual death (Rom. 11:15). The

Every man is a steward unto God. There is no title, office, or trust so sacred as stewardship. It grants a man full authority to direct, control, and use the property of his Master. The owner has no special oversight of his affairs but entrusts them to the care and management of the steward. There can be no doubt that this is the proper view of our position in the world. We are here to keep house for the Lord. We hold all things in trust, so we must give an account whenever He asks it. We can use anything if we prove faithful to our divine trust. It was the infidelity of the steward in the parable, the careless scattering of the master’s goods, that led to his dismissal.

*Author Unknown*

reader will notice that there is a difference between the resurrection of the dead and the “resurrection from the dead.”

People who are baptized are baptized for, or in respect to, the dead state. Now, if the dead are not raised, what do they do, or what do they accomplish, by being baptized for this dead state? This view of the matter harmonizes with what the Bible says about baptism.

The following facts should have weight:

1. Christianity is an individual matter. No one can believe for another, repent for another, or be baptized for another.
2. If the fact that baptism is necessary, makes it necessary for a living person to be baptized for a dead person, then someone must believe and repent for a dead person, for they are as necessary as baptism.
3. We are commanded to baptize penitent believers, but nowhere are we commanded to be baptized for dead people.
4. No historical evidence exists for such a practice as the Mormons’ advocate existed at Corinth. If it had existed, and Paul used

it as *argumentum ad hominem*, that would not prove the practice correct. He used war, the equivalent of war, the races, and even boxing as illustrations but did not endorse such things.

It is hardly correct to say that the Mormons believe in faith, repentance, and baptism, just as we do. Their faith is not the same as my faith. They

have fixed up a sort of material god, and they believe in Joe Smith as a prophet and the *Book of Mormon* as an inspired book. They believe that there are now inspired prophets and that no part of the Bible is binding upon any generation, save as it may be taught or bound by some living inspired prophet.

*Deceased*

## Anti-Bible Hostility

*Gary W. Summers*

Does the world seem a little nuttier every day? A person can hardly tell the difference between real and fake news (even religiously) because of so many bizarre actions. This news item was checked for authenticity, so bizarre is it, but it was reported by ABC, CBS, and AP (if that is worth anything). On June 28 [2017], in Little Rock, Arkansas, a man yelling, "Freedom!" crashed his vehicle into a one-day-old monument to the Ten Commandments. Information about injuries to the vehicle was omitted, but after plowing into the 6,000-pound monument, it must have suffered at least a few scratches.

It is not the first time the *alleged* driver had acted so irrationally. Almost three years ago he was arrested for destroying a similar structure in Oklahoma City. The one Arkansas was privately funded. Now since his occupation is listed as "unemployed/disabled," a good penalty would be (assuming he were convicted) for the state to take a significant portion of his check each month until he paid for the replacement of what he destroyed. (Send him before Judge Judy.)

He should also be psychologically examined. Apparently, he does not possess the wherewithal to figure out that destroying a remembrance and symbol of moral and spiritual law will not actually change anything. This law, the Ten Commandments, was destroyed by a greater power than a human being with a ramming machine. God nailed the Law to the cross (Col.

2:14), but nine of the ten principles are incorporated in the New Testament. Has the perpetrator of this senseless act not read what happened when Jehoiakim used his penknife to cut up and burn the Word of God? God replaced it and added a few more words to it (Jer. 36:23-32). Has he never heard that Jesus promised that heaven and earth would pass away but that His words would never pass away (Mat. 24:35)?

This most recent effort is just as futile as any other. Bibles have been confiscated before, yet the progress of the Truth remains unabated. One might as well try to stop the ocean's tides as to stand against God. The man who expressed himself in this destructive manner may just be a wacko. The fact is, however, that many are biased against the Scriptures because they think God has restricted their freedom. The law of God was provided to set us free (John 8:31-32) and keep us free. By giving in to his anger, a person puts his freedom at risk.

*Winter Park, FL*

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

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## Speaking the Truth in Love

*Mike Demory*

That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ (Eph. 4:14-15).

These powerful words of Paul should incite within the open and honest individual the need to **stop** allowing themselves to accept every doctrine that *appears* to come from God's Word without question. Speaking to members of the church of Christ (Christians) in Ephesus, he reminds them they must become and remain adults in their reasoning and thinking skills. He says children are easily tossed about, believing anything others tell them. This is why the Bereans were called *more noble* than those of Thessalonica because they refused to readily accept Paul's words without first research (Acts 17:11). Notice the text says they *examined* the Scriptures daily to make sure the truth was being taught. *Examined* is a legal term for careful and exact research. Millions today allow their feelings and the newest fad of the crowd to be their standard of right and wrong. Such individuals are children in their thinking, allowing themselves to be tossed to and fro and remaining captives of the devil.

Notice how Paul compares the teaching of error (Eph. 4:14) with the teaching of truth (Eph. 4:15). Error never exposes itself as being false. It is always packaged as the truth. Paul also wrote

that there will be those in the world who use "good words and fair speeches [to] deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18). Far too many adults act like lazy children who still expect to be spoon fed, never wanting to have to think for themselves. It is just easier to accept what others tell them to believe than having to spend time in careful and exact research. I have had elders tell me, "Whatever the preacher believes, so goes the congregation." First, such men have just admitted they are not qualified to stand as leaders of the congregation, and second, they have admitted the problem of laziness exists within the church walls! When Jesus said the way to eternal life is narrow, He was describing the meticulous effort required to make it down that path and remain on that path (Mat. 7:13-14).

Rather than allowing ourselves (being pleased) to remain on the milk of the Word, requiring over and over again the first principles (Heb. 5:12; 1 Cor. 3:1-3), should we not be studying to show ourselves approved onto God (2 Tim. 2:15)? Before we can expect to measure up the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13), Paul instills in us the desire to teach the truth in love. Preachers are often told, "You speak the truth, but just not in love," meaning you stepped on our toes. We did not like it because the truth applies to others, not us, and we will not change, so back off! Many believe teaching the truth in love means to soft soap God's Word. Did Jesus teach the truth in love

when He said, “Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Mat. 23:13-33)? Or when He called them “blind guides,” “whited sepulchres,” “serpents and generation of vipers?” Of course, He did.

Teaching the truth in love means telling others the truth when they want to hear it and even when they do not (2 Tim. 4:2). The English word *love* comes from the Greek word *agape*, which means to seek the best possible good for others. Rebuking, reproofing, and admonishing those in error or about to turn to error is never pleasant, but it is most definitely necessary for the soul’s salvation (Jam. 5:19-20). If a person enjoys every minute of exposing the error in another, then such is not done in love and is a sin. No love is demon-

strated when another is allowed to remain in error for fear of hurting *feelings* or destroying a friendship. Remember, we will be held accountable on Judgment Day for not being the watchman on the wall (Eze. 33:3-6) just because we do not want others to dislike us for speaking the truth.

John reminds us:

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:7-8).

The author of Hebrews also exhorts us to “consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb. 10:24). Speaking the truth in love will hopefully provoke others to do the same.

Mexico, MO

## Is Drinking Alcohol Wrong?

*Bob Prichard*

Most people would say that getting drunk is wrong, but many people feel that there is nothing wrong with *social drinking* when done in moderation. There may be a difference in the degree of intoxication between a “social drinker” and a drunkard, but there is very little difference between the two. Whether the person drinks a great deal or only a little, the alcohol impairs him. Drinking moderately makes one “moderately drunk.” God has never allowed “moderate sin.” Sin is sin in His sight.

Wise King Solomon said, “Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging; And whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Pro. 20:1). He asks:

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; They that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, When it giveth his colour in the cup, *When* it moveth itself

aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, And stingeth like an adder (23:29-32).

Solomon’s vivid words depict one of the great dangers of consuming alcohol—“At the last it biteth like a serpent.”

People drink for many reasons. Sometimes, it is because of loneliness, pain, or failure. Often, people just want to follow the crowd or have a good time. Those problems the drinker wants to escape from through the bottle are still there when he is sober again, though. Christ came to help us overcome the problems that face us. Among the Christians at Corinth were former drunkards. Paul reminded them:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanc-

tified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

God intended for Christianity, not alcohol, to fill the void in people's lives. Paul wrote:

be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:18-19).

Some say that drinking is not as serious as other sins. That does not excuse it in God's sight, however. According to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11,

cited above, God classes the drunkard with idolaters, fornicators, and thieves. Alcohol devastates millions of families each year. The influence and power of alcohol bring broken homes, traffic fatalities, and general chaos. Whether alcohol is used moderately or immoderately, it is sinful and opposed to the will of God. A significant percentage of people who try to "social drink" end up as alcoholics, unable to curb or control their desire for alcohol. With all the well-known problems of alcohol, why take a risk by social drinking?

*Copied*

## Does Baptism Save?

*Clarence A. Westapher*

Some men say, "We are saved by grace." However, the Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). We believe that God's grace is His gift toward our salvation, but "through faith" indicates that there is something for us to do and that is a living acting faith. [It is literally, "through the faith" which is the Word of God—editor.] The Pentecostans in Acts 2 realized this when they asked, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" When Peter told them what to do, they were baptized. Then, and not until then, did the Lord add them to His church (2:47). We are saved by grace on God's part, and man's part in salvation is to obey God's commands [the faith—editor]. We repent (17:30) because we have faith in Christ. We are willing to confess Christ (Mat. 10:32) and be baptized into Christ (Gal 3:27).

Again, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7), and without the shedding of blood, there is no remission. It was necessary on God's part for the blood to be shed and necessary for the alien sinner to do his part by obeying the Gospel. The blood must be contacted, or it will avail nothing. To do this, one must go to where He shed it, which is the

place of His death. We do this by obeying the Gospel. "All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3-4). It requires more than the Bible to convince people that there is salvation in sprinkling, pouring, or in faith only.

Baptism is a positive command of the Lord (Mat. 28:19). Baptism is for those who hear the Word and are taught to have faith, repent, and confess Christ before men. Therefore, infants are exempt from baptism.

Some people have water sprinkled or poured over them in lieu of baptism by obeying the precepts and examples of men and then expect salvation from Christ. After baptism, the faithful Christian will study the Word of the Lord carefully and do what the Bible tells him to do. Let us speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent, and when we consider baptism, let there be a thus saith the Lord. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

*Deceased*

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## The Lord's Church Was Not an Accident but Purposed

*Marvin L. Weir*

In previous dispensations of Bible history, there was much to be understood regarding “the mystery of Christ,” but all has

now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; *to wit*, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Eph. 3:4-6).

All that God would have men to know was not revealed through the Old Covenants. The New Testament Church, the Body of Christ, is the chosen instrument through which “the manifold wisdom of God” would be made known to all people (3:10). Let us learn about:

### The Divine Plan!

The purpose and plan of the Lord was “that he might create in himself of the two one new man, *so making peace*” (2:15). This new body would be—*Composed of Jew and Gentile!* The terminology used here represents the entire human race. One who is not a Jew is a Gentile, and it matters not the color of his skin or what language he may speak. *Jew and Gentile* literally encompass all of mankind. The Lord's church is composed of the *ekklesia*, literally, the called-out ones. There is absolutely nothing miraculous or mysterious regarding this calling as all are called through the Gospel (2 The. 2:14). All people have the obligation “to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye [they] were called” (Eph. 4:1). Coffman comments on this walk as follows:

“Walking” is frequently used in the NT as a designation of the Christian's total behavior pattern. To walk “worthily” is therefore to exhibit the kind of life that would do honor to the holy religion of Christ which they had accepted.

All of the high hopes, aspirations and ideals for God's holy church upon this earth, however, must finally succeed or fail in a degree determined, at least in part, by the kind of people who make up the church (195).

### Reconciled to One Another!

“And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16). The truth is stressed that Jew and Gentile “are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (2:19). A careful student of the Scriptures will observe that they all now belong to “the household of the faith” (Gal. 6:10).

### Reconciled to God!

“And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross” (Eph. 2:16). No Jew has a *body* to himself, and neither does any Gentile have a *body* to himself. So, if it is easy to see that there cannot be two acceptable bodies unto God among the entire human race, how can one claim that there are thousands of acceptable *bodies* to our Lord today? A person is either a member of the “one body” or a member of

“another body” which does not belong to the Lord!

### The Devine Preparation!

Tremendous work had to be done, which only God could do, to achieve what God had proposed for mankind. We will see that there was—*A Wall of Partition to Be Broken Down!* “For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition” (2:14). In Old Testament temple worship, the Gentile court was cut off from the inner court by a separating wall or partition. There will be, however, no partiality shown in the church of our Lord. In the Lord’s **one** and **only** church, He promised to build (Mat. 16:18), there would be no room for prejudice, bias, sectarianism, and any other “ism” that man might want to include!

All divisive to the Lord’s church must be broken down. But what is occurring today? Men continue to build walls of partition with their pomp and pride, pagan superstitions, and man-made creeds. All the man-made councils and edicts in the world cannot take the place of a single word from Almighty God!

### Enmity to Be Slain!

“And might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16). Adam Clarke says of the above verse:

That the Jews and Gentiles, believing on the Lord Jesus, might lay aside all their causes of contention, and become one spiritual *body*, or *society* of men, influenced by the *Spirit*, and acting according to the *precepts* of the *Gospel* (441).

What Clarke succinctly states is correct, but did he believe and practice what he said? No, not at all, as Clarke was a member of the Methodist church and a follower of John Wesley. The Methodist church began in 1729 in England, with the influence of John and Charles Wesley. Were Wesley and Clarke willing to “lay aside all causes of contention, and become one spiritual

“*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Eph. 4:4-6).

body... acting according to the precepts of the Gospel?” The answer is “No!”

What part of “one body” (Eph. 4:4) is not understood by theologians and those professing to preach and teach **the Gospel**? How does “one church” become “many churches” and not be divisive? How can different and contradicting man-made creeds all lead to Heaven? Is Christ or man the “chief corner stone” of the church (3:20)? Stones that do not fit together make an unstable and untrustworthy structure. Why can men see this truth in buildings of the world but simply ignore it when it involves religious matters?

God’s Word teaches that there should not be any “schism in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25). A death blow to man-made denominations is given in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13:

Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.... Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?

From the creation of the world, the Lord’s church was purposed in the mind of God!

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Blossom, TX

# The Seed and What it Produces

## *Dub Mowery*

God set the natural laws into existence at the time of creation. This included the law of procreation—each species of life having the ability to reproduce after its own kind. The Scripture reveals that

God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good (Gen. 1:11-12).

What was true of plant life was also true of other species of life. Other types of life were fully developed with the ability to reproduce their own kind, including humans (1:20-28). Each species of life **did not** come from any other species. Therefore, this rules out the unfounded theory of evolution. Since **mankind is of one blood**, this proves that the entire human race has a common heritage (Acts 17:26). Humans are not even the same flesh as other species of life. The inspired Word informs us of this fact in the following words:

All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds (1 Cor. 15:39).

This same principle of seed reproducing after its kind in the physical realm is also true in the spiritual realm. When a person obeys the Gospel of Christ, that individual is born into the spiritual kingdom of the Lord (John 3:5; Rom. 6:17-18). The inspired Word of God is the seed in this process. The apostle Peter reveals this truth as follows: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). This same truth is taught in James 1:18. Also, in the parable of the sower, we learn that the seed

of the kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). Since the spiritual kingdom is the church if we use the same seed that produced the church in the first century, then we will get the same results. The pure seed of the inspired Word will not produce a single denomination. It takes something **other than, or in addition to**, the New Testament to produce a particular denomination. The doctrines of men, whether those doctrines are in the form of catechisms, church manuals, prayer books, or informally upheld, are vain (Mat. 15:9).

If a clay bowl filled with 2,000-year-old wheat grains was found in a pyramid of Egypt, what would those grains be capable of producing if the germ of life remained within them? We know that those grains of wheat would not produce watermelons, cucumbers, or any other kind of grain than wheat. In the spiritual realm, this same principle is just as valid. Those individuals who go past the creeds of men and their preconceived concepts to the pure and unadulterated Word of God found in the New Testament can learn how to become a Christian and live in harmony with the principles. To do less or more than that is to produce a denomination, not the New Testament church.

*Deceased*

Strong congregations are made up of good “churchgoers” and good “church givers.” Without these things, a church will not grow. Are we doing our duty as we should? Do we give as we have prospered? Are we attending church as we should? We will feel better if we do according to our ability. Are we growing cold?

*E. M. Borden, Deceased*

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## *Beacon*

Bellview Church of Christ

4850 Saufley Field Road

Pensacola, FL 32526

850-455-7595

Michael Hatcher, Editor

[bellviewcoc@gmail.com](mailto:bellviewcoc@gmail.com)



## Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Sheila Myrick in the death of her son, Alvin, on August 9. Please keep Sheila and her family in your prayers.

