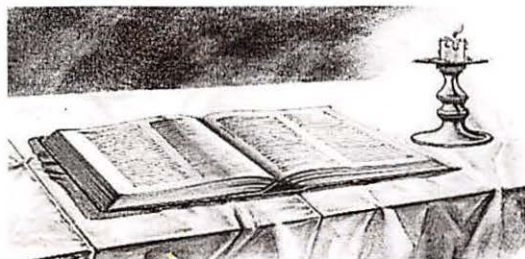


# Gospel Gleaner

*For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



## THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

*Sitting at the Feet of the Master Teacher*

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## **“The Churches of Christ Greet You” (Romans 16:16)**

The West Fayetteville Church of Christ is pleased to bring you the *Gospel Gleaner*. Are you familiar with the churches of Christ? Have you ever attended our services before?

Faithful churches of Christ desire to return to the New Testament and to be the church of the Bible. In the Bible, we find that the church is the assembly of all those who have been called out of the darkness of sin by obeying the gospel. These souls are added by God to the spiritual body of Christ, which is His church (Acts 2:42, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23).

The church belongs to Christ. It is His church. We, therefore, seek to honor Christ as our Lord in our worship, teaching, and daily walk.

One can be added to this sacred assembly and spiritual kingdom by hearing the gospel preached (Romans 10:17); believing the facts concerning Christ as revealed in the gospel (John 8:24); repenting of sin (Luke 13:3, 5); and by being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:11-13; Galatians 3:26-27) to wash sins away by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 1:7).

For more information about the church, or God's plan of salvation, we offer free Bible Correspondence courses and personal Bible studies. Call or write to us.

### **The Gospel Gleaner**

PO Box 456  
Fayetteville, TN 37334

[www.gospelgleaner.com](http://www.gospelgleaner.com)

Andy Erwin, Editor

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com). The West Fayetteville Church of Christ reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, notes, and articles to publish.

## Gospel Gleaner

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### WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE

Stephen R. Bradd  
*Clinton, Illinois*

Ronald Bryant  
*Prescott Valley, Arizona*

Gerald Cowan  
*Marion, Illinois*

Andy Erwin  
*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

Mel Futrell  
*Birmingham, Alabama*

Steve Gibson  
*Nashville, Tennessee*

Gary McDade  
*Chattanooga, Tennessee*

Tom McLemore  
*Selma, Alabama*

Andy Robison  
*Moundsville, West Virginia*

Ron Thomas  
*Chillicothe, Ohio*

## Interpreting the Parables of Jesus

Gerald Cowan

Some common definitions of *parable* are not accurate, adequate, or appropriate for New Testament Study. For example, the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible merely says a biblical parable is a method of speech in which moral or religious truth is illustrated; a brief story using facts or events of everyday life to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth. That is an observation, not a definition. Some definitions are simply trite, essentially meaningless and valueless. For example, to say a parable is "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning" tells nothing about the form or parabolic method of illustration.

The Greek word *PARABOLĒ* (verb form *PARABOLŌ*) means literally "placed alongside something; understood to be for purposes of comparison." In practical terms it is the comparison of the known to the unknown, the familiar to the unfamiliar. Aristotle said that, like all figures of speech, the parable implies intuitive perceptions of the similarities of dissimilars (Politics, 1459a).

*PARABOLĒ* is generally equivalent to Hebrew *MASHAL*, and can include such forms of speech as: Proverb (Ezek 18:2-3, 1 Sam 10:12); Riddle (Judges 14:12-19); Dark saying (Psalm 49:4, 78:2); Allegory (Ezek 17:1-10, 24:2-5); Fable (Judges 9:8-20, 2 Kings 14:9); Story/parable (2 Sam 12:1-4, Ezek 20:49-21:5).