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Nancy Travis           | Bill & Peggy Crowe |
| Rheba Stancliff        | Nelda King         |
| Orville & Linda Worley | Carla Burleson     |
| Karen Ayliffe          | Bill Busch         |
| Jenny Sheline          |                    |

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:** Paul Brantley  
Michael Hatcher  
Bill Busch

**Minister:** Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 35

August 26, 2024

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4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
850-455-7595

## Salvation by “Faith Only” Is Not by Faith

*Lee Moses*

Most people have heard such religious slogans as “faith plus nothing else saves,” “just believe, and you will be saved,” and the self-contradictory but oft-repeated “salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.” The intended meaning of such sayings is crystal clear—one cannot do anything beyond realizing in his mind that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before that person is numbered among the saved. This is the popular doctrine of “salvation by ‘faith only.’” But is this teaching **by faith**? God declares, “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). If any teaching does not come from the Bible, God’s all-sufficient revelation to man, it is not **by faith**. Thus, whether the doctrine of “faith alone” is by faith hinges on whether the Bible teaches such.

### What Is Faith?

The Bible uses *faith* (or *believe*, its verb form) in different senses. Faith can refer to the act of believing something to be true, as in Matthew 9:28: “the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, **Believe** ye that I am able to do this?” Faith can refer to the confidence of a clear conscience, as in Romans 14:23: “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of **faith**: for whatsoever *is* not of **faith** is sin.” Faith can refer to one’s fidelity or trustworthiness, as in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “God *is* **faithful**, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.” Faith can refer to the New Testament, as in Galatians 3:23: “But before faith came, we

were kept under the law, shut up unto the **faith** which should afterwards be revealed.” Last, faith can refer to a trusting belief that has manifested itself in works of obedience, as in Romans 1:8, “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your **faith** is spoken of throughout the whole world.”

There is a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the nature of faith. Some advocate the doctrine of “faith only” because they believe that salvation by faith excludes any kind of effort from the individual receiving salvation. The New Testament does make clear that neither works of personal merit nor works of the Law of Moses lead to salvation (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-9). However, faith and works are not mutually exclusive: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6). Biblical faith **works**. “Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29). Our Lord called faith itself a work, which indeed it is. Why are there so many admonitions to believe and have faith if believing is not something that one does?

### Does Faith Not Save?

It is undeniable that one must have faith to be saved. It is impossible to please God without faith (Heb. 11:6). If one does not believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ, that person will die in his sins (John 8:24). Faith is mentioned many times as a prereq-

uisite to salvation (Mark 16:16; John 3:16; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10; et al.). However, other prerequisites are also mentioned for salvation: repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), and baptism (1 Pet. 3:21). To conclude that one is saved by faith only requires blinding oneself to numerous passages that say more is necessary.

Several Biblical uses for *faith* have already been examined, from the mental assent of a thing to being true to the faith that has manifested itself in obedience. When the doctrine of “faith only” is taught, it generally does not use this last definition but the first. However, one would be hard-pressed to find a Biblical account of anyone being Divinely commended, much less saved, at the point of believing something true. Faith is expressed in words, action, or both before it is commended. James asks, “What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (Jam. 2:14). Faith can save a person, but a faith without works cannot. James also said, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (2:19). Here is a commendation of faith that has not expressed itself in action—“thou doest well”—however, it is a tongue-in-cheek commendation; as James also compares such faith to that of the demons and proclaims it **dead** (2:17, 20, 26). This context is the only passage in the Bible where *faith only* is found, and it reads, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not** by faith only” (2:24). The illustration has been used of two oars: If a man only rows his boat with one oar, he will go in circles; but if he will row with both oars, he can move forward. Likewise, when faith is only accompanied by its works, the soul can move forward to salvation. If not, a soul merely goes in circles, never moving beyond the stagnant sea of sin. It was **by faith** that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 **acted** and thus were blessed. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Yes, faith is essential for salvation, but it is not all that is essential for salvation. It is grammatically impossible from this verse that salvation can precede baptism, and it is grammatically impossible that baptism is not just as much a requirement for salvation as faith. Faith saves, but not faith only.

#### What About Unbaptized Believers?

When confronted with Mark 16:16, some will respond by directing attention to the second half of the verse: “but he that believeth not shall be damned.” They then claim that the failure to mention baptism in the second half of the verse means that those who believe only shall be saved. The problem is that a third class of people has been imagined in this verse where Christ only mentioned two: (1) those who believe and are baptized and (2) those who do not believe. There is no mention of the third, those who believe and are not baptized.

To refer to an unbaptized *believer* is a misnomer—one who is Biblically *believing* is one who has been baptized. Paul and Silas baptized a Philippian jailer, following which he is described as “believing in God” (Acts 16:33-34). Paul, on a later occasion, met a group of about twelve disciples in Ephesus whom he knew to be believers (19:2). Yet, when he became aware that they did not have a true understanding, he asked, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” (19:3). When Paul knew this group to be believers, he also knew them to have been baptized.

The question “What about unbaptized believers?” could be rephrased, “What about **disobedient** believers?” When the multitude assembled at Pentecost asked Peter and the other apostles what they should do about their sinful state, Peter told them, “Repent, and be baptized... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” (Acts 2:37-38, 41). What if they would have responded, “We are content with merely believing the things which you have taught us, and have no intention

of repenting of our sins nor of being baptized”? This could scarcely be called “gladly receiving the word.” Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). He also declared assuredly, “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” (Mat. 7:21). Unbaptized believers are among those whose faith is compared to that of demons (Jam. 2:19). Certain “chief rulers” who believed in Jesus but refused to confess Him are said to have “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43). This implies that their failure to do more than merely believe left them in a position where they would not receive the praise of God. Mark 16:16 may not specifically address the third class of “unbaptized believers,” but it is abun-

dantly clear from the verse itself and other passages that this class is not included among the “shall be saved.”

### Conclusion

The doctrine of salvation by “faith only” dominates the denominational world. Through it, many sincere people are being led astray, given false assurance of salvation, and robbed of incentive to do the will of God. Doctrine not taught by the Scriptures cannot be said to be “by faith,” according to Romans 10:17. The doctrine of “faith only” is nowhere taught in Scripture; and thus, as much as its advocates attempt to emphasize “faith,” is not even **by faith**. May good and honest hearts wholly reject this doctrine and obey from the heart that form of doctrine that will save them from sin (Rom. 6:17).

*Union City, TN*

## Love One Another

It is one thing to love the church as an abstract idea. It is quite another to love the people who are the church. Loving the doctrinal concepts is meaningless unless genuine love for the brethren exists. It is vain to speak of loving God if we do not love one another (1 John 4:20). Preaching to identify the New Testament church will fall short if the badge of brotherly love is not evident. “By this shall all *men* know

that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Those who serve Christ must wear his colors. This goes beyond mere affirmations. “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Sound doctrine without sound hearts makes only an empty sound (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

*Author Unknown*

## How to Tell When You Are Getting Weak Spiritually

- When you would rather stay at home than assemble with the saints.
- When you would rather watch TV than visit the sick and weak or teach the lost.
- When you would rather read a magazine or the daily paper than the Bible or religious material.
- When you find a political speech inspiring but a Gospel sermon boring.
- When you pray for the preacher but sleep through his sermons.
- When you thank God for the elders but refuse to cooperate with them.
- When you talk long and loud about what the church should do but never do your part in what is being done now.
- When you sing with your lips, what you do not mean in your heart.
- When you look upon spiritual work as a chore rather than a privilege.

*Author Unknown*

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## Gospel Meeting

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Gospel Meeting  
with  
Lee Moses  
Oct 6 – 10

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis                      Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff                      Nelda King

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Joyce Johnson                      Bill Busch

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## “Through the Night with a Light from Above”

*Lee Moses*

On the evening following the Islamic attacks upon the United States on September 11, 2001, members of Congress assembled on the steps of the Capitol building to sing a rousing rendition of *God Bless America*.

The lyrics of this beloved song are as follows:

God bless America, land that I love

Stand beside her and guide her

Through the night with the light from above

From the mountains to the prairies

To the oceans white with foam

God bless America, my home sweet home

By singing this song following the 9/11 attacks, our nation’s politicians, for a short time, set aside their political differences to show unity and strength, mainly by saying they would seek that unity and strength from God. Although the attacks brought about a dark time, the United States would make it “through the night with a light from above.”

Once again, the U.S.A. is facing dark times. However, this time, there is little unity among our nation’s leaders or populace. We are at a verbal and ideological war with ourselves. There seems to be little “light” to be found to guide America “through the night.”

However, the “light” of which Irving Berlin wrote shines as bright as ever. The problem is our nation largely fails to see it. Why? If we look for guidance, we look to the wrong places. We look to *experts* who have been indoctrinated in secularism and Marxism. We look to whoever can

throw the biggest temper tantrum and assume that their anger proves the justness of their cause. We look to Washington, D.C.; we look to Seattle; we look to Harvard; we look to Minneapolis; we look to San Francisco.

Notice from where the light comes—“from above.” There is a Divine source of light and guidance to all who will look, and it is God’s Word (Psa. 119:105, 130; 2 Pet. 1:19).

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“Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path.... The entrance of thy words giveth light; It giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psa. 119:105, 130). “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” (2 Pet. 1:19).

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Irving Berlin’s original lyrics read, “Stand beside her and guide her **to the right** with a light from above.” “Through the night” and “to the right” are virtually synonymous—we will never make it through the night if we fail to move to the Right—as in, that which is right and true, God’s perfect standard. Too many Americans simply fail to lift up their eyes to find that light from above.

The Psalmist warns, “The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9:17, ASV). May America be guided “through the night with a light from above.”

*Union City, TN*

# A Contrast of Crowns

*Charles Pogue*

Jesus wore a crown of thorns (Mat. 27:29; Mark 15:17 John 19:2, 5) that His followers might have a crown of righteousness and life (2 Tim. 4:8; Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10). That crown is a crown of rejoicing and of glory which does not fade away (1 The. 2:19; 1 Pet. 5:4).

In our world today, when the now rare sentence of execution is actually carried out, people across our nation cry for a means that is absent of pain and agony. When Jesus was sentenced to die, He was executed by a process which was painful and shameful (Heb. 12:2).

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (Gal. 3:13).

Before Jesus went to the cross, He was mocked. Matthew 27:28-31 describes the mocking Jesus endured at the time of His conviction.

And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify *him*.

In this mocking Jesus was smitten on the head, doubtless driving the thorns of the crown into His head bringing pain to Him and blood from Him. As the Lord hung on the cross the mocking continued. For instance, Matthew 27:42 records:

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

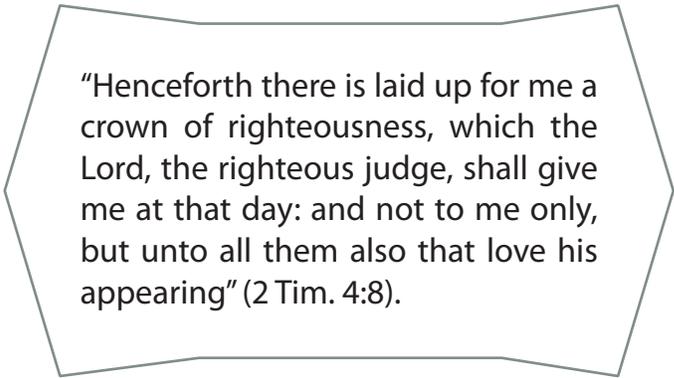
Before Jesus went to the cross, they removed the scarlet or purple robe they had put on Him and put His own raiment back on Him. There is, however, no indication that the painful and humiliating crown of thorns was removed.

Jesus wore a humiliating crown that there might be laid up for faithful Christians a crown of righteousness they will receive on the day of Judgment (2 Tim. 4:8). How can one who has ever been brought to a humble appreciation for the crown of thorns the Lord wore on his behalf ever turn away from the Lord and His righteousness thereby losing the claim for the glorious crown laid up for the saved? We would suggest many of those who turn away from the Lord and lose their crown would not if they would continue to desire the sincere milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2). In the same chapter, verses 21-24, by implication it is astounding one would turn from the Lord who wore the crown of thorns.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Jesus gave up the ghost with a crown of thorns on His head so when we give up the ghost, we may have prepared ourselves through His mercy to receive the crown of life.

*Deceased*



“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Everyone is invited to attend!  
Bellview Church of Christ  
Gospel Meeting

with

Lee Moses

October 6 – 10, 2024

“Seeking Salvation”

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sunday Bible Class:       | An Inspired Guide         |
| Sunday Morning Worship:   | Seek                      |
| Sunday Afternoon Worship: | A Life Worth Living       |
| Monday Evening:           | Two Sets of Seekers       |
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Nelda King

Joyce Johnson

Bill Busch

## Please Remember

September 15

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

October 6-10

Gospel Meeting with Lee Moses.

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# BEACON

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September 9, 2024

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## “Will Ye Also Go Away?”

*Lee Moses*

When Jesus Christ asked the above question of His twelve apostles, it seemed the tide had turned against Him and His message. The very same day, a large multitude had traveled across the Sea of Galilee to find Jesus. Five thousand men had been ready to crown Him king one day prior. But after Jesus preached to the throngs, “many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” (John 6:66-67). The Lord’s church presently seems to be facing a similar crisis. Large numbers of once-faithful congregations have turned away from the faith. As such, the Lord’s question looms even larger. What valuable lessons can Christians take from His timely query?

The Lord never forces followers. When the throngs of Jesus’ disciples turned away from Him, He did not run after them. He did not instruct His remaining followers to stop them. He did not use the miraculous powers He had recently demonstrated to block their exit, threaten them, or otherwise coerce them into following Him. He had already set before them all the evidence they needed. He had preached the Word to them. They chose to reject it. As Jesus’ question to His apostles demonstrates, they were likewise free to leave if they chose.

Many denominationalists believe that the Holy Spirit directly compels people to obey God against their will. However, the Bible teaches no such thing. God sent the Holy Spirit, who

inspired the apostles and four other men to complete God’s written revelation to man (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12-13). Once a man hears or reads that Divine message, he has the choice of following the Lord. A choice not to follow certainly grieves the Lord and will ultimately bring judgment (cf. Gen. 6:5-7; Mat. 24:34-39), but the Lord never forces followers.

The Lord will not compromise His message to amass or maintain numbers. The reason the large number of disciples gave for turning away from Christ was, as they put it, the message Christ was preaching “is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60). Did Jesus then offer them a message more palatable to them? No; instead, “When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you [“cause you to stumble”—ASV]?” (6:61). And when they left, apparently never to return, Jesus did not run after them, saying, “Wait! Let me offer you an easier version of Christianity!”

Many churches today are willing and eager to compromise the Gospel if it means having more significant numbers. Christ did not do such, and neither did the apostle Paul:

And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *was* Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I

*am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles (Acts 18:5-6).

Whether many or few join us in the Lord's Cause, with the apostle Paul, let us never be "ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Christians aspire to a higher calling than being numbered among the fickle majority.

Turning away from Christ means going backward. When the disciples "walked no more" with Jesus, the Scripture also states that they "went back." They had exerted significant efforts to find Jesus and come to Him, but whatever progress they made had been forfeited. Oftentimes, preachers and church leaders will remark on the *progress* they have made by studying psychology, denominational church growth tactics, and other such tripe while abandoning God's Word. Their churches view themselves as far more *contemporary, hip, and relevant* than *old mossbacks* who still demand Bible, chapter, and verse preaching and a "thus saith the Lord" for what they practice. To the Galatians, Paul wrote, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (Gal. 5:7). If a church or a child of God is no longer obeying the truth, it is impossible for him to "run well." Peter wrote of some who had "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," yet became "again entangled therein, and overcome" (2 Pet. 2:20). No cause of celebration exists when new trends or *discoveries* lead to the abandonment of the Lord and His Word.

Turning away from Christ obliterates one's hope of eternal life. One is filled with sadness as one reads Jesus' question to His apostles. "Will ye also go away?" Many once faithful Christians have turned away from Christ; the apostles certainly could have. Yet, Peter's prompt and unwavering response reassures the Christian reader:

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou

art that Christ, the Son of the living God (John 6:68-69).

While one might be tempted to follow the crowd that has turned away from Christ, the alternative is terrible to contemplate—the forfeiture of the eternal life laid up for each Christian. Friend, nothing is worth this. Let us determine never to turn away from following Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, who has the words of eternal life.

*Union City, TN*

Let me be a little kinder,  
Let me be a little blinder  
To the faults of those about me;  
Let me praise a little more;  
Let me be, when I am weary,  
Just a little bit more cheery;  
Let me serve a little better  
To those that I am striving for.

Let me be a little braver  
When temptation bids me waver;  
Let me strive a little harder  
To be all that I should be;  
Let me be a little meeker  
With the brother who is weaker;  
Let me think more of my neighbor  
And a little less of me.

Let me be a little sweeter,  
Make my life a bit completer,  
By doing what I should do  
Every minute of the day;  
Let me toil without complaining,  
Not a humble task disdaining;  
Let me face the summons calmly  
When Death beckons me away.

*Author Unknown*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Carla Burlison

Orville & Linda Worley

Nelda King

Joyce Johnson

Bill Busch

## Please Remember

September 15

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

October 6-10

Gospel Meeting with Lee Moses.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

## Bellview Church of Christ

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 38

September 16, 2024

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4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
850-455-7595

## “It’s a Book”

*Lee Moses*

Something caught her youthful eye as a young girl followed her mother through a bookstore. She apparently saw something different about one particular book that set it apart from the others that filled the racks and shelves. As curiosity filled the young child, she asked her mother, “What’s that?” Her mother curtly responded, “It’s a book.” So, mother and daughter promptly moved on to look at other things, with nothing more said about the book that captured the young girl’s imagination. That book was the Bible.

The above story is true, as related to me by a Christian lady who works at the bookstore where this mother-daughter dialogue took place. The mother’s unhelpful answer to her daughter manifests the world’s increasing ignorance of and callousness toward the Bible. “It’s a book”? The Bible is as far from being just a book as any book could be.

**It is a book by which God speaks to man.** No, rephrase that—**the Bible** is the book by which God speaks to man. “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). Of what novel could this be said? In what textbook could this be said? “God...hath...spoken” (Heb. 1:1-2). What a wondrous blessing that is! Our Creator has revealed Himself and speaks to us, but He only does so through the Bible.

**It is a book infallible in every way.** “[God’s] word *is* true *from* the beginning: And every one of thy [His] righteous judgments *endureth* for

ever” (Psa. 119:160). Every word of the Bible is true from the beginning to the end. Of what other book could this be said? Every historical tidbit is precise. Every scientific statement is accurate, even if it was not corroborated by science until centuries or millennia later. Textbooks have new revisions almost yearly because of the writers’ *facts* change. But with the Bible, one can be sure he **has** the facts. And only the Bible provides such assurance.

**It is a book that illuminates the way through darkness.** The world is filled with conflicting philosophies and religious doctrines. The world is filled with temptations to ensnare us as we attempt to make our way through our earthly lives. Satan tries to keep the world in darkness, to keep people from discovering what is truly important in life, and to keep people from God (2 Cor. 4:4). His efforts have been largely successful. With such darkness, how can one make it through this earthly life without stumbling and falling? “The way of the wicked *is* as darkness: They know not at what they stumble” (Pro. 4:19). Only the Bible provides illumination brilliant enough to pierce the gloom: “Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105).

**It is a book that provides Divinely selected historical accounts that best encourage and instruct the child of God.** Learning history, and especially learning from history, is valuable. As many history teachers will remind their students, “Those who do not learn from history are con-

demned to repeat its mistakes.” I have personally found great encouragement in reading biographies of pioneer preachers and other faithful Gospel preachers who have gone on before. However, when **God** has specially chosen which past figures of history to profile and which information to include in their accounts, one can be certain that those accounts, romanticizing the men and women they profile without ever overly glorifying them, will prove particularly encouraging and instructing (cf. Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 10:11).

**It is a book that shows us how to be and remain saved.** Without the Bible, man would likely not perceive that he is lost—he would certainly not perceive the separation his sin brings from God and the punishment that his sin demands. However, the Bible indicates man’s lost state and constantly points toward salvation. As a drowning man esteems the life preserver that comes his way to be of inestimable value, so much the more should a man who has been lost in his sin esteem the Bible. “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).

**It is a book that shows us an eternity we can anticipate.** Without the Bible, we could easily think that this life is the only life we have to live and that this world is the best that man’s Creator could offer. But the Scriptures make clear that man’s Creator has prepared dwelling places for His redeemed far greater than anything human eyes have ever beheld or that human imagination could conceive (John 17:24; Rev. 14:13; 21-22).

People must understand that the Bible is far more than just a book. It is the Book of books, unapproached by the most timeless classics that the earth’s greatest authors have offered. Parents must seize opportunities to teach their children what a marvelous book it is. Every human being needs to appreciate what a wondrous blessing it is to have the Bible and treasure it, constantly mining its unsearchable depths.

*Union City, TN*

## Finding Real Value

*Cled E. Wallace*

Some religious suckers go into ecstasies over gold bricks. They think real religion is found in tables of statistics or fashionable pews. They cannot thrill to anything short of hired choirs or polished declamations. A John the Baptist, with garments of camel’s hair and a diet of locusts and wild honey, is a fanatic or a madman to them. A Christ who snubs lawyers and Pharisees and associates with publicans and sinners is both a pain and an enigma to them.

Dorcas, full of good works and almsdeeds, was a real value in womanhood. She would not fill a column on a society page today. Some of the most valuable Christians I have known have been men and women in out-of-the-way places, honest sons and daughters of toil who reared families

and were unknown outside of narrow circles. They could not express their thoughts in Shakespearean elegance, but they could show their devotion to God in practical ways most pleasing to Him.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. That is why man accepts so many gold bricks for real human value. “For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*” (1 Cor. 1:26—ASV). A man will select a painted butterfly for a wife instead of a sensible, practical woman. And the woman looks a lot better—especially after the paint is washed off the butterfly.

*Deceased*

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Gospel Meeting

with

Lee Moses

October 6 – 10, 2024

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Carla Burlison

Orville & Linda Worley

Nelda King

Bill Busch

Karen Ayliffe

## Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family of Joyce Johnson, who passed away on September 11. Please keep the Johnson family in your prayers.

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# BEACON

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September 23, 2024

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## The Gracious Justice of God

*Lee Moses*

The Biblical statements about God's grace find no peer among all the religions of the world (cf. Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2; Tit. 3:4-7). Holy Scripture portrays a God of grace, who desires the salvation of every soul, who has done and will do His part to make that salvation available to all (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Yet, Scripture also portrays a God of swift and severe justice, a "consuming fire" who will "devour the adversaries" (Heb. 12:29; 10:27). The full impact of such justice will only be truly seen when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 The. 1:7-8).

Many sincere people have difficulty harmonizing the grace of God with the justice of God. They read, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22) and find what they believe to be irreconcilable attributes.

The justice of God troubles people. Some hear the Gospel's warnings about judgment to come and assert that such violates their sense of what is right. Some make such statements as "I refuse to believe in a God that would condemn people to an eternity of hell." Some even go so far as to say, "If any of my loved ones are going to be in hell, I want to be there too." They claim that the justice of God is too strict and severe to be righteous.

Justice is defined as "the giving to every person that—and all of that, and only that—to which he

is entitled, whether good or bad and that without partiality or favor" (Turner 50). God's justice matches this definition in clear distinction to the modern *justice* (or failure to achieve thereof) often displayed by the American court system. It is a self-contradiction to say that God's justice is not righteous—even the Biblical words *judgment* and *justice* can also be translated as "righteousness." God will vindicate those worthy of vindication. As Solomon observed, "Also to punish the just is not good, Nor to strike princes ["the noble"—ASV] for equity" (Pro. 17:26. God cannot punish the guiltless, for He is infinitely good (cf. Mat. 19:17). Contrary to the blasphemous doctrine of "original sin" and its subsequent "total hereditary depravity," God will hold no one guilty for sins that person has not committed himself (cf. Eze. 18:20). Yet there are times when punishment must be administered. It is then, and only then, that God punishes—and He will never fail to do so at such times. This is regardless of one's social status, influence in government, or stockpiles of riches. God's impartiality in justice is undoubtedly praiseworthy, whether seen in His verdict of guilty or innocent or in His administration of punishment or reward. God is described as "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*" (Exo. 34:7).

In the courts of this country, the accused or accuser in a trial is occasionally able to "pull the

wool over the eyes” of the judge and jury. The defendant and his attorney may be able to persuade the judge that the defendant is genuinely penitent and that he does not require the punishment that meets his crime. They may convince the jury that the defendant is not guilty of something he did. Conversely, an accuser can sometimes convince a jury that the defendant is guilty of a crime he did not commit. Such lies make a mockery out of a court system designed for the welfare of society. But such mockery will not be made of God’s justice:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Gal. 6:7-8).

Notice from the passage that God is responsible for pronouncing eternal sentences. This is because sin is an eternal offense. Once sin has been committed, one cannot wish or wash it away of his own doing since sin separates man from God (cf. Isa. 59:1-2; Hab. 1:13); one who enters eternity having a soul fouled with sin must be punished by eternal separation from God (cf. 2 The. 1:9). This means eternal separation from all good things, for “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17). Where God has removed His presence, there can be nothing good. And, as “the wages of sin *is* death” (Rom. 6:23), the sentence for entering eternity with sin can only be an eternal punishment of death.

It can be difficult to see the grace of God’s justice when His potential punishment involves oneself or one’s loved ones. When a convicted criminal is put to death or sentenced to life in prison, that criminal and his family members are not usually among the ardent supporters of the punishment being carried out; the criminal deserving the punishment notwithstanding. But as much as some might wish for God to lay aside His law on the day

of judgment, God can only do right (cf. Ps. 92:15; Jer. 9:24; Rom. 9:14). One who is honest can see the righteousness of God’s punishment, whether administered to oneself or another. The “angel of the water” said of the severe judgment of the Lord, “Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus” (Rev. 16:5). The psalmist realized, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, And *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa. 119:75). Perhaps only on the day of judgment will we fully appreciate God’s justice and the necessity of the punishment of the sinful.

As sure as the punishment of the sinful is, so is the reward of the righteous. God does not have an uncertain, nebulous law that can be interpreted one way by one judge and entirely differently by another. Despite the horrendous atrocity that sin is, God has provided, through Jesus Christ, the means of forgiveness for all mankind from sin (cf. Rom. 3:23-24; Acts 2:38). There need be no doubt for the faithful Christian that he will receive the reward:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

God’s wonderful grace allows every man and woman to enter judgment, knowing that the righteous Judge will judge him. None must be in doubt as to what his sentence will be. Each person will “receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). No one will be punished more than what he deserves, and each person who has availed himself of God’s grace while on earth shall reap life everlasting. May God be praised for His gracious justice!

#### Work Cited

Turner, Sr., Rex A. *Systematic Theology*. Montgomery, AL: Alabama Christian School of Religion, 1989, p. 50.

Union City, TN

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Lee Moses

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 40

September 30, 2024

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## Why We Meet on the First Day of Every Week

*Lee Moses*

There has been a growing trend in recent decades of various denominations to provide church services at alternate times for those not desiring to come on Sunday mornings. Many people have found it unreasonably burdensome to awake at a reasonable hour on the Lord's Day to worship their Creator, so they have moved worship services to another day. When living in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, I recall that there were roads to avoid on Saturday nights because certain mega-churches would be dismissing thousands from their services at that time. Is it acceptable to forego assembling on the first day of the week in favor of meeting on a more convenient day? No one disagrees that churches professing Christianity have traditionally met on the first day of the week. But tradition is not sufficient reason to say that churches professing Christianity must meet on the first day of the week (Mat. 15:9). What does the Bible teach? Is it obligatory to meet on the first day of every week?

The apostolic pattern entailed assembling at a particular time to worship. When Jesus gave instructions to the apostles about how they were to partake of the Lord's Supper, He told them, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until **that day** when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mat. 26:29). They were not to be partaking of the Lord's Supper before the kingdom's establishment on the day of Pen-

tecost (Acts 2), and there would be a specific day on which it would be taken. Jesus did not yet make clear whether "that day" was literal or figurative; weekly, monthly, or yearly—the apostles would have to wait for further instructions. But as of the day of Pentecost, the apostles had received those instructions, as **all** the early Christians "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). *Breaking of bread* is included here in a context of worship (the use of the phrase in Acts 2:46 is clearly in the context of a common meal) therefore, referring to the Lord's Supper. All observed a particular pattern. From what Jesus had told His apostles, as recorded in Matthew 26:29, this pattern would have to include assembling at a specific time to partake of the Lord's Supper. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). And how often was this? "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7). While it is again agreed that *break bread* can refer to a common meal, it is impossible but that here it refers to the Lord's Supper. The prior verse indicates that they waited a full week for this day and came together to break bread, that is, **for the purpose of** breaking bread.

It cannot be understood that they waited a full week to eat but that they waited a full week to partake of the Lord's Supper. Since it is understood that this congregation was also following the apostolic pattern (Acts 2:42) and that this is provided as an example for us, it follows that we should observe this pattern.

Not only is the first day of the week set aside as the time to partake of the Lord's Supper, but it is also set aside as the time for giving: "Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). *In store* has reference to a common treasury; made clear by the fact that if it were not a common treasury, there would still have to be gatherings made when Paul came. One can only put into a common treasury in a common location, showing that they were assembled together for this and on a common day—the first day of the week, literally translated as "the first day of every week."

In AD 112, Pliny wrote in a letter to the Roman Emperor Trajan regarding Christians: "It was their habit to meet on a fixed day to assemble before sunlight and sing." The day was fixed, but the time was their "habit." Jesus Christ began the practice of assembling on the first day of the week:

Then the same day [of Christ's resurrection, LM] at evening, being the first *day* of the

week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you (John 20:19).

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you (20:26).

The key to understanding the need for meeting on the first day of the week is understanding the need for responsibility to God and authority from God. Each of us is responsible for worshiping God, including partaking in the Lord's Supper and giving of our means. But when do we have Biblical authority to do these things? (Col. 3:17). Only on the first day of the week. Also essential to the first day-of-the-week worship is congregational singing (Mat. 26:30; Col. 3:16), preaching of God's Word (Acts 20:7), and prayer (Mat. 26:26-27; 1 Tim. 2:8), although these acts of worship are authorized at other times as well (Jam. 5:13; Acts 13:14ff; 1 The. 5:17).

If we are to be pleasing to God, we must indeed meet on the first day of the week. It is a day greatly anticipated by Christians for the opportunities it provides that exist at no other time. We love the Lord and worship Him—this is why we meet on the first day of the week.

*Union City, TN*

## Never Give Up!

Sometimes, in this old world, we begin to sense that we are overwhelmed and helpless in our attempt to call men back to God and His eternal will. Let me encourage all of us to remember fundamental truths that should motivate us: **God is still God!** He has not left us; He has not changed! His blessings, expectations, promises, and warnings remain firm. **It is not our job to force people to accept the truth; instead, we must keep preaching it.** The only way that truth is ineffective is if we allow the world to silence the voice

of righteousness or begin to question it timidly. God demands loving but fearless messengers. **Make up your mind that no matter what the world does, you will not compromise with evil.** Light dispels darkness. The only way darkness dominates is when we hide our lights. Remember! The Bible still says, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17).

*Author Unknown*

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## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:**

Paul Brantley

Michael Hatcher

Bill Busch

**Minister:**

Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 41

October 7, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
850-455-7595

## Is Anything More Important Than Your Salvation?

*Lee Moses*

**Your financial security is not more important than your salvation.** Based on the way they live, most American adults place financial security near, if not at, the very top of life's priorities. While financial prudence is wise, and financial success gained through hard work is applauded, there are matters far more important.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mat. 16:26).

**Your job or school responsibilities are not more important than your salvation.** Responsibilities are an essential part of life. They tend toward personal improvement. They help to bring order and purpose to our lives. They help us contribute to a larger good than ourselves.

Many view their job responsibilities as more than providing for their financial needs. They view other people as depending on them, whether co-workers, employers, or customers. This is a healthy way to view one's vocation. There has recently been a lot of talk about "essential businesses." Still, given the preceding, most businesses serve a valuable role in society that extends well beyond the primary goods and services they provide.

That said, such responsibilities pale when compared with the things of the Lord. When Jesus called His disciples, saying, "Follow me," they immediately laid aside their work responsibili-

ties to follow the Lord (Mat. 4:18-22; Luke 5:27-28). For doing this, Jesus promised them numerous blessings in this life, "and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30). Your ties with friends and family are not more important than your salvation. Parents, children, spouse, and friends are all tremendous blessings from the Lord, to be cherished and savored (Psa. 103:13; 127:3; Pro. 18:22; 17:17; 27:9). Yet, Jesus warns:

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Mat. 10:37).

The threat of disease is not more important than your salvation. A disease brings misery to lives, as well as painful early death. However, consider the words of encouragement Jesus gave His apostles:

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 (10:28).

Losing an eye or bodily limb in this life is far better than losing one's soul for eternity (Mark 9:43-48). Compared with the Judgment to come, powerful persecutors and devastating diseases are mere gnats in our existence.

**Your nation's security is not more important than your salvation.** Many brave souls have died for our national security, and those are sacrifices never to be taken lightly. However, one sacrifice was given greater than all those com-

bined: Jesus Christ “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. 1:4). Christ’s sacrifice did not deliver us from wicked political powers, such as the Assyrians, the Nazis, or the Soviets. He died to deliver us entirely from this present evil world, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity” (Tit. 2:14), “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (Heb. 7:25), and, as a result, Christians “are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*” (10:10).