## **"Parable" in the New Testament**

The Old Testament background is important since Jesus was a Jewish teacher, not a Greek. His speech and thought patterns would have been traditional or contemporary Jewish for his day. He no doubt spoke to the people in then common Aramaic. The parable can be a metaphor which makes an implicit comparison between dissimilar things – it states one thing in terms of another. Examples of this include: "the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6), "Herod...that fox (Luke 13:32), "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers" (Matthew 23:33). The hearer is required to make the necessary inference. If he cannot or does not know – for example what is a phoenix, sphinx – the metaphor is meaningless to him.

The parable can be a simile or similitude. A simile makes an explicit comparison, introduced by "like, as, as if, seems, etc. Jesus uses this form often, as in "the kingdom of heaven is like..." A similitude is a simile expanded into or presented as a word picture: see examples in Luke 15:1-7 and 8-10, Mark 4:30-32, Matthew 13:33). Again, the comprehension of the hearer depends upon his knowledge and understanding of the qualities being compared. When a similitude is expanded from a picture into a story, it becomes a story parable (Luke 15:11-32), or an example parable (Luke 12:15-21).

The parable can be or contain elements of an allegory, a story containing extended metaphors or similes which are related to each other. A story or example parable usually has one main point of comparison, but an allegory has several. In an allegory each point, factor, or character may have special meaning and significance. But in story parables many items mentioned are just for background or context, in order to clarify the main point being made. There is a tendency on the part of many to treat all the parables of Jesus as allegories, but that is neither necessary nor valid.

### **Distinctive Features of the Parables of Jesus**

The parables follow the rules of popular and effective story-telling: the rule of comparison and contrast, the rule of human interest, and the rule of end-stress. Attention focuses on the last person or last act in the story, and the story ends when the point has been made and supported. Nothing is usually appended except a moral or lesson which is drawn from the story by the story-teller himself.

The Lord's parables were extemporized in life situations, not composed in isolation, as in the preparation of sermons to be delivered at some set time. They were intended to elicit a response (or a change in attitude and action).



## **Understanding the Parables**

Faith is required – willingness to hear and understand, acceptance of the scripture as being God's Word, not man's. If we try to see only human wisdom here, we will find much that is meaningless to our minds, much that seems invalid or incorrect to us.

To understand the true importance and impact of the parables we must see them from the Lord's point of view. The teachings of Jesus were based upon himself not only as teacher of the ignorant, but as Savior of the lost. We must see that Jesus believed men were and are able to understand and apply his teachings – including the parables. When we read we should expect to be able to understand and apply them.

In a practical sense, to understand parables one must be able to think in pictures and conceptualize points of comparison. One needs a good sense of logic as well as a lively imagination. Knowledge of scripture content and of the doctrines contained in and presented by the Scriptures is a necessary safeguard in interpreting parables. Some knowledge of relative history, customs of people in Bible times and places, particularly the people to whom the parables were first spoken, is imperative.

### **Interpretation of the Parables**

The parables of Jesus fall into three categories. Most of them are IN-

STRUCTIVE, doctrinal. Many are intended as WARNING. Some are PROPHETIC. They could also be categorized as: KINGDOM, SALVATION, and JUDGMENT parables. Because a parable is a figure of speech, it requires interpretation. Caution: anything which must be interpreted can also be misinterpreted.

A few rules of interpretation will help us make sure we get the right message, and do not get false or ambiguous (mixed) messages from the parables. First, look at the context. What prompted the parable? Is any sort of introduction or purpose for the parable given? Second, look for any application contained in the context, or in the parable itself. Jesus sometimes made clear what he was talking about by the way he started or ended the parables.

Desired meanings must not be forced upon the parable. It must be interpreted, but that does not mean it can be assigned different meanings. The parable enables one to understand a truth or doctrine. But parables are figurative. There is no New Testament doctrine which is taught only in a parable. When the meaning and application of a parable are given in scripture, we are not at liberty to interpret it to mean something else.