**No, nothing is more important than your salvation.** “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (9:27). Financial security, job performance, family, or friendly ties will not prevent death’s eventual arrival, much less that of Christ’s Judgment. At that time, no one will be lamenting diseases he suffered in life or breaches of national security. All that will matter from that point on and from eternity following is that we are found saved and faithful in Jesus Christ.

Will you be?

*Union City, TN*

## Our Influence in the Community

Our influence in the community is of irreplaceable importance to our Christian duty. The great commission in Mark 16:15 exhorts us to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” It should be impossible for a Christian to set out on that quest and walk right past their community and the souls therein. It must start with those around us. To be effective in this endeavor, we must maintain an exemplary influence (Mat. 5:16). The following are some important things to our influence in the community.

### Be Sure That Your Actions Comply with Your Words

A man at a sporting event on Sunday morning will have little success trying to convict the other attendees of the importance of faithful church attendance. Likewise, a Christian wearing an immodest bathing suit or one of the scant uniforms worn in certain sports will find their appeal for others to remain pure or abstain from fleshly lust go unheeded. Do you go about saying, “This or that is wrong,” yet you do the very thing against which you teach? (Rom. 2:21-24). Practice what you preach.

### Be Friendly

People do not like to listen to someone they could or would not consider a friend. “A man *that*

*hath* friends must shew himself be friendly” (Pro. 18:24). We should want the community to like us, not for popularity’s sake, but so that through us they might come to knowledge of the truth.

### Return Good for Evil

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9).

This practice will set you apart in the eyes of the community and God. This truly is an effective way to win souls for Christ. Let your influence be one that will attract lost souls and cause them to obey the will of God.

Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (Jam. 5:20).

*Author Unknown*

New tasks demand greater strength. There is but one source of strength for the Christian. That source is inexhaustible. It is God.

*Author Unknown*

Everyone is invited to attend!  
**Bellview Church of Christ**  
**Gospel Meeting**

with

**Lee Moses**

**October 6 – 10, 2024**

**“Seeking Salvation”**

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sunday Bible Class:       | An Inspired Guide         |
| Sunday Morning Worship:   | Seek                      |
| Sunday Afternoon Worship: | A Life Worth Living       |
| Monday Evening:           | Two Sets of Seekers       |
| Tuesday Evening:          | Against the Odds          |
| Wednesday Evening:        | Building Endurance        |
| Thursday Evening:         | Standing Before Two Gates |

Sunday: 9:00 A.M., 10:00 A.M., & 1:00 P.M.

Monday – Thursday Evenings: 7:00 P.M.

A covered-dish meal will be provided in the fellowship building on  
Monday – Thursday at 6:00 P.M.

Visitors are invited to every meal.

Come and enjoy a meal and Gospel preaching.

The lessons will be available for viewing on our website at:

<http://www.bellviewcoc.com/meeting.html>

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

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Nelda King

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## Can One Be Saved Outside the Church?

*Lester Kamp*

This question is an important one. There continue to be many who claim that the church is non-essential to salvation. They say that if one has a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ,” one can be saved without being in any church. It should be noted that, according to the New Testament, the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). It is, therefore, absurd to think that one can be in Christ (saved) without being in His body, the church.

As we proceed to answer this question that has been raised, it is essential to emphasize that “the church” in the question refers to the church built by Christ (Mat. 16:18), the church purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), and the church into which people were added in the New Testament (Acts 2:47; Col. 1:13). We are not referring to any man-made churches that did not even exist in New Testament times. We can say without hesitation that salvation is possible without any of these churches. Therefore, in other words, is it possible for anyone to be saved without being in the church (i.e., being a member of the church)? Let us see what the Scriptures teach. What is the Biblical answer?

**First**, if one can be saved without the church, one can be saved without a savior. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). Since Christ Jesus is the savior of the body and the body is the church (Eph. 1:22-

23), if a person needs a savior (and we all do according to Romans 3:23), then that person needs to be in the body where Christ is savior. Since Christ is only “the savior of the body,” He is not the savior of any outside the body.

**Second**, if one can be saved outside the church, one can be saved without the benefits of the death of Christ. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Christ “gave Himself” (laid down His life, died) for the church. Why would He do such a thing if the church is not essential to man’s salvation? If a person desires the benefits of Christ’s death on the cross, that person must be in the church.

**Third**, if one can be saved without being in the church, then one can be saved without the benefits of the blood of Christ. Suppose a person had \$100 with which he purchased a jacket. To enjoy the benefits of the \$100, a person would need to wear (i.e., be in) that jacket. Consider: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Therefore, to receive the benefits of the blood of Christ, the purchase price of the church, one must be in the church.

**Fourth**, if one can be saved without being in the church, one can be saved without being reconciled to God. Sin causes man to be lost because

sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). He remains lost until a man is reconciled (i.e., brought back) to God. “And that he might reconcile both [i.e., Jew and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16). Remember the “one body” refers to the church (1:22-23). Where is a person reconciled to God? The answer: in the one body, the church. If a person wants to be reconciled to God, he must be in the church. Outside the church, there is no reconciliation with God!

**Fifth**, if one can be saved outside the church, then one can be saved without being in Christ. “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is

in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). Clearly, salvation is in Christ. How does a person get into Christ? According to Romans 6:3-4, baptism is that act of obedience that brings him into Christ. The same act (baptism) brings a person into the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor. 12:13). The same act that causes one to enter Christ causes one to enter the church. Therefore, how is it possible to be in Christ without being in the church? It is not possible! After looking at these Scriptures, we can answer the question that has been raised. Without reservation, we can conclude that no one can be saved without being in the church.

*Aurora, CO*

## Gospel Meeting with Lee Moses

### “Seeking Salvation”

Lessons available on the website.

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## The New Testament—Our Guide

*J. D. Tant*

When the church was established and began to work, Paul wrote 14 letters to churches and preachers telling them how to live. James wrote one letter, Peter two, John three, and Jude one. These are all letters on church discipline and government, telling church members how to live.

John wrote the last book in the New Testament. Revelation not only tells of the past and the present in the first century but crosses the river of death and tells us of the future home God has prepared for those who love Him and do His commandments. He tells us that on the other side of the river of death, there is no night but one eternal day: no sickness, sorrow, pain, or death. The river of life

and the tree of life are found there. So, the New Testament—properly divided, read, understood, and obeyed—is a safe guide to lead us into the city whose Builder and Maker is God.

In summary, there are 27 books in the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John tell me what I **must believe** to be saved. Acts of the Apostles tell me what I **must do** to be saved. The 21 letters of Christian instruction that follow tell me how I **must live** and work **after** I am saved to finally reach the heavenly home we read about in the last book of the Bible.

My brethren are often condemned for preaching so much in Acts of the Apostles, but this will

be our leading book if we teach salvation to a dying world, for this is where we find the plan of salvation first taught by the apostles after they had Holy Ghost baptism which qualified them to preach the Gospel to all the world. If we teach the same things the apostles taught them to do, we are sure we are

teaching the Word of God, and we are also confident we will be rewarded on the last day for so doing. So, let all be satisfied with the simple Word of God, to teach and fight it along that line, knowing that if we do this, heaven will be our home.

*Deceased*

## Paragraph Sermon

*E. M. Borden*

Man's life on earth is very short at its longest. "He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down" (Job 14:2). Man's life is measured to threescore and ten, and then "if by reason of strength, *they* be fourscore years" (Psa. 90:10). But even then, a man's life on earth is very short.

Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:

and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it (Ecc. 12:6-7).

Solomon's life on earth was filled with joys and sorrows. He lived for many years, but his earthly career had to come to an end. He left his great wealth to others; he left his earthly career. "Dust to dust" was the destiny of his flesh until the resurrection. His spirit returned "unto God who gave it."

*Deceased*

## Nehemiah's Prayer

One of the sincerest prayers in the Bible is found in Nehemiah 1:5-11. The background to this prayer is in the first four verses of Nehemiah. Nehemiah lived in what was known as the post-captivity period of the Jews. During this time, we read about his prayer in the book of Nehemiah.

- Nehemiah directed his prayer to the Father (Neh. 1:5-6).
- He recognizes God as the one and only God.
- It is God who hears His children.
- The Bible directs Christians how to pray properly (Luke 11:1; Mat. 6:9; Eph. 3:14; 5:20).
- Nehemiah confessed sin to God (Neh. 1:7).
- It is impossible to speak to someone when separated (Isa. 59:1-2).

- Un-repent sin will hinder the prayer life of a Christian (1 John 1:7-10; 3:22; Jam. 5:16).
- Someone not a Christian cannot pray an acceptable prayer to God (1 Pet. 3:12).
- Nehemiah begged for God's mercy (Neh. 1:8-10). We would be hopelessly lost without God's mercy. The humble pray for mercy (Luke 18:9-14).
- Nehemiah asked for God's favor (Neh. 1:11). We should pray all things according to God's will (1 John 5:14). It is okay to ask for God's blessings (Ezra 8:21-23, 31).

Just remember that spiritual blessings are more important than physical ones. Nehemiah's prayer teaches his complete dependence upon God. Do you depend on God?

*Author Unknown*

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## “How Long, O Jehovah? Wilt Thou Forget Me for Ever?”

(Psa. 13:1)

*Marvin L. Weir*

In Psalm chapter twelve, there is a cry to God for help. A godly person is in short supply, and the faithful appear to be failing. To the Psalmist, God’s help is not coming soon enough. The faithful today have also been known to cry, as did the martyrs at the close of the first century, “How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). There is a tremendous need for children of God to learn patience and be willing to **wait** and **pray**. It is not man but God who knows best, and as the Old Testament prophets reveal, Jehovah will act when He is ready. The thirteenth Psalm is concerned, first, with Words of Anxiety.

### Divine Forgetfulness!

“How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou forget me forever” (Psa. 13:1a)? God is always mindful of His people’s needs and cares. The truth of the matter, however, is that God’s “thoughts are not [our] thoughts, neither are [our] ways [His] ways” (Isa. 55:8). The Creator has His timetable, and He will not be pressured into action just because man desires immediate action. It may appear to the faithful that God did not hear, no longer cares, or has forgotten. But such is not true! Jehovah is not restricted to accomplishing His purposes in a limited time, as He is eternal. As Peter says, “But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with

the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Pet. 3:8).

### Desire for His Presence!

“How long wilt thou hide thy face from me” (Psa. 13:1b). It is a blessing that one has the presence of mind to miss God being in their midst. Sadly, some would never miss God hiding His face from them! We are living in a world that is quickly becoming more comfortable with removing God from their sight (figuratively speaking). And, with sin growing more popular every day, the result is that one’s iniquities will hide God’s face from him (Isa. 59:2). May we choose to live our lives in such a manner that we can rest assured that God is with us (Rom. 8:38-39)!

### Our Own Weakness!

“How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day” (Psa. 13:2a)? The resources upon which man leans may prove unfruitful. Even the best and wisest of men prove to be miserably helpless and poor when left to themselves. The Psalmist is correct in saying, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (46:1). No matter how self-sufficient and worldly one may become when a crisis strikes, that mere man does not have the ability or power to cope with, the words “Help me, God,” coming rolling from the lips! The wise man is correct in stating, “The fear of Jehovah is the begin-

ning of knowledge; (But) the foolish despise wisdom and instruction” (Pro. 1:7).

#### Power of the Enemy!

“How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me” (Psa. 13:2b)? When people absence themselves from the power of God, he surrenders to the power of Satan. As long as man chooses to reject God and live in sin, Satan is going to triumph over man. Peter reminds us that “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication: But the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). The Psalmist is also concerned with Words of Intercession.

#### Plea for Consideration!

“Consider and answer me, O Jehovah my God” (Psa. 13:3a). If a child of God states his case truthfully and completely unto God, He will listen and consider carefully. Coffman says that turning to God in prayer is “the answer, the ultimate answer, the only answer to all the problems associated with our earthly pilgrimage.” God informs us that He desires to know of our needs and cares. He said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). Peter admonishes all who will listen: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:67).

#### Plea for Enlightened Eyes!

“Lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death” (Psa. 13:3b). The influence of divine light

is essential, for its absence means darkness and death. The Word of God will supply one with the light necessary to navigate through a world filled with the darkness of sin. The apostle Paul told the Ephesian brethren that their understanding needed to be enlightened so they could know the hope of His calling, the riches of his glory, and the greatness of His power (Eph. 1:17-19). The Psalmist now turns his attention to Words of Confession.

#### His Faith!

“I have trusted in thy lovingkindness” [mercy, KJV] (Psa. 13:5a). What else can one truly trust in? Can one trust the world, government, friends, or wealth? These things fail people more often than not. Isaiah reminded the people, “Trust ye in Jehovah forever; for in Jehovah, (even) Jehovah, is an ever-lasting rock” (Isa. 26:4). The wise man admonished, “Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart, And lean not upon thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he will direct thy paths” (Pro. 3:5-6). Our faith needs to be rooted and grounded in God and His Word!

#### His Hope!

“My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation” (Psa. 13:5b). The Psalmist has hope because God has shown mercy in the past. The God who delivered in the past will deliver in the future. May we remember this truth the next time we are tempted to say, “How long, O Jehovah? Wilt thou forget me forever” (13:1)?

*Blossom, TX*

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# The Lord and His Strength

*Stan Harvey*

Rendering obedience to the commandments of God demands a willing heart to be submissive to Him. Obedience requires more than verbal consent, merely saying that he will obey God. There must be commitment and the willingness to pursue and seek the truth of God's Word.

Consider Ezra, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6), whose writings focused on attempts by Ezra to lift up, encourage, and persuade God's people to rebuild the temple. Regarding obedience, Ezra provides a great example of attitude and purpose for the child of God today. The Bible records that Ezra "had prepared [devoted] his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (7:10). When the prophet Samuel spoke to the house of Israel, he voiced a similar declaration from God: "If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts...and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 7:3).

Throughout the Bible, this theme or emphasis is seen. In a beautiful psalm of thanksgiving, David exhorted God's people to "Seek the LORD and his strength, Seek his face continually" (1 Chr. 16:11-12). Again, "serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (28:9ff).

Seeking God then implies the **willingness to obey God without question**. The psalmist made this point abundantly clear. "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, *And that* seek him with the whole heart" (Psa. 119: 2).

In a psalm of praise, David revealed how to get near and stay near to God: "The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, To all that call upon him in truth" (145:18). When a person calls upon God in truth, he must be willing to obey Him in truth!

Jesus taught us how one can be spiritually filled. "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Mat. 5:6). The Hebrews writer, in straightforward language, connected faith and seeking. "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Today, a generation of people draw near to Christ with their mouths and attempt to honor Him with their lips. Jesus says of such folks they are "hypocrites" and that "their heart is far from me" because they teach "*for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). Lest one forget, the Hebrews writer reminds every soul that Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9).

Whether one is teaching the essentiality of baptism, the sin of denominationalism, or the importance of godly behavior and character, **adherence to God's Word is not an option but an eternal obligation! Amen!**

*Copied*

Our prayers for restored health, safety from impending danger, and relief in famine or other distress are in line with the divine will, for they are the heart's hurry call for heavenly aid from Him who has promised all things needful to those who sorely need His aid. His Word stands that He "will never leave nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

*Author Unknown*

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[bellviewcoc@gmail.com](mailto:bellviewcoc@gmail.com)



## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Bill Busch

Dot Dodd

## Please Remember

October 30

Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 p.m.,  
in the auditorium.

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## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:**

Paul Brantley

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Bill Busch

**Minister:**

Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 44

October 28, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
850-455-7595

## “Let Us” Responsibilities

*John Chowning*

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb. 10:22-25).

To whom great privileges have been granted, great responsibilities have been given. The spiritual privileges enjoyed by every Christian result in significant, practical responsibilities. Therefore, what practical value is the incredible privilege of having unfettered access to the Throne room of heaven (10:19-21) if you do not pray or do not pray with boldness?

Prayer, which is appropriate to the new and living way Jesus opened or consecrated for us by His blood, is both a privilege and a responsibility. The earnest exhortation of verse 22 is to seize upon the privilege of prayer and draw near to God's throne in boldness, knowing with utter certainty that as a Christian—whose conscience has been cleansed when he was baptized into Christ (1 Pet. 3:21-22)—your prayers are heard and answered by God.

In practical terms, there is little, if any, difference between a person who cannot read and a person who can read but does not. In like manner,

there is little, if any, difference between a non-Christian who does not have access to God in prayer and a Christian who does not pray. In addition, what practical value is the privilege of having unfettered access to the Throne room of heaven (Heb. 10:19-21) if you do not hold fast to the anchor of hope (10:23)?

A Christian's hope is anchored to the immutable counsel of God, which is confirmed with an oath (6:17-19). It is anchored in heaven's Throne room by Jesus, our forever high priest (6:20). Nothing is said or done on earth that can destroy or even weaken this indestructible anchor in any way. Its strength is derived from the truth that every person confesses in becoming a Christian—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. This truth is the impregnable bedrock of Christ's church (Mat. 16:16-18). It is the confession that anchors our hope.