Question: did Jesus use parables to conceal the truth deliberately from people? He did not do it to prevent truth-seekers from finding the truth. He did it so that those who were seek-

ing truth, and were willing to apply their personal faculties to finding the truth, would find it easier to understand. A careful study of Matthew 13:10-15, Mark 4:10-12, and Luke 8:9-10 shows that failure to understand and apply the word of God, the gospel of Christ, including that spoken in parables, is not due to the divine will, but is the result of self-willed rebellious attitudes of the hearers.

Why then did Jesus speak in parables? He did so that he might reveal and illustrate his message to his followers (those “inside”), but also to those “outside” who desired to know God, and therefore to become his followers (cf. Matthew 13:9; Mark 4:33). He did so in order to reveal to his enemies and detractors their real attitudes and relationship to God (see Luke 18:9; Mark 12:12). Sometimes, Jesus used parables to disarm his enemies by concealing from them what they were unwilling to receive, and to give them nothing to use against him.

Paradoxically, since they were designed to conceal truth from those who did not genuinely and sincerely seek God, the parables were designed to stick in the mind – perhaps to germinate later in the soil of the human heart. The parables could be justification of God’s acceptance of some and rejection of others. Lesson: “Take heed therefore *how* you hear” (Luke 8:18).

## Questions for Each Parable

- To whom was it originally addressed?
- Under what circumstances (the context) was it presented?
- What was the main point, the particular lesson intended?
- How can knowledge of local customs, laws, traditions, or methods of agriculture, commerce, and industry, etc., help one to arrive at the true meaning and point of the parable?
- How can the lesson be applied to people other than the first hearers? Can it be applied today?

## Summary of Principles

Seek the one main point of the parable – do not seek allegorical significance in the details of the parable unless the context requires it.

Understand the life situation and context in which the parable was presented. If the Lord or some inspired interpreter (gospel writer) gave the meaning and application, do not seek another meaning for it.

Seek to make a present application. The parables, just as all other parts of the scripture, are written down for our learning, and not just for the benefit of those who heard the Lord speak in person.

Parables cannot be used to define doctrines, but only to support, clarify, illustrate, or implement doctrines presented elsewhere in scripture.

# The Prodigal Son

Ron Thomas

The focus of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is seen in the three parables within the chapter. The lost sheep is found; the lost coin is found; and in this parable, the lost son is found.

In each of these parables, there is value placed on the object lost. About the sheep, it gives clothing, food, and is for sacrifice. Sheep also are creatures that operate from instinct, not volition; thus, lost sheep must be searched for.

The lost coin is an inanimate object that does not have “animal instinct” or volition. It is lost because it was misplaced or rolls away because of handling procedures; where it lands, there it will stay.

With regard to the lost son, there is intrinsic value placed on him by virtue of God creating the male and female “in our image” (Gen 1:26); they are far greater than the other two combined – many times over! A child is God’s gift of love to parents.

It is my intent in this article to give less consideration to the details of the parable, and instead more consideration to lessons learned, followed by a present-day application. As we reflect on this parable and consider lessons to be learned, our application will give some brief attention to warnings per-

taining to how some wander away because focus is put on self.

## Overview of Parable

A father had two sons, and they worked for, with, and alongside their father. Without notice, the younger son asked his father for his inheritance; clearly, such a request would have stunned his father, and was outside the norms of society at the time. Stunned or not, the father was under no obligation to give his son his portion of the inheritance, which amounted to one-third of his father’s wealth. Nevertheless, he did.

Though unstated, there is no doubt a father in such a circumstance would understand the request and decision by his youngest son as a request by an immature person. The immature is not aware of the potential danger that is ahead of one who is self-absorbed.

The social customs of the time meant the actions of the younger son reflected poorly on him and his father. With respect to the son, the custom for receiving inheritance was when one’s father died. In this case, the son looked at his father and his family (in general) and no longer wished to live within the family structure, or to be identified with the family name – all while his father still lived (Edwards, p. 438). Because of thoughtlessness

and carelessness, he went from feast to famine (Edwards, p. 439), eating food that symbolized bitter poverty (*ibid*).