Just as God's truth never erodes or bends, your confession of the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, ought to be equally steady and unswerving. The wondrous privilege of Jesus being our forever High Priest results in the responsibility to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. The absolute faithfulness of God to His promises and predictions of the Old Testament results in your personal responsibility to be equally faithful to your confession of His Son.

Finally, what practical value is the privilege of having unfettered access to the Throne room of heaven if you fail in your fundamental duties to God and man? When the blood of Christ saves a sinner, the Lord adds him to the body of the redeemed, the church (Acts 2:47). This means that a child of God has responsibilities to His Father in heaven and God's family on earth. Assembling each Lord's Day to worship God and to admonish and edify fellow Christians is one practical, tangible responsibility of the privilege of being saved by Christ.

Shirking this responsibility by forsaking the weekly assembling of the saints or failing to attend to the spiritual welfare of your fellow Christians when you assemble is inappropriate behavior. Worship is not about you. It is about God and seeking to help your spiritual brothers and sisters grow in love and good works.

Why become a Christian if you do not intend to fulfill your fundamental duties to God and man?

"Let us" seize the responsibilities inherent in our privileges.

Cookeville, TN

## Members Who Strengthen

*Ken Chumbley*

The strength of the church lies in her supernatural elements, her sure foundation, her divine cornerstone, her infallible guide. The weakness of the church lies in her human elements. We can offer no improvement in the supernatural elements, but we can strengthen the human elements. There are four groups of members who strengthen the church.

(1) **The first group is composed of attending members.** They are found in every congregation. They have the same *excuses* which others use, company comes to see them too, they also work very hard all week, they too have Sunday illnesses; but because of their love for the church—they *put*

God first "not forsaking the assembly" (Heb. 10:24-25).

(2) **The second group is made up of informed members.** The Christian life begins with a spiritual impulse, a movement of life toward God. When and where and how this desire, for more knowledge of God is not always discoverable. It is perfectly plain, however, that when a life has been "born again," its growth can be sustained and matured only through knowledge and experience as they "grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). They are busy people who make time to feast on the good Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). "Blessed *are*

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they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6).

(3) **The third group which strengthens the church is that of the supporting members.** A church is strong or feeble, not primarily in proportion to its enrolled membership, but in proportion to its supporting membership. The strength of a church is in its “active members” those who invest time, thought, energy, and money in its maintenance. The weakness is seen in the number of its inactive members. Those who have a will to work make time for the church and give their time and service to the cause. They are like the Christians in Antioch. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea” (Acts 11:29-30). Have you ever parked at a parking meter with time left on it? You used someone’s money to park. Many in the church are doing the

same things. They use the work and effort of others for their benefit.

(4) **The fourth group which lifts the church is a consistent member.** Those in this group profess with their lips and their lives. They are Christians on Monday as well as Sunday. They are dependable and trustworthy in every undertaking. When there is a need they will step in and fill the void. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Is it possible that the church of our Lord at [Bellevue] has those who fall into these groups? If you cannot find yourself, begin at once to confess the error of your way and dedicate your life to strengthening the church.

*Deceased*

## Make Your Calling and Election Sure

Every election cycle, we are incessantly bombarded with election coverage from the news media, and election ads on radio, television, text messages, phone calls, etc. There is another all-important election that is running its course right now. It will not end on the first Tuesday of November, but it will be an ongoing election every day for the rest of our lives. This election has nothing to do with politicians. It has nothing to do with holding some public office. It has nothing to do with governorships, presidencies, legislatures, or Congress. We do not go to the polls and vote for somebody else in this election. This election is all about us, each of us, as individuals.

Peter admonishes, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble” (2 Pet. 1:10—NKJV). This election is for a home in Heaven. God casts the only vote. We run our campaign daily in how we live our lives before Him. Our eternal salvation is what

we are running for. To lose will mean spending eternity condemned in Hell.

There is no possibility of securing a victory in this election using deception or lies. We cannot make false promises to gain God’s vote, for He already knows everything about us, including our deepest thoughts (Psa. 139:1-4). The devil is our ruthless adversary (1 Pet. 5:8). To let him win means eternally our defeat and our destruction! But God assures us of victory (1 Cor. 15:57). The condition is our faithfulness to Him (Rev. 2:10).

Each of us needs to look at our lives through lenses of careful and honest self-examination. While alive, we still can change. Once this life is past, the race will have been run. The campaign will be finished. The election will be over. God will cast His vote. Make any changes in your life that need to be made now. This one election we dare not lose!

*Author Unknown*

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## The Disciples' Question in Matthew 24

*R. L. Whiteside*

The passages considered in this study are Matthew 24:3, 15, 33-34, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Was Christ referring to His Second Coming and the literal end of the world or to the end of a certain age? If the latter, what age?

The question asked by the disciples grew out of the statement Jesus made about the coming utter destruction of Jerusalem. The speech Jesus made was in answer to the disciples' questions; no matter what view you take of the speech Jesus made, there are difficulties. But we must not ignore the fact that the speech was made in answer to the questions asked by the disciples. Matthew, Mark, and Luke give a record of these questions. Matthew: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (24:3). Substituting the marginal reading, the last question would be, "And what shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?" This would mean the complete ending of the Jewish age with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple—the destruction of the Jews as an organized nation. Mark: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?" (13:4—ASV). Luke: "Teacher, when therefore shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when these things are about to come to pass?" (21:7—ASV).

To say that Matthew's report of the questions does not mean the same as the reports of Mark

and Luke is to accuse someone of giving a false report. Compare the wording of Matthew's last question with how Mark and Luke record it.

In an important sense, the Lord is always present with those who serve Him, yet there are occasions when His presence is so manifest in some work, blessing, or disaster that it is said He comes on such occasions. The disciples at that time expected that Jesus would soon declare Himself King, and the Jews had so bitterly persecuted Him that they would expect Him to put down His enemies and carry out the decree He made about the temple.

The Lord's coming is often mentioned when His Second Coming is not hinted at (Read Psa. 80:1-2; 101:2; John 14:23; Rev. 2:5, 16, 25; 3:3, 11, 20). Certainly, David was not referring to the Second Coming of Christ. Certainly, John 14:23 does not refer to His Second Coming, and it is just as certain that five of the references in Revelation do not refer to His Second Coming, and the other references do not seem to do so. Certainly, the Lord did not deceive these good people of Thyatira by making them believe His last coming would occur while they yet lived.

With the disciples' notions and understanding of matters, how could they have been asking about what we now know as the Second Coming of Christ? They did not so much believe that Jesus would be killed and, therefore, did not believe that He was going away. The common idea

amongst the Jews was that the Messiah, when He came, would abide with them forever (John 12:32-34).

Even after Jesus rose from the dead, the disciples expected Him to assume the reign of government in Jerusalem soon. However, they still did not expect Him to go away (Acts 1:6). They could not, therefore, have been asking about His Second Coming. Commentators have viewed their question in the light of later knowledge and not in the light of what the disciples then knew, and, astonishingly, Bible students have done so. The disciples referred to His coming in judgment on Jerusalem.

Jesus said the temple would be utterly destroyed (Mat. 24:2), and the disciples asked Him, “What shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished?” He mentioned the signs that would presage the destruction of Jerusalem. Just as the fig tree’s putting forth its leaves showed the near approach of summer, “even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that he is nigh, *even* at the doors” (Mark 13:29). And it would all occur before the people then living passed away, and none but the Father knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed. But it would be a dark time for the Jews.

To make most of Matthew 24, refer to the end of the world, a matter about which they had not

inquired, is to accuse Jesus of not dealing fairly with His disciples, and it would be confusing to them, for they would certainly understand that He was answering their questions.

The siege and downfall of Jerusalem would be a time of great tribulation. Josephus tells us about the horrors of that time. Yet, while the Jews were still fighting and the Romans were outside the walls, there was hope. But when Jerusalem fell, and the Jews that were still alive were carried off as slaves, darkness settled over them. That darkness is described in Matthew 24:29. The language is figurative, as was also the language used in describing the condition of the Babylonians after the fall of Babylon (Isa. 13:1-10).

Some have argued that “this generation” in Matthew 24:34 refers to the Jewish race and that it would not cease to be until all the things mentioned had occurred. But it seems better to take *generation* in its ordinary meaning. To make it refer to *race* is to make Jesus guilty of saying an absurd thing. He had been telling what would happen to the Jews. It would be absurd for Him to say, “This Jewish race shall not pass away till all the things that are going to happen to it have happened to it.”

*Deceased*

## It Is Not That Hard...Unless

*Charles Pogue*

Jesus’ familiar words in John 15:5, “I am the vine, ye are the branches,” have been incorrectly understood and misused by those fooled by the false theory of ecumenicalism. They claim the branches are the various denominations of men. It is not difficult at all to see the falsehood in the idea. Who is Jesus speaking to in the context? His disciples. In the immediate context, the word *ye* refers to them. They are the branches. That other

individuals may be a branch is understood by the following phrase in the verse, “He that abideth in me.” There is absolutely nothing in this or any other New Testament passage even remotely suggesting the branches can be identified with the hundreds or thousands of the churches of men. The question is, why is that false interpretation placed upon the passage? We shall answer the question shortly.

In Mark 16:16, Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Those in the denominational world say that because the baptized is not included in the last part of the verse, it is not essential to salvation. Jesus just said it was! Again, we ask the question, why do men place a false interpretation of the passage?

The answer is straightforward. Those in the denominational world have the preconceived notion that one is saved by faith alone without any actions by the believer. Though most would deny such is the case, their doctrine implies obeying the commands of God amounts to earning salvation via works. To state the real problem in simple language, men interpret the Scripture based on their doctrine rather than understanding doctrine based on Scripture.

Peter stated in so many words, “baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). Was Peter wrong? No. He was an inspired apostle writing inspired Scripture. Be it understood. It is not the water that washes away the sins but the blood of Christ. Peter is relating when the blood washes those sins away. Baptism for the remission of sins is a must and a must to be understood.

In Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he states that Christ is the head of the church, which is His body (1:22-23). In Ephesians 4:4, he wrote clearly that there is one body. If the church is Christ’s

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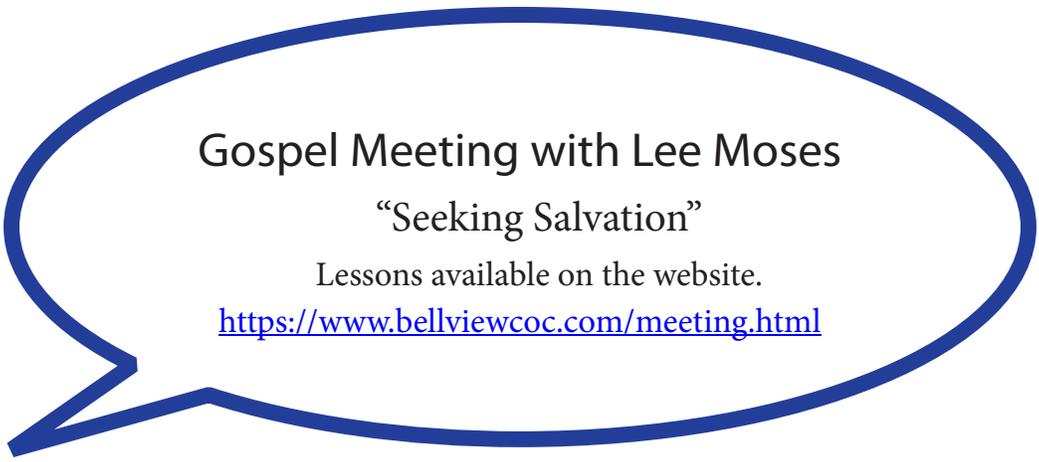
“And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23).

---

body, and there is only one body, there is only one church. Any person who has not been misled by false doctrine can understand these simple truths of Scripture.

The plan of salvation is not hard...unless. Unless what? Unless a person is unwilling to put aside beliefs that totally contradict what God has revealed in His Inspired Word. Maybe the person holds on to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, or one church is as good as another because believing and obeying the truth is harder in their mind than the error they hold. Maybe admitting the truth would compel them to understand the jeopardy that souls are in of family members who have already passed away. Whatever their reasoning is, putting aside the errors they have been taught and accepting the Scripture for what it says is a must. If one puts aside the false notions held by men regarding God’s plan of salvation, the role of the church in that plan, or any other point of truth revealed in the pages of the New Testament, it is very easily understood.

*Deceased*



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## Sympathy

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Tim Cozad in the death of his brother, Mark. Please keep Tim and his family in your prayers.

## Please Remember

November 17

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

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# BEACON

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## The Coming of the Kingdom

*Cled E. Wallace*

The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the kingdom of God, which both John, the immerser, and Jesus announced was “at hand” and “come nigh unto you” in the days when Rome ruled. Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). Isaiah’s eloquent contribution to the hope of Israel is expressed in these words:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:6-7).

Isaiah and Daniel talked about the same kingdom, whose king would sit “upon the throne of David.” It is the same kingdom that Christians are now in because they are Christians and are loosed from their sins through the blood of Christ. In truth, no man can be a Christian and not be in it.

The whole ministry of Jesus on earth, His miracles and teaching, arousing great hope in the hearts of the people, and reaching its culmination in His resurrection, ascension, and coronation was a development of the theme of the kingdom of God. It is absurd to

contend that He changed His theme or plan when He promised to build His church.

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mat. 16:16-19).

The church and the kingdom are united in inseparable identity.

The church is simply that great assembly of the redeemed over which Christ rules as king. These redeemed of the Lord are “an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9). The Lord made them “a kingdom” (Rev. 1:6). What kingdom? Whose kingdom? Was it unknown to the prophets? Were they talking about something else? The answers are obvious.

In this connection, Jesus charged His disciples not to tell any man that He was the Christ and predicted the abuse and death He was soon to suffer in Jerusalem. He also affirmed that He would be raised from the dead and definitely implied that the kingdom would not be established before then. He further said:

Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Mat. 16:28).

Jesus could not be a priest on His throne and exercise power foretold by the prophets until He conquered death and entered His glory. That sanctuary of glory is not on earth.

When Jesus arose from the dead and gave infallible proof of the fact to His apostles, it renewed their hope that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. They knew it had not come, but they had not forgotten that He had said that it was “at hand.” So, the question they asked Him was a natural one. “They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” This was just before His ascension to heaven. He assured them that

ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:6-8).

Sometime before this, but after His resurrection, He had told them that:

Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high (Luke 24:46-49).

Language of this sort, together with the claim that “all authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” and His charge to them to go into all the world with the Gospel, could not do otherwise than kindle within them burning fires of interest regarding the main theme of Jesus’ teaching—the kingdom of God. They had been active in spreading the news of its approach.

The Lord’s ascension, a few days of waiting in Jerusalem, and then came Pentecost—and the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the apostles in the Holy Spirit, with its miraculous accompaniments, brought together an astounded multitude. “And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12). When Simon Peter stood up and “lifted up his voice,” he certainly had the undivided attention of all. His explanation of the meaning of all *this* reveals Jesus, as Christ, sitting on the throne the prophets said He would occupy.

Peter’s speech on Pentecost is applied to prophecy. The prophets converge here. Of the coming of the Holy Spirit, he said, “This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel” (2:16), and he quoted Joel so precisely, and to the point it could not be otherwise convincing. The facts of the life of Jesus on earth, His claims, miracles, and teachings were widely known. The “men of Israel” had rejected, crucified, and slain Him whom God so distinctly approved. God raised Him from the dead. Peter’s introduction of a prophecy from David concerning the significance of this fact is decisive in establishing Christ’s place as king.

For David saith concerning him, I beheld the Lord always before my face; For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; Moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, Neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption (2:25-27).

David was not speaking of himself. He was foretelling the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, before corruption set in His body, and that for a specific and divine purpose. Peter’s explanation of David’s prophecy is clear and final.

Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being

therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set *one* upon his throne; he foreseeing *this* spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption (2:29-31).

David's prediction of Jesus' resurrection was based on the promise and oath that He would raise up His son and seat Him "upon his throne." The resurrection of Jesus, then, had as one of its specific purposes the seating of Jesus, David's son, on David's throne. Since Peter introduced David's prophecy, he must make two things clear. His audience expected definite answers to at least two questions. First, did God raise Jesus from the dead? Second, did He seat Him on the throne of David, as He swore to David that He would? That God raised Him, Peter declared: "This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses" (2:32). That settled the fact of the resurrection. Is He on the throne? God raised Him up to put Him on the throne. Did He put Him there?

Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear (2:33).

"Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted." Why the *therefore*? God made an oath to David that He would raise up one to sit on

His throne. Peter declared that He had been raised from the dead and gave convincing testimony. "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted," God put Him on the throne, just like He swore to David that He would.

Peter was thorough in his exposition and application of David's prophecy.

For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet (2:34-35).