The disaster the father knew would come to his son came. Not long after leaving home, the younger of the two sons is feeding swine with food *he* desired to eat, but could not because no one had regard for him in his impoverished condition (Luke 15:16). After a period, within his pitiful experience, his mind began to clear of Satan's cobweb-like influence.

He came to his senses, and knew the one solution to his circumstance was a return home. He picked himself up, relegated himself as unworthy of his father acceptance, but determined to return just the same. With all the uncertainty concerning how his father would respond, he went home. His father received him warmly, though his brother was not as receptive to his return and the festive occasion that followed.

The parable paints a picture that is hard to misunderstand; whether one understands the social customs of the time, or transfers the moral lesson into our own, the point of the parable is clear for all to gain understanding. What lessons can be learned?

### Lessons Learned

First, circumstances have a way of giving clarity to one's life. Those who received clarity in life, because of circumstances experienced, are in

position to understand the nature of sin and who it is against.

The word sin (*hamartia*, "missing the mark") is not a word that fails to communicate an idea; many, however, look upon the notion of sin as antiquated, a word that has no real substance.

In a secular society, what mark was missed? If the mark of God was not missed, then it could only be the mark (or bullseye) of man, and that means there is no real wrong in this world. The Lord, however, sees things much differently; "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV).

A second lesson learned is that of forgiveness. On the father's part, he was always ready to forgive; but, the son had to "come to his senses," pick himself up, and return to the father before forgiveness could be granted. The son had to *return* home.

Another lesson one can learn from the parable is the same the son came to understand: namely, his sin was against heaven and his family, especially his father. Sin has tentacles that reach farther than one's personal failing. Sin is a breach of relationship with the Almighty, and, as is the case in the parable, it's a compromise of family relationships because of self-centeredness.

A fourth lesson is related to circumstance's teaching capability. The

experiences of life should teach those willing to learn about the importance of humility. If this quality of thinking is not learned, then those same experiences can generate humiliation.

At first, the younger son thought only of himself; but now his thinking of self is in relation to his father.

For a moment, think about the torrent of resignations and accusations being leveled against people for sexual impropriety. Those who were in powerful and influential positions (Congress, business, entertainment) have now been humbled in one way or another because lessons that could/should have been taught and learned were not applied. Sometimes the sins of the past are never erased.

One lesson more: the father was always looking for his son, even though it was the *son* who wandered away. The father never moved from his position of residence and work.

The son, if he ever desired to return, knew precisely where the father was to be found. When the lost son did return, he knew where to go. Having made a decision to return, the father, always looking, saw him at a distance, but did not wait for his actual arrival. Instead, he went to the son and met him on the way as he returned home.

If one will consider life's experiences, many lessons can be learned. If the lessons go unlearned, there is much waste. The younger son, though

prodigal (wasteful in living), learned from his life and was now at home.

Let's now consider some applications that should be a warning to the church.

### **Applications and Warning**

An elder can become prodigal if he entertains the influence of people who call themselves Christians, but pressure him (and the others) to accept counsel not beneficial to the congregation, either spiritually or practically. The elders are men who should be well-schooled in Scripture and maturity; they should see such things for what they are.

Deacons, as servants of the Lord's people in the Lord's church, have been identified and tasked to serve. Their work is not always an easy work, but is usually an important work.

A deacon can also wander from the Father's care and concern, if he allows his occupation or other things to interfere with attention given to the work of the Lord.

A deacon must provide for his family, and his occupation is not minimized in this remark. However, a man who accepts the Lord's work as a deacon must not only be grounded in the Lord's way of righteousness, but he must also have a strong desire to serve the Lord's people. When this begins to fade, the first step toward wandering away might be taking place.