To be seated on the throne, on God's "right hand," Jesus had to "ascend into the heavens." The idea that He must come down out of heaven to sit on the throne is a complete reversal of the divine order and an anti-climax that cannot be tolerated. When Jesus made purification for sins, He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (1 Cor. 15:25-26). Peter expressed the complete fulfillment of David's prophecy when he said:

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified (Acts 2:36).

The kingdom has come.

*Deceased*

## Highly Recommended

*Alfred P. Gibbs*

A young man came to London bearing a letter of introduction to Baron Rothschild with the request that he would give him employment. The great banker received him warmly but expressed regret that he had no position for him. As the young man was going, the baron put on his hat and walked along with him, pointing out the various objects of interest. Passing the bank, the rich man went in to transact some business. Afterward, the young man applied at that bank for work and was asked: "Are you not the young

man walking with the baron this morning? Well, you were in good company; and since we need a young man, we will consider this a sufficient recommendation."

To walk with God is, after all, a good recommendation. And when men of the world require a Christian's services in sickness or death, they will be likely to consider such a fact as a high recommendation.

*Deceased*

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## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Bill Busch

Dot Dodd

## Congratulations

Our congratulations are extended to Bill and Peggy Crowe on the birth of their 18<sup>th</sup> great-grandchild, Elijah Crowe, born on November 5.

## Please Remember

November 17

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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Tim Cozad



# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 47

November 18, 2024

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4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
850-455-7595

## Abominable and Disobedient

*Mike Demory*

Titus warned that Christians must be prepared for deceivers coming into their midst, those who will subvert entire households, having turned away from the truth and exchanging it for the commandments of men (Tit. 1:10-16). Although Titus' warning was against the Judaizing teachers of his day, the same continues to stand true today. These abominable and disobedient liars have accepted an enormous responsibility in shepherding the flock over which they are members. Yes, as Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things**, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

Over the past few years, I have witnessed a new thing that was unfathomable in the Lord's church decades ago. *Elders* who justify their disobedient and abominable actions by saying they spent weeks in "prayer and study." There is nothing wrong with prayer and the study of God's Word. It is something that more of us should be doing. However, as the adage says, "Actions are stronger than words," or in this case, "prayer and study." I have seen congregations who have decided to add the instrument to their worship or allow women

to take authoritative positions make written statements to justify their actions that "after many weeks or months of intense prayer and study, we have concluded that God is silent on the matter of instruments, or the matter of women teaching Bible classes, or leading prayers." It is apparent that their study must have been out of one of the newer versions of the Bible that have added the books of "First and Second Opinions" because no one should require weeks or months of study and prayer to establish that they are categorically and undeniably wrong!

To abuse prayer and study to justify ungodly actions and lead hundreds of souls astray is a technique taken out of Satan's handbook for suckers! Several years ago, the *elders* of the Southern Hills church in Abilene, Texas, went so far as to blame God for their decision to establish their "Bar Church!" You heard it correctly. They stated that "**God repeatedly led us** to follow Jesus outside the walls of our church building..." Oh yes, they did pray that God's will be done. Unfortunately, it was the will of Satan, the god of this world! Not only do they serve alcohol, but they have a band with the lifting of holy hands and other Pentecostal endeavors. Was there not prayer and study going on at Ephesus? Sardis? Laodicea? Thyatira? and Pergamos? No doubt, yet Jesus instructed them to repent of their evil works or have their candlestick removed. If prayer and study are not in accordance with God's Word, rationally han-

dling the evidence presented and drawing **only** such conclusions as the evidence provides, then it is nothing more than will worship that one is involved in.

James hit the proverbial nail on the head concerning such brethren who justify evil deeds by contending they “prayed and studied” about it when he wrote:

Ye ask (prayer), and receive not, because **ye ask amiss**, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (Jam. 4:3-4).

Brethren who *pray* for using instruments in worship, allowing women to lead prayer, singing, or teaching, or endorsing alcohol as a means of

evangelism have asked God amiss. They have become adulterers by exchanging God’s truth for a lie.

Instead of shouting for joy that they have reached a higher state of spirituality (which, by the way, is Pat Boone’s argument), James says they should turn that joy into mourning and humility (4:9-10) because they have transgressed God’s will. Yes, we should all spend time in prayer and study, but not to the point that it violates the Word of God. This is no different than those who claim a new revelation from God. God does not change (1:17), and no amount of prayer or study can change that unless one is determined to be abominable and disobedient!

*Mexico, MO*

## How Do You Know You Are a Christian?

*Gayle Oler*

Ask a person if he is a Jew, and right back, you get your answer: yes or no. There is no doubt in his mind about that. Ask him if he is a Mason, and there you are again a positive answer. He knows beyond a doubt. But ask him if he is a Christian! “Well, I hope so,” he may reply.

Others may answer, “Yes, sir!” Then, if you ask, “How do you know you are a Christian?” you will likely hear, “Well, I just know that I am.”

Paul tells us how you can know whether you are a Christian, a child of God. “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16—ASV).

You will notice that there are **two** witnesses, not one as many suppose. God’s Spirit does **not testify to** your spirit, but the two spirits jointly testify. If one testifies to another, there is only one witness. If they testify with each other, there are two witnesses. So, the two witnesses must join in making testimony that we are children of God.

But how does the Spirit testify? He testifies by words: “Which things also we speak, not in

words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual *words*” (1 Cor. 2:13—ASV). But we ask: “What is this testimony that the Spirit bears concerning one’s being a child of God?” Is it a new revelation borne directly to us by the Holy Spirit? It is not. God has already given men all the testimony by the Holy Spirit they will ever get. Look at this passage: “According as his divine power **hath given** unto us **all things** that *pertain* unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Notice that “hath given.” All things about life and godliness **had been given** two thousand years ago. The Spirit has already borne His testimony. Why expect anything further?

Is the Spirit’s testimony a matter of our feelings? It is not. Many people talk about how they *feel* in religion. They think if they feel good, they are saved. They believe they are unforgiven and lost if they do not feel something strange or bad.

Feelings are deceitful. Jacob listened to his sinful boys’ false reports about Joseph, looked

upon Joseph's coat, which was bloody (Gen. 37:31-35), and *felt* that his boy was dead. But his feelings deceived him. A person can be happy and contented in a false religion if he believes the false religion to be correct. True religion will make a person joyful and happy, but joy and happiness are no signs that one is saved. It is a sign that he *thinks* he is saved.

Sincerity is no evidence of being a Christian. True Christians are sincere, but others are sincere, too. Jacob was sincerely mistaken when he said he would see his son no longer on this side of the

## The Bridge You'll Never Cross

It's what you think that makes the world  
Seem dull or bright to you.  
Your mind may color all things gray,  
Or make them radiant hue.  
Be glad today, be true and wise,  
Seek truth *amid* the dross.  
There's useful work for you to do  
With hand and brain and heart;  
There's urgent *human* service, too,  
In which to take your part.  
Make *every* opportunity  
Worth while, and not a loss;  
The best is yours, so do not fear  
The **bridge** you'll never cross.  
If life seems drab and **difficult**,  
Just face it with a will;  
You do not have to walk alone,  
Since **God** is with you still.  
Press on with courage toward the goal.  
With truth your shield emboss;  
Be strong, look up, and just ignore  
The bridge you'll never cross.

*Author Unknown*

grave. Paul was sincerely mistaken when he persecuted the church.

The combined testimony of God's Spirit and man's spirit offers us knowledge of whether we are Christians. The Holy Spirit testifies as to the way of pardon through the Word of God, and man's spirit testifies as to whether he has obeyed that way. Here is the way it is done:

- The Spirit says, "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
- Man's spirit says, "I have done this" or "I have not done this."
- The Holy Spirit says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).
- Man's spirit says, "I have repented," or "I have not repented."
- God's Spirit says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).
- Man's spirit says, "I have been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of my sins" or "I have not been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of my sins."

Any honest, intelligent person can take the Spirit's testimony on how to obtain pardon, compare that plan with what he has or has not done, and know beyond a doubt whether he is a Christian. You know whether you are a believer, don't you?

Do you know whether you have turned your heart to God? Do you know whether you have been baptized in Jesus' name for the remission of sins? Then, in the light of the Holy Spirit's full testimony and honest conviction about your actions, you can **know** whether you are a Christian.

Regardless of how much you may **feel** you are saved or how your own spirit testifies to that effect, the Holy Spirit must corroborate that testimony with His, which is the Word of God. A man is never saved before the Spirit says he is.

*Deceased*

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## Thoughtful Words

How many words have you spoken this day  
Designed to encourage and cheer?  
How oft, may I ask, went you out of your way  
To gladden the hearts of those near?  
You may lift a burden and lighten some load  
Make sadness and gloom disappear,  
By being more thoughtful of others nearby  
Through a word that is warm and sincere.

*Author Unknown*

## Sick

Remember in your prayers:

|                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Nancy Travis           | Bill & Peggy Crowe |
| Rheba Stancliff        | Nelda King         |
| Orville & Linda Worley | Carla Burseson     |
| Bill Busch             | Dot Dodd           |

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# BEACON

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## Be Ye Thankful

*Marvin L. Weir*

One might argue over many details regarding the national holiday of Thanksgiving. Many people regard the nation's first Thanksgiving to have had its beginning in the fall of 1621 with a three-day feast by the Pilgrims in celebration of a bountiful harvest. Let us reflect that the only Thanksgiving many people give any thought to is the secular holiday that provides them an occasion to gather with friends and family to feast upon turkey and trimmings while enjoying parades and football games on TV. While we are to be thankful for our food, families, and friends, let us guard against allowing affluence to rob us of being truly thankful for God and spiritual blessings. A tremendous lesson can be learned from the congregation of the Lord's people at Laodicea. In Revelation 3:15-17 we read:

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

A person ceases to be grateful and thankful when he does not appreciate the Giver of all good things (Jam. 1:17). It is strange, in one sense, that material blessings that should produce a sense of thanksgiving to God instead bring complacency. Jehovah wants people to be thankful, not just once

a year but every day of their lives. Listen to the words of the Psalmist:

Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands. Serve Jehovah with gladness: Come before his presence with singing. Know ye that Jehovah, he is God: It is he that hath made us, and we are his; We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: Give thanks unto him, and bless his name. For Jehovah is good; his lovingkindness *endureth* for ever, And his faithfulness unto all generations (Psa. 100:1-5).

This Psalm reminds man of the blessings that can be his. God is to be worshipped and served with gladness. Man must never forget that he belongs to God; God has made and sustains human beings. Upon submissive obedience, we are entitled to be "the sheep of his pasture."

Christians, recipients of all that New Testament Christianity has to offer, have more to be thankful for than any other. In Christ was hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3), and the one who is finally "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27) has immediate access to "every spiritual blessing" (Eph. 1:3). Paul reminded the brethren at Colossae, saying:

As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and builded up in him, and established in your faith, even as ye were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of

you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power (Col. 2:6-10).

In encouraging further faithfulness and thanksgiving, Paul admonished the Colossians to: let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God. And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Col. 3:15-17).

Perhaps the most familiar words regarding expressing thanks to God are found in Philippians 4:6-7: “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

The lingering question is, how can one be thankful “in everything”? Coffman, in his commentary on Philippians, quotes George Henry Stephenson in a sermon given at Highland in Memphis, Tennessee, as observing:

In youth one may thank God for the brightness and prospect of life beckoning to the future. In age one may thank God that life has extended so long. In health one may thank God for the greatest of physical blessings. In illness one may thank God for wise physicians, kind nurses and the tender concern of loved ones. In wealth one may thank God for having been made the steward of such large accounts. In poverty one may thank God for Him, who though He was rich became poor that He might make many rich, and for His special promise, “Blessed are ye poor.”

In the event of great loss, one may thank God for blessings he is yet permitted to retain. In death, the Christian can thank God for the hope of eternal life. At all times and places, in all circumstances and situations, the Christian will thank God for Jesus Christ our Lord, for the Father who gave Him, for the life He lived, the death He died, His resurrection from the dead, and for His everlasting Gospel which we have received. Christians must ever be thankful for the distinctiveness of truth and the preciousness of every spiritual blessing. One will not be His friend if one does not cherish God’s truths. If one does not give thanks for what God has done on his behalf, he is in danger of becoming spiritually bankrupt. A history lesson from the Gentiles centuries ago confirms such:

because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,... And even as they refused to have God in *their* knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting (Rom. 1:21-22, 28).

Let us be thankful for the very source of our being, and grateful for every blessing from above!

*Blossom, TX*

## Three Gates

If you are tempted to reveal

A tale to you someone has told  
And another, make it pass,

Before you speak, three gates of gold.  
These narrow gates: First, “Is it true?”

Then, “Is it needful?” In your mind  
Give truth answer. And the next

Is last and narrowest, “Is it kind?”  
And if to reach your lips at last

It passes through these gateways three,  
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear

What the result of speech may be.

*Author Unknown*

# Seeking Signs

*Bob Wear*

Two of the most unfortunate errors being made today are (1) seeking (demanding) signs from heaven and (2) maintaining unscriptural expectations. These two problems are related and are causing untold difficulties and much strife among the people who profess to be Christians. There is no sure way to evaluate all the loss to human beings because of these two popular but false ways. Both practices are the product of the uninformed mind; they are strongly subjectivistic and constitute a very dangerous rejection of the completeness and authority of God's written revelation.

An evil and unfaithful generation seeks after a sign.

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he [Christ] answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Mat. 12:38-40).

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the sign. No other sign is needed, and no other sign will be given. All present-day claims for signs of all kinds are nothing more than foolishness coming from the vain imaginations of human minds which have refused a love of the truth of God.

Faulty expectations are tragic in their eventual effects. They lead many good people to disillusionment, some to skepticism, and, in time, lead people away from God and God's way for humankind. If God does not say it, we cannot believe it. If God does not promise it, we cannot expect it.

We cannot improve God's way by our humanistic claims of this or that. God's established order is complete and adequate to accomplish our salvation. Seeking new or additional signs is a waste

of time and effort and a violation of God's Word. Whatever people may think they have found that is new or extra will be useless in establishing and maintaining an approved relationship with God. All this humanistic behavior will make an acceptable relationship with God impossible.

There is evidence that claims of special signs, extra revelations, and additional personal experiences indicate troubled, sometimes twisted, and always misinformed minds.

The growing subjectivism among those professing to be Christians is becoming one of the greatest hindrances to the effective proclamation of God's Word by which we are saved. In many instances, it is substituted for spiritual growth, Christian behavior, and God's Word to serve as the spiritual guide.

The fact remains that the Gospel of Christ is God's power to save. It (the Word of God—1 Pet. 1:22-25) contains the evidence to produce our faith, the commandments to obey in the beginning, and in living the God-approved life in the church, and the promises we can expect from God (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Acts 18:8).

If the Gospel of Christ is not permitted to serve its God-ordained purposes in our lives, we are told that we will be lost (2 The. 1:7-9). This being true, we must content ourselves with God's way—to learn, believe, and live it.

We must seek what God teaches us to seek and expect what God tells or promises us to expect. Other seekings and other expectations will cause us to fail.

*Deceased*

---

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23).

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“A man has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of an intimate knowledge of the Bible,” says a statesman.

Author Unknown

### Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Nancy Travis

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

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Bill Busch

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# BEACON

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**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
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## The Mercy and Grace of God

Text: 1 Peter 1:1-12

*Kent Bailey*

The divine scheme of Redemption centers upon our need for mercy and grace. By *mercy*, we refer to compassion or forbearance shown to the offender. By *grace*, we refer to unmerited or undeserved favor.

When Peter, the apostle of Christ, penned the words of our text, it was without a doubt that he realized and was reminded of his need for mercy and the grace of God in his personal life. When we consider the record of Peter's denial of Christ and our Lord's reaction to such, we are reminded of the mercy and grace of God (John 13:36-38; 18:25-27; Luke 22:61-62).

One of the aspects of the realization and reality of one's sin is the effects of sinful behavior on one's thought process. The realization of one's sin brings upon one the aspect of personal guilt and worthlessness. Considering Peter's denial of Christ, we rightly conclude that he genuinely repented of such sin. We conclude this because of the results produced within his life. Considering that godly sorrow precedes repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), such produces a deep contrition of thought and a sense of worthlessness in the estimate of one's life. When one is impressed with the fact that he has sinned against God and stands justly condemned in a lost condition, there is a sense of complete hopelessness that overwhelms him. We note, in the life of Peter, that he gave up. He decided to return to his former

work of fishing. No doubt Peter sincerely thought that his sin against the Lord had disqualified him from further service in the cause of Christ.

One of the greatest displays of the mercy and grace of God is demonstrated in the way that Christ responded to Peter's repentance (John 21:1-25). Another crucial passage in the study of the mercy and grace of God is recorded in Luke 22:31-34. The time element under consideration is before Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. In this text, we read that Christ not only demonstrated His Deity by His omniscience concerning Peter's denial of Him, but He also demonstrated His mercy, grace, and willingness to forgive by indicating that Peter would return to a condition of faithfulness and service unto Him. Christ further indicated Peter's worth to the cause by stating, "when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren."

On the imprint of every page of the Word of God, we note the eternal message of the mercy and grace of God (Eze. 18:23, 32; Hos. 11:8-9; John 1:17; 3:16-17; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 Tim. 1:12-15).

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"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

---

It is not God's desire that any should be lost in eternity, but rather that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). The entire aspect of God's scheme of Redemption finds its foundation upon the reality of God's divine mercy and grace.

### God is Sovereign in Delegating His Mercy and Grace

By this phrase, we mean that such is a recognition on our part that whatever He wills is right. God alone determines the appropriate course of action. This does not mean that He is arbitrary. Because of His perfect attributes and nature, He alone can determine the essence and limits of His mercy and grace (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Pet. 4:18; Jam. 2:14-26). We do not earn God's Salvation. It is by His divine mercy and grace that our faith acts in obedience to His divine scheme of Redemption (Heb. 5:8-9).

### God's Mercy and Grace do not Remove the Consequences of Sin

One of the most touching stories in the Scriptures deals with the life of David, King of Israel. David was approximately 50 years old at this time. He had made vows before God (Psa. 101). He had insisted upon righteousness in his nation. As a nation, Israel had been taught to love, honor,

respect, and obey God. David, their King, was their example. He was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

Despite his love for God, he fell into temptation and yielded to sin. David was guilty of both adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11-12). God sent the prophet Nathan to inform David of his sin and demonstrate that he was worthy of death (12:5). Even though David did sincerely repent of his sin, confess it to God, and plead for mercy and forgiveness. Even though he was forgiven because he turned to God (Psa. 51), he still faced terrible consequences for his sin. David paid with 20 years of heartbreak, strife, and the loss of a child that meant everything to him.

### God's Mercy and Grace are Costly

In the Scriptures, we note the vicarious suffering of Christ. As the second member of the Godhead, He took on the essence of humanity while maintaining His Deity and became our substitute on the cross in suffering for our sins, paying our sin debt, and tasting death for all of us (Isa. 53:1-6, 12; Heb. 2:1-9; 2 Cor. 5:21). Salvation is not inexpensive. It cost Christ His blood to purchase our Salvation and build the church, which com-

## Unbelief of Moses and Aaron

*R. L. Whiteside*

On one occasion, Moses turned his confidence from God to self. The people were thirsty on their journey. God commanded Moses to assemble the people and to speak to the rock that it brings forth its water (Num. 20:8). Moses and Aaron assembled the people before the rock, but he did not speak to the rock, but to the people: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" (20:10). "Must we"—thus leaving God out of the transaction.

Then God said to Moses and Aaron, "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (20:12). Moses had no more doubt then of the existence of God than he had any other time. Yet, God says he and Aaron did not believe in Him. They did not have sufficient confidence in God to do what He said but followed their way, and no man did that except through a lack of faith in God.

*Deceased*

poses the totality of those saved (Mat. 16:16-18; Acts 2:38; 20:28; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23).

#### God's Mercy and Grace are Conditional

Because Christ purchased Salvation for us, He has the right to state its conditions (Heb. 5:8-9). We must believe the Gospel (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Acts 17:30), confess the Deity of Christ (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Rom.

6:1-7; 1 Cor. 12:13). The Christian must remain faithful to Christ (1 John 1:6-7; Rev. 2:10). The unfaithful fallen away covenant child of God must return to Christ (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:6-10).

Only through acceptance and obedience to God's scheme of Redemption will one be a beneficiary of the mercy and grace of God.

Calhoun, GA

## Do You Have "Hope" or just a "Wish"?

*Ed Johnson*

In Hebrews 6:11, the inspired writer teaches, "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Interestingly, the writer used the words that he used and the order in which he used them. Notice: *diligence* and then *assurance*, and then *hope*. When we examine these three words as they are used together and the order in which they are used, we start to see the difference between *hope* and *wish*.

*Diligence* is defined as "working hard; a careful effort; being diligent; industrious." Diligence describes an attitude that one has when handling a task. It is an attitude of working at that task with everything we have. It is "putting our heart" into that task. This task would be the study of God's Word, prayer, and the praise of God. It would include anything that would cause us to look forward to our salvation.

With that kind of diligence toward that task, we have a "full assurance." *Assurance* is defined as "making sure or certain; a positive declaration inspiring confidence; a certainty." So, a *full* assurance would be an even greater degree of certainty or confidence of something coming about. In Hebrews 6:11, that something is a hope.

---

"And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end" (Heb. 6:11).

---

Then, what is the definition of *hope*? Usually, people use this word to mean little more than "something I wish I had." They use *hope* in the context of being little more than a wish. Based **only** on what the Hebrew writer teaches, true Biblical hope is far more than just a wish. He teaches that Biblical hope is a hope that is based on a **diligent** effort put forth toward achieving something. That diligent effort gives us a "full assurance" of receiving that something, which is the "hope." So, we can see that hope, as the world uses it, is little more than a wish. But hope, as taught in the Bible, is much more. It is a strong desire (a diligent effort) for something and a reasonable expectation (full assurance) of receiving that. **That** is hope. We must have a Biblical faith, which the same Hebrew writer defines as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Then we consider the source of that faith, "faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

So, because Christ's Word teaches or tells us something that we have never seen, we nevertheless believe it; that is faith. Based on that faith (the belief that something is, or will be, even though we have never seen it), we have eternal hope.

*Copied*

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Bill & Peggy Crowe

Rheba Stancliff

Nelda King

Orville & Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Bill Busch

Dot Dodd

## Please Remember

December 15

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 50

December 9, 2024

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4850 Saufley Field Road; Pensacola, FL 32526  
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## History and Geography Confirm the Bible

*N. B. Hardeman*

About 700 BC, Isaiah stood upon the hilltops of Israel and drew aside the curtain to look into the mystic future. The sky was clear to him, and he predicted world events that the most pronounced critics of the ages could not deny. In chapter 13, he speaks of Babylon, “the glory of kingdoms, The beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency” (13:19). He says it, “Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there” (13:19-20).

At the time of this prophecy, Babylon had not attained greatness. About 100 years later, Nebuchadnezzar made it one of the wonders of the world. Its walls, 15 miles on each side, 87 feet thick and 350 feet high, were, excepting that of China, without an equal before or since. The temple of Belus, the palace and its hanging gardens, the banks of the river, and the artificial lake and canals for draining the great Euphrates have ever excited the wonder of the world. Strange it is to imagine anyone having the courage to predict the downfall and desolation of so great a city, and yet, this is what the prophet declared. It came to pass that 51 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of the Jews, this great Babylon fell to rise no more. Subsequent history confirms Isaiah’s prophecy and demonstrates the inspiration of him who foresaw its doom.

In Ezekiel 26:7-14, the prophet foretells the destruction of old Tyre on the Phoenician coast’s mainland. He declares that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon will come against it, and he will break down its walls and towers with his weapons of war. With his horses, he will tread down its streets. With the sword, he will destroy its people, and old walls, fallen towers, stones, arches, and remains of ancient magnificence shall occupy its site. His final prophecy is that “the stones and timbers and dust shall be laid in water” (26:12). This prophecy was spoken more than 200 years before its fulfillment while old Tyre was yet in her glory. The years rolled by, and Nebuchadnezzar came and laid waste in the city and left it a mass of ruins. The remaining inhabitants moved to an island half a mile from the mainland and about three miles in diameter. They erected a wall around the island 150 feet high and built a modern city called New Tyre. The glory of this latter was more significant than the former. Tyre sent her ships to distant ports and carried on the commerce of all countries roundabout. Protected by its gigantic walls, it became prominent, powerful, and wealthy. In 336 BC, Alexander the Great began his march to conquer the world. Reaching the Phoenician shore, he looked upon the ruins of an old city and gazed with some misgivings upon the island city so prosperous and prominent. At first, he thought of making terms with them and passing on but later decided that leav-

ing behind such an influential city was dangerous. He, therefore, conceived the idea of building a causeway 200 feet wide and a half mile long from the mainland to the island. He saw plenty of stones and masses of timber and dust on the ruins of the old city to accomplish his purpose. With 200,000 men working for seven months, he finally succeeded, and with his battering rams, he made a breach in the wall, burned the city, destroyed it, and enslaved its inhabitants. He slew 8,000, and 2,000 of those taken prisoners. He crucified and erected their crosses along the shore of the Mediterranean. Thus, it was true that the stones, timbers, and dust of old Tyre were laid in water. Let an enemy of God's Word tell how Ezekiel knew about this 250 years in advance.

Luke 2:1 says: "there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." When John began his ministry, it was the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (3:1). Many years after, Paul appealed to Augustus (Acts 25:21). Here is confusion and apparent contradiction. Unless one has made a study of the political affairs of that land, it is impossible to get through this tangled network of allusions. The Augustus who appears in Luke as if dead and alive again in Acts is none other than old Nero, who,

by his flatterers, was called Augustus. No record of this decree, other than Luke's, could be found, and for hundreds of years, infidels denied that such a decree ever went forth. They declared it a forgery, and many a friend of the Bible suffered embarrassment before them. In 1927, Mr. William T. Ellis, a noted scholar and world traveler, wrote an article in which he said the original decree had been found on the walls of an unearthed building in Angora, Asia Minor. Luke has been corroborated, and the story of the Bible is confirmed. Let Christians thank God for those who are spending millions on archaeology. Regardless of their purpose, they invariably find evidence supporting that story given by inspiration.

Writers and travelers have always had great difficulty maintaining geographical and topographical accuracy. This is especially true if one is trying to give an account of some country with which he is unfamiliar, and even then, egregious errors are found. When the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, written by leading scholars and experts in their respective lines, first appeared, it contained so many errors in geography and topography that its rival, the *New American Cyclopedia*, got out a pamphlet exposing them. Such is man's inability to speak and write accurately about these matters.

Most scholars who visit Palestine with a view of writing an article or book regarding that country feel it is their special duty to correct the errors of all others regarding places and the physical features of that sacred land. Books written primarily as tourist guides are filled with errors that render them useless and undependable. Now let it be said with absolute assurance and without fear of contradiction that no single error can be found in geography or topography in the New Testament. This is equally true whether the writer speaks of Palestine or foreign fields. The argu- eyed critics of 20 centuries have been unable to find a single error. Let the enemies explain how those "Ignorant Jews" and illiterates **could** write

Faith in Christ is the foundation upon which every Christian life is founded. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Faith in Christ produces repentance. When the penitent believer confesses his faith in Christ, he is ready to be baptized. Then faith continues through repentance, confession, and baptism. Peter says we add faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity to that faith. In fact, at the end of faith, we receive eternal life, which is in the world to come.

*E. M. Borden, Deceased*

with **such accuracy**. There is one answer to this query: “that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21).

We give this Bible to all as a Book good always and everywhere—a light to our feet when we are

young—a guide to our path during mature years, and when we come to die, it is the **only** Book one cares to have beside him.

*Deceased*

## If Tomorrow Never Comes

*Danny Box*

Tomorrow will never come for many people. “Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam. 4:14). The nature of our life sermons is that we are on earth only for a brief time. What if tomorrow never comes in your life?

**If tomorrow never comes, I want to be found in Christ.** The Bible teaches we should “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi. 3:9). I care nothing for self-achieved righteousness; I simply want to be found in Him.

**If tomorrow never comes, I want to have served faithfully in the Lord’s army.** I long to hear God say, “Well done, good and faithful servant;

thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat. 25:23). Whatever has been put into my hands, my goal is to be trustworthy in it. Being God’s faithful servant is what matters.

**If tomorrow never comes, I want to die in the service of my Lord.** I realize, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). I desire to be busy with God’s business during the daylight of my life. Night is coming.

**If tomorrow never comes, I want my family and friends to know of my love, and I want to leave them an example to follow.** Paul said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). My prayer is that the example of my life can be such that I can say to family and friends, “Follow my example. I followed the Messiah; now you follow me.”

**If tomorrow never comes, I want to have made some difference for good in my world.** “Let your moderation [unselfishness] be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand” (Phi. 4:5). I want to serve my fellowman, realizing that the Lord is near. What would be your desire “**If tomorrow never comes**”? Would you wish for one more day to obey? (Mark 16:16).

Would you wish for one more day to be restored? (Acts 8:22). Or would you pray, “come, Lord Jesus?” (Rev. 22:20).

*Deceased*

### Twelve Famous Rules for Reading

1. Read.
2. Read.
3. Read some more.
4. Read anything.
5. Read about everything.
6. Read enjoyable things.
7. Read things you enjoy.
8. Read and talk about it.
9. Read very carefully—some things.
10. Read on the run—most things.
11. Do not think about when you are going to get time to read, but,
12. Just read.

*Author Unknown*

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Nelda King

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Dot Dodd

Bill Busch

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The Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together has been canceled for December.

## Weekly Services

### Sunday

Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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# BEACON

Vol. LIII / No. 51

December 16, 2024

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## Will God Be Satisfied with Less Than Our Best?

*Guy N. Woods*

The view that there is but one essential service of the church—at which the Lord's Supper is served—is persistent and widespread. Many thousands of disciples in congregations throughout the land attend Lord's Day services in the morning hour but are never present at the evening service or, indeed, for any other. Proceeding from the assumption that this meeting alone is obligatory, they attend it and do not bother to concern themselves with any other church activities, with the satisfying feeling that they have exhausted all responsibility to the Lord for the week. This attitude and its disastrous effect on the church is limited to no section of the brotherhood; the problem is far-reaching and one with which faithful elderships and dedicated Gospel preachers wrestle continually.

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The faithful disciple does not ask, "What do I have to do?" His exciting and anxious question is, "What may I do?"

---

Were we to concede that those thus influenced are correct in limiting their activities on the ground alleged that there is but one essential meeting of the Lord's people—which we do not—the attitude exhibited is highly objectionable and exceedingly displeasing to the Lord. The disposition flows out of a heart possessed by one **who is content to do less than one can for God!** That one is capable of such a decision evidences that

the person thus influenced is unmoved by the love of God and the immeasurable sacrifice of Christ and possesses a hardened and calloused heart. The parable of the Plowing Servant teaches us to say that when we have done all that we ought to do, we are still unprofitable servants (Luke 17:7-10). If, in having rendered the full measure of service of which we are capable, we are unprofitable servants, what of the individual **who has not done as much as he could?**

This parable is a striking reminder that we are not our own and that the legality of the Lord's title to us and a full measure of service on our part is unquestioned. His ownership extends to us, what we have, and what we can do. He is entitled to all the services we are capable of, and it is the height of presumption that this inherent right should be questioned.

The disciple who loves the Lord will not complain at His commands nor raise questions regarding their essentiality. The truth is, the Savior never gave an unnecessary command nor uttered an unnecessary word. Brethren, who argue that some of the activities of the Lord's people are non-essential, are guilty of the rankest sectarianism and join forces with denominational devotees who make similar charges regarding Mark 16:15-16.

The faithful disciple does not ask, "What do I have to do?" His exciting and anxious question is, "What may I do?" He who earnestly desires to put the kingdom of God first in his heart and life

rejoices in doing the Lord's will to the extent of his ability. He will never resort to fallacious arguments to justify his failure. To seek the kingdom first is not to seek it last or, for that matter, second. It is to give it top priority. When personal interests clash with those of the kingdom, our responsibility is clear; all such personal matters must give way to the higher and nobler obligations of the soul.

The sin of the rich man (Luke 16) is often repeated in our day. It is not indicated that he came into possession of his "good things" through fraud, theft, or deceit. He had his "good things" here; he chose to live for this life—not the next. He could not have them both here and hereafter!

Neither can we.

*Deceased*

## Persistence

*Ken Chumbley*

Have you ever heard the story about the young man who "fell head over heels" for a young lady? Sadly, she rejected his advances. He would ask numerous times to take her out, but she made it clear she was "not interested." The young man was not deterred. He started writing a letter to her every day. Some were long epistles extolling her and his love for her. Others were much shorter—but to the point. Each one told of his undying love and devotion. The mailman faithfully delivered these letters each day for over a year until the young lady married—the mailman!

Our Savior often taught in parables and in one of these He speaks of the persistent widow:

And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:1-8).

Each of the parables of our Lord put forth one main point. Here our Lord was teaching that persistence gives us dividends. Those who meet with success in life are not the *lucky* one's but the persistent ones. Many examples could be given, such as Lincoln and Edison—who had many failures before they reached success. Failure in the past or fear of failure is no excuse for not trying. Failures do not hold us back—it is our failure to keep on going that ensures more failure. Have you been trying to get someone to attend the worship services with you? Just because your efforts have been rejected, do not give up trying. Persistence pays off! Have you been trying to teach someone and are waiting for them to respond in obedience

## Your Chance

*Berton Braley*

With doubt and dismay, you are smitten;  
You think there's no chance for you, son?  
Why, the best books haven't been written,  
The best race hasn't been run.  
The best score hasn't been made yet,  
The best song hasn't been sung.  
The best tune hasn't been played yet.  
Cheer up, for the world is young!  
No chance? Why, the world is just eager  
For things you ought to create.