A preacher can also begin to wander into wastefulness when he does not preach the Lord's word faithfully.

Paul told Timothy what he must do: "I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

In this exhortation, there are two points to emphasize. First, preach boldly the Lord's word. Second, the preacher must live the life he preaches!

The Bible class teacher must take care to protect him/herself from wandering away from the Father's love and care. The teacher must properly prepare his (her) life in the way life is to be lived. A teacher must also take the necessary time to prepare for the Bible class that is taught.

It does not take long for a student to see the preparation level of the teacher. A Bible class teacher can wander away when personal and aca-

demical preparations are not as important as they both once were.

To all who love the Lord, when it's time for the saints to gather together, are we prepared to worship the Lord as one should? Or, are we going through the motion because "that's just what we do" each time the saints gather to meet? If it is the latter, we are wandering away from the Lord's love, care and concern.

If one wanders away, whether they have gone far, or not so far, what is the solution? The solution is found in the decision of the youngest son.

"And when he came to himself, he said, 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants'" (15:17-19).

Let us regain our senses, our practical sense of love toward God, and let us return, if we have wandered away, to the Father of mercies.

## References

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

# The Parable of the Sower

Stephen R. Bradd

In Matthew 13:3-9, Jesus declared: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on the stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

The seed sown by the farmer falls on four different types of soil:

## **"Some seed fell by the wayside"**

This indicates hard-packed earth, perhaps a well-trodden path or road, running through or around the field. This soil would not allow any of the seed to sink in, much less take root. The result was that this seed quickly became bird food (or perhaps it would be crushed underfoot – Luke 8:5).

## **"Some fell on stony places"**

There are two general types of stony ground: (1) stony ground that has "much earth" and (2) stony ground that does not have "much

earth." Jesus says that this stony ground is of the latter type.

The first type of stony ground has the potential to produce fruit-bearing plants as long as the stones do not hinder the roots from developing properly.

The second type of stony ground exists when a very thin layer of soil is covering a layer of rock. This causes the seed to sprout and spring forth "immediately." This likely happens because the plant is not using its energy to grow deep roots. Therefore, most of the growth occurs rapidly above the surface. This plant will do well only until the blazing sun scorches it.

Due to its lack of proper roots, this plant doesn't have the ability to draw much moisture or sustenance from the soil. It will soon wither and die.

## **"Some fell among thorns"**

Many times farmers would not remove thorns by the roots but instead burn them or cut off the portion above ground. This was only a temporary solution because the thorns would eventually come back stronger than ever. Such is the case here. The seed sprouted and grew, but it was no match for the thorns that were growing up around it. Over time this plant

would be deprived by the thorns of everything essential to its growth (i.e., nutrients and sunlight). It would die before being able to yield a crop.

**“But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop”**

“Good ground” is soil that allows the seed to penetrate (i.e., it is soft), it allows roots to develop properly (i.e., it is deep), and it is not already dominated by other vegetation (i.e., it is free from impurities). Ground that meets all three of these criteria will yield a crop. Of course, the productivity will vary based on the specific conditions of the soil and environment. Jesus indicates such by talking about the yield varying from a hundredfold to sixty to thirty.

Although these four types of soils are very distinct, they may all be found lying close to each other in a particular region. Due to the rather indiscriminate manner in which seed was sown in that age, seed would definitely fall on all of these four types of soil. It should be noted that ground that is not currently “good” could be made such with a lot of hard labor. Hard ground can be tilled, rocks can be removed, and thorns can be uprooted—if there is a desire to do such.

Then, at the close of the parable, Jesus said: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” This is a statement that our Lord made frequently. He used it here to prevent the people from regarding the parable as merely a physical story about farming. It should have

indicated to them that there was a meaning beneath the surface for which they should search.

So, what is the deeper spiritual meaning here? This parable is exceptional in that we have an inspired interpretation of it recorded, which is not the case for most of the parables Jesus delivered. Let us consider Jesus’ interpretation of the parable in Matthew 13:18-23:

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root within himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

As Jesus began to explain the parable, He said – “The sower sows the word” (Mark 4:14). Ultimately, Jesus is the sower, and the seed is the incor-



ruptible word of God (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23). But, all disciples are commanded to become sowers. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20).

One cannot make disciples without sharing the word of God, which is spiritual seed. Let it be observed that physical seed, when scattered from the hand of a child, will grow as readily as if from a grown man, though it may not be scattered as skillfully.

All Christians should be sowers of seed. It matters not how much experience or confidence they have. It is not smooth speech or a refined approach that saves the souls of men—it is the gospel! The gospel is God's power to save man (Romans 1:16,17). The power is in the seed, not the sower!

May we never forget such and excuse ourselves from sowing God's word into the hearts of men. We have a duty that we must endeavor to fulfill to the best of our ability.

### **THE "WAYSIDE" HEART**

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." It appears that God's word only lies on the surface of those who have "wayside" hearts; they do not allow it to penetrate. They are too

hardened for the word of God to make an impact in their life (at the present time, anyway).

Possible reasons for this hardness of heart include pride, worldliness, and apathy. Once they reject the word, Satan can use any insignificant, passing thoughts or distractions as a bird to carry out of their minds anything they may have heard. For such an individual, the teacher's voice has barely ceased until some criticism or passing thought regarding another matter causes him to forget the spiritual message being shared.

### **THE "STONY" HEART**

"He who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy." An individual of this type responds positively to the gospel but only in an impulsive way. He receives the word vigorously, but his enthusiasm is shallow and short-lived. His joy is not the joy that results from genuine repentance; it is superficial.

This is the type of person who is always starting projects but never completing them (cf. Luke 14:25ff). Such a one needs to "count the cost" and realize that there is a daily "cross" to bear when one follows Christ faithfully. This type of individual doesn't allow the word to really take root in his heart, and thus, he is essentially unchanged by it and unwilling to make the necessary commitment. As soon as difficulties and persecutions arise, he will fall away.

It should be noted that sunlight strengthens the healthy plant but withers the sickly, ill-rooted one, just as tribulation and persecution strengthen real faith but destroy counterfeit faith (cf. James 1:2-4; e.g., John 6:60-66). Today, this type of person is often the one who is "won to Christ" on the basis of frills rather than the truth of the gospel. They accept the word superficially, but they will not last long enough to bear fruit for the Lord.

### **THE HEART DOMINATED BY "THORNS"**

"He who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." This type of individual begins well, but later allows matters of this life to become his master (cf. Matthew 6:24).

This individual has the potential to bear fruit, but that potential is not realized because of misplaced priorities. The Scriptures clearly teach that preoccupation with matters of this life, whether it be "cares" or "riches," is, by nature, an exercise in self-deceit (e.g., Luke 12:16-21; 18:18ff; II Timothy 4:10; Revelation 3:15-17).

### **THE "GOOD" HEART**

"He who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23; e.g., Acts 2:37ff; 10:33ff; 17:11,12). Honesty is manifested in the sincere reception of the truth.

Goodness is seen in the practical application of the truth, so as to bear fruit (Luke 8:15).

A person has a good and honest heart if he genuinely pursues the truth at all times and maintains a strong desire and motivation to always do that which is right, regardless of the difficulty or consequences. It should be understood that it is certainly not enough to bear one crop and then fall into unfruitfulness--one must persevere (cf. Matthew 10:22; Revelation 2:10).

The fact that even when the word reaches the good heart, the yield may vary is easily understood in light of the unique set of circumstances surrounding each individual hearer. Differences in such factors as innate ability, upbringing, education, life span, and sphere of influence will quite naturally result in different degrees of productivity in God's kingdom.

The Lord will hold each individual responsible according to his or her ability. If you can only bear "thirtyfold," then do so and receive God's blessing. If you can bear a "hundredfold," then do so and receive God's blessing, but don't try to deceive God by only bearing "thirtyfold" (cf. Matthew 25:14ff)!

Clearly, the purpose of sowing is to provide a crop to be reaped; this is true physically and spiritually. The power is in the seed (i.e., the word), but its power will be of no effect if it

is not sown. All faithful disciples **must** do their part to evangelize!

In summary, this parable divides the hearers of the gospel into four general categories: (1) the hearer who rejects the gospel, (2) the shallow hearer whose emotions are superficially touched yet his heart is still hard, (3) the hearer whose heart is fully right but allows himself to be conquered by outward temptations or worldly pursuits, and (4) the persevering and fruitful receiver of the word. All hearers of the gospel fall into one of these four general categories. Dear reader, to what category do you belong?

The simple fact that you are studying this lesson suggests that your heart is not impenetrable to God's word. It

is our hope that you have a good and honest heart, an attitude that loves God's word as divine truth and diligently seeks to understand and apply it so that much spiritual fruit may be produced for the Lord.

However, we realize that many, tragically, fall into the second and third groups. These are individuals who are partially committed to the Lord and His kingdom, yet there is some resistance to fully following Him. Friends, if this describes you, please take action today!

You can cultivate a heart that is completely devoted to God, but you must first desire such. Then, you must fervently labor to remove the impurities and distractions from your life. You can do it with the Lord's help!

## **The Parable of the Talents**

Tom McLemore

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus spoke what is known as "The Parable of the Talents." This parable comes in the midst of two other passages stressing the need to be prepared for his second coming.

What is the best approach to take to this parable? The great parable section in Matthew 13 not only provides us with a number of Jesus' parables, but also a methodology, suggested by Jesus himself, for interpreting all of his parables. For two of Jesus' initial parables, viz., the parables of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9)

and the weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30), he provides explanations (Matthew 13:18-23, 36-43).

These explanations call us to see points of comparison between the details of a parable and the realities of the kingdom of heaven. In Mark 4:13, Jesus said to his disciples, "Do you not understand this parable [of the sower]? How then will you understand all the parables?"

We are given a specific clue to the meaning of the parable in the pronouncement Jesus makes (in the

words of the master) toward the end of it. "For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has shall be taken away" (Matthew 25:29).

The reader of the Gospel will recall that Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 13:12 (Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18) in his teaching about the *purpose* of the parables.

In the previous verse, Matthew 13:11, he said, "To you it has been given to understand *the secrets of the kingdom of heaven*, but to them it has not been given" (Matthew 13:10, emphasis supplied).

This is the key to opening the meaning of the parable of the talents. It suggests to us the primary comparison upon which the parable is built. The *property* of the man going on a journey entrusted to the servants (in the form of talents) represents the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (the word of God). Jesus began his explanation of the parable of the sower, "when any one hears the word of the kingdom..." (Matthew 13:18).

In Mark 4:14, Jesus said, "The sower sows the word." In Luke 8:11, Jesus said, "The seed is the word of God." Were Jesus giving an explanation of the parable of the talents, on the basis of the explanations in Matthew 13, I am persuaded that he would begin by saying, "The talents are the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (the word of God)."

The central theme of the parable is *not* the use of abilities, but *the use of what is entrusted* according to ability. The parable is appropriately called "the parable of the talents" rather than "the parable of the abilities."

The central concern of the parable is *the talents*. The talent was a Greek coin with the value of five to six thousand *denarii*. The *denarius* was a Roman coin equivalent to the day's wage of a common laborer. The talent was a large sum of money, representing *twenty years' labor* of an individual. Even the servant in the parable who was entrusted with *one talent* was entrusted with great treasure!

How apt to compare the secrets of the kingdom of heaven (the word of God) to great riches. Paul wrote, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). "How great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Paul appreciated the value of "...all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2, 3).

Having established this primary

comparison (the talents represent