*Deceased*

to the Gospel, but they keep putting it off until some “more convenient season”? We must keep teaching. Let us never forget that we plant, and we water—but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Persistence pays off!

Have you been carrying a load of trials and troubles that are hard to bear and you have asked for the burden to be lifted—but the problems remain? You are not alone. Job learned a vital lesson—troubles are part of life (Job 5:7; 14:1). Remember that Paul asked three times for his “thorn in the flesh” to be removed and how God answered him:

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in

my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor. 12:9).

Paul pressed on:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Persistence pays off! Let us not get discouraged. Satan is ever active in seeking to get us to give up—but we cannot. Paraphrasing the words of Winston Churchill; “Never, never, never give up!” Persistence pays off!

*Deceased*

## Thoughts On the Season Ahead

*Bill Jackson*

Surely, most of God’s children are schooled on the difference in the coming season as a religious celebration and as simply a holiday time. That distinction the child of God will always have to make as various “times on the calendar” come upon us. We have in mind stressing two or three things about the matter, hoping it will help us.

(1) Christmas is **not** a religious season for the family of God. There is but one day on our calendar with religious significance: the first day of the week. Beyond that, the observance of days is condemned, as Paul noted in Galatians 4:10-11. In the religious creeds of men, we have noted dozens of pages about the “church year” and the various religious seasons. New Testament Christianity knows of no such.

(2) Removing its religious significance, the child of God can appreciate and enjoy the day off from labor, the free time that allows visiting to and from family and friends, and the greetings, gifts, and eating that goes along with the season. After all, some men hold religious festivals such as Memorial Day, Thanksgiving Day, etc. We

must not, but we appreciate the day off and attendance to things of enjoyment.

(3) More than these things, the child of God knows that the work of God goes on, and the season must not be allowed to hinder his service to God. There may be more-than-usual spending because of gifts and guests, and it is well to know that Satan would try to use the season to cause us to fail to give to the Lord as we should, in **money** and in **time**! I may visit away, and folks may visit me, but let me propose that this will not affect my worship and service. I may do more than the usual weekly spending of funds, but let me propose now that this will not be allowed to affect my giving to the Lord in any way. If anything, let me also present a gift to the kingdom—let me increase my contribution!

May these thoughts help us place the season in perspective, see where we can and cannot participate, and see that regardless of the season, my service and worship to God goes on constantly.

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Carla Burleson

Dot Dodd

Bill Busch

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December 29

Singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

## Weekly Services

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Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

Afternoon Worship Service — 1:00 p.m.

### Wednesday

Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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# BEACON

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December 23, 2024

**A Publication of Bellview Church of Christ**

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## Refuting the Roman Guards' Assertion Concerning Christ's Missing Body *Benjamin Franklin*

Luke says of Jesus that he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

The apostle Peter, in his first discourse to a Gentile audience, said,

Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead (10:40-41).

Paul says, "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," of whom the greater part remained to the time of his writing (1 Cor. 15:6).

The only testimony we have on the other side is the testimony of the watch—the same persons in our title, the Roman Guards. They afterward changed and contradicted their first testimony. Their last testimony is that "His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept" (Mat. 28:13). This is all we know of on this side worth mentioning.

From this testimony, we must make up our minds. The testimony of the watch is very objectionable and, we think, cannot be regarded by any persons who do not wish to be deceived. To their testimony, we make the following objections:

1. They had previously given a contrary testimony when they were unbiased, of their own choice, and had no motives to tell a falsehood. Their first account, given before they had any conversation with anybody, was more likely to be true than any after testimony. The first objection to their second account is that it contradicts the first. Both their accounts cannot be true, and it is more probable that the first is accurate than the second.

2. The second objection to their last testimony is that they had been tampered with by the chief priests and Pharisees, who were known to be enemies, which precisely corresponds with their telling a different story from the first.

3. Their testimony is objectionable because it precisely corresponds with the anticipations of the chief priests and Pharisees. They commanded the guard lest the disciples should steal the body and say, He is risen from the dead. It was natural that their minds should fall back upon the expedient they had previously thought of.

4. Their testimony is objectionable because if they were asleep, as they say, they did not know what happened with the body. They could not know whether it was stolen or had risen. Their admission that they were asleep destroys their

testimony, for men can not testify to what occurs when they sleep.

5. Their account is objectionable because the guard came under the most rigorous laws, inflicting the severest punishments upon them for delinquency. They would have risked their lives to have been found asleep. It is not probable that they would have risked all this, to have all fallen asleep, if they had felt a little drowsy.

6. They knew the time when he said he would rise. Of all other periods, they certainly would have been the most unlikely to have been asleep at this crisis.

7. Each watch only had to be on duty six hours in twenty-four. They could not have needed sleep.

8. Their story is incredible because they would have been brought to punishment if they had been asleep. But not one word is said about punishment. The matter is all suffered to pass quietly, which shows that the rulers did not attach any blame to the guard.

9. The story is incredible because the disciples were timid, cowardly, and discouraged, so they were the last men on earth to have undertaken such a hazardous enterprise. It is believing against all reason and analogy to think they would attempt such a thing.

10. The story is incredible, for the rulers would have compelled the disciples to have brought the body back if they had believed it to be in their possession. They certainly had the power and disposition to do this, and the fact that they did not do it is clear evidence that they did not believe they had it.

11. This story is incredible because the disciples could have done nothing with the body if they had stolen it. They could not have raised it from the dead. To have kept it in their possession would only have opened the way for their exposure. They had no inducement to steal it.

12. They were too weak to have forced the guard and taken the body. They could not, therefore, have obtained it in that way.

13. They could not have bribed the guard, for they were too poor; they had no money.

14. They could not have persuaded the guard to give up the body, for they had no influence. In all these respects, the story of the guard and the common report of the Jews for years, that the disciples stole the body while the guard slept, is not only objectionable but wholly incredible and, as such, must be repudiated by men of sense and reason everywhere.

*Deceased*

## Settling Doctrinal Questions by Popular Vote

*R. L. Whiteside*

Things new to me keep coming up. When I was twenty years of age, I heard a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher in debate refer to Acts 15 to prove the scripturalness of the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Some years ago, I attended the Mason-White debate in Dallas, Texas, and heard Brother Mason use this same Scripture to prove their right to hold conventions. Just recently, I

heard this same Scripture put to a new use, namely, to prove the right of a church to settle a question of doctrine by popular vote. This seems to be a convenient chapter. Will the reader please stop here and carefully read that chapter?

The last preacher referred to was accused of preaching unsound doctrine in that he had preached that the blood of martyrs is the seed

of the kingdom and had challenged anyone to show where the Bible says that the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom. In a meeting called to consider the matter, the preacher took the position that the whole church should, by popular vote, settle the matter of his soundness. A visiting preacher argued against such a procedure and raised this question: "If a preacher should preach that sprinkling is baptism, would you leave it to a popular vote to determine his soundness? Where would such a course end?" In reply, the accused preacher brought up the proceedings of the meeting outlined in Acts 15, and argued that the whole church at Jerusalem settled the question of circumcision that was then agitating the churches, composed of Jews

and Gentiles. It was later pointed out to him that the decision was inspired, for the document sent out says: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us" (15:28). To this, the preacher replied: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit just as it seems good to the Holy Spirit now when we come to conclusions in harmony with the Scriptures." To hear a Christian preacher argue that a church may, by popular vote, settle a matter of doctrine is astonishing enough, but to hear him try to prove his point by the proceedings of that meeting is amazing beyond measure. If another Gospel preacher would take such a position, I would like to hear from him.

*Deceased*

## Study the Bible

The effect that the Bible has had upon the world is beyond estimate. "Educate men without religion and you make them but clever devils," said the Duke of Wellington. And Colton said:

Philosophy is a bully that talks very loud when the danger is at a distance, but the moment she is hard pressed by the enemy she is not to be found at her post; but leaves the brunt of the battle to be borne by her humbler but steadier comrade religion, whom on most other occasions she affects to despise.

That is the great value of the study of the Bible. In it is found the crutch of life upon which to lean when all other props are gone, the key that opens the door to the chamber of solace when all other doors are closed. Study the Bible.

A myriad of life's lessons can be learned from its pages. It is the chart and compass to sail the seas of existence: the cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, by which to guide our feet along the stone-strewn journey of life's tortuous highway. It is the treasury of the world's knowledge, the custodian of the heritage of the ages, and the preserver of spiritual balm that heals the troubles

of the soul. It is yesterday, today, and tomorrow: the reflection of the past, the mirror of the present, the prophecy of the future. It is the scroll of time, the promise of eternity. It portrays the cycle of life, with its sorrows, joys, cross, and crown. It is old, but nothing outside of it is new. It is a university of knowledge, an eon upon eons of experience.

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*Author Unknown*

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

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Remember in your prayers:

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Nancy Travis

Orville & Linda Worley

Nelda King

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Bill Busch

## Please Remember

December 29

Singing and a devotional service at 1:00 pm.

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Bible Classes for all ages — 9:00 a.m.

Morning Worship Service — 10:00 a.m.

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Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

## Bellview Church of Christ

**Bishops:** Paul Brantley

Michael Hatcher

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# BEACON

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850-455-7595

## Parallels Between the Ark and the Church

*Kent Bailey*

The theme of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is a dramatic revelation of God's scheme of Redemption for fallen humanity. A careful study of the epistle of 1 Peter demonstrates not only the reality of such a plan but also the magnificent greatness of such. This scheme of Redemption is so magnificently great that the Old Testament prophets diligently inquired of the salvation that has been offered unto us (1 Pet. 1:10). The scheme of Redemption is so magnificently great that it took centuries, from the human participation of sin in the garden of Eden unto the coming of Christ bringing about his earthly ministry, His rejection of the masses, His suffering and death on the cross, His burial and victorious resurrection from the dead, and ascension to Heaven (1:18-21).

This scheme of Redemption is so great that the blood of Christ saves one in being begotten by the Gospel of Christ to bring about a penitent faith that leads one to confess Christ and be baptized for the remission of one's past sins. When one accomplishes such, one has purified their soul in obedience to the truth, being born again, not of corruptible but rather the incorruptible seed of the Word of God which lives and abides forever (1:22-23).

Regardless of the horrible sufferings one must endure, if one remains faithful during the "trials of faith," one will receive the end of their faith, even the eternal salvation of their soul (1:7-9). The traditional view that faith will be

lost in sight is inconsistent with the Biblical definition of *faith* and is not in harmony with what the divine record teaches. The noun *faith* means confidence and the verbal equivalent of *believe* means to confide, trust, or rely upon. Such inherent components of faith cannot cease. Following His resurrection from death, our Lord stated to Thomas, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed" (John 20:29). The faith of Thomas was gained, rather than lost, in sight. Paul wrote, "have I not seen the Lord?" Seeing Christ did not result in his losing faith, which afterward he mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed."

The element of faith does not end where knowledge begins—the more knowledge one develops, the greater faith one will have. In 1 Peter 1:9, the phrase "end of your faith" was not related to such termination. While the term, *end* (*telos*, NT Greek) is correctly defined as termination in some instances, *telos* is also correctly defined as being "the end of which all things relate, the aim, the purpose." In 1 Peter 1:9, the inspired writer uses *end* to refer to the end result, purpose, or design, not termination.

The magnificent greatness of salvation in Christ is depicted in 1 Peter chapter 3. When the magnificent greatness of salvation is considered, who can ultimately harm us if we are true followers of Christ (3:13)? If one suffers for the cause of truth rather than being focused on the temporal

aspects of life in this world, one needs to be focused upon giving an adequate defense of their faith (3:15).

Our faith is anchored in the Lord God, not in humanity. We must be ready to give an answer (*apologia*, NT Greek). *Apologia* is defined as a defense. We are to be ready to give a defense of the truth that inquires of a reason (derived from *logos*, NT Greek). According to *Thayer* (380-382), along with *Arndt and Gingrich* (478-480), this term has a variety of definitions. The context of 1 Peter 3:15 points to being a ground, reason, or evidence of our hope and faith.

Not all suffering is pointless. Such is demonstrated in the ridicule and rejection of Noah and his preaching and in the vicarious sufferings of Christ on the cross for our salvation. The magnificent greatness of salvation is noted in the parallel regarding the ark and the church of Christ (3:18-22). The parallels are striking in noting a comparison in salvation from the great flood and in salvation found in Christ!

In the days of Noah, God authorized the construction of only one ark (Gen. 6:14). There were no lifeboats of “arks of your choice.” At the beginning of the Gospel age, Christ built only one true church (Mat. 16:18-19). He did not build a multiplicity of denominations or para-church institutions.

In the days of Noah, God authorized the ark to be constructed out of only one type of wood—

gopher wood (Gen. 6:14). When the one true church was established, it was built out of those who had been purchased by the blood of Christ (Col. 1:13-14).

When Noah constructed the ark, God authorized only one door (Gen. 6:16). Christ’s way is the only entrance into His church (John 10:1-9).

On the inside of the ark, only one family was wearing one family name—that belonging to Noah (Heb. 11:7). The church of Christ is God’s one true family wearing the name of Christ (Eph. 3:14-15; Acts 11:26).

Noah and his family, within the ark, were saved from the evil, sinful world by God using the great worldwide flood to transport them to a new life (Heb. 11:7). Those within the church of the Lord have been translated by Christ by baptism to a new life in Him (1 Pet. 3:21).

Those saved from the great flood were within the ark, and those outside were lost and condemned (Gen. 6:17-22). All who are saved in Christ are within the church of Christ, and those who are accountable outside are lost (Acts 2:47; 20:28; Col. 1:13-18; Eph. 1:22-23; 2 The. 1:7-10). God invited all individuals in Noah’s day to escape condemnation in the flood (Gen. 7:1).

God invites all sinners today to escape the condemnation of the Judgment by coming into Christ (Rev. 22:17). Do not neglect, reject, or despise God’s offer of salvation in Christ.

*Calhoun, GA*

## Handling Aright God’s Word

### *Dub Mowery*

In “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), we need to carefully examine every passage of Scripture on a given subject. In the four Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there are some events and teachings of Christ that are recorded in only one of the books. Sometimes the same thing is

recorded in two or three books, and a few of the works and teachings of Christ are recorded in all four books. For instance, it is necessary to study all four books to obtain a complete picture of the events on the night Judas betrayed Christ (Mat. 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:1-12).

Mark 14:47 says when Judas led the multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests that, “one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.” Neither this passage, nor its immediate context reveals who cut off the high priest’s servant’s ear, his name, or immediate response to this incident.

Turning back to Matthew 26:52-54, we find Jesus’ response to the individual who cut off the ear.

Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?

Turning to Luke 22:49-51, we find that those with Christ were willing to take up swords against the multitude and that Jesus touched the ear of the high priest’s servant and healed it. But it is not until we turn to John 18:1-12 that we learn the identity of the one who cut off the ear—Simon Peter—and the servant’s name Malchus. These four accounts of Judas’ betrayal of Christ serve to illustrate the necessity of taking all that is recorded in the Bible on a subject before drawing a conclusion. The same is true with our approach to the subject of our souls’ salvation. It is essential that we include all Scripture pertaining to redemption in the New Testament.

In John 3:16, Jesus said, “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.” Some people claim, “There is enough Gospel in that one verse to save the world!” If that is so, why did God give us 41,170 other verses in the Bible? Who can say one passage of Scripture is more important than another? Many assume, from John 3:16 and Romans 5:1, that a person becomes

spiritually saved the moment he believes. But that concept is not Biblical.

A careful examination of God’s Word reveals that there’s much more involved than mentally “accepting Jesus as Savior.” Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Obedience to the Gospel of Christ, on man’s part, is essential to salvation. That is stressed in Hebrews 5:8-9: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.”

Submitting to the Gospel terms of salvation in the Bible does not constitute “meritorious works” (Eph. 2:8-9; Luke 17:10). But there are essential works that God commands for us to be saved. Even our belief is a work of God (John 6:29). When Peter entered the house where the Gentile Cornelius and his family were gathered, he said, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). “Working righteousness” is another way of saying, “obedience to God’s commandments.” David defined God’s commandments as “righteousness” in Psalms 119:172.

Our faith is incomplete without obedience (Jam. 2:21-24). To be saved, we must, (1) Hear the inspired Word of God (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31), (2) Believe in God, and Jesus as the Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), (3) Repent of our sins (Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 7:10), (4) Confess our belief in Christ as God’s Son (Acts 8:37), and (5) Be baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

You cannot be saved by any of these alone. But when they are taken as a whole and you do all these things God requires, handling aright His Word, He will save you from your sins.

*Deceased*

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January 19

Birthdays and Anniversaries Get-together will be held after the afternoon service, in the zone room.

January 29

Fifth Wednesday Singing at 7:00 p.m., in the auditorium.

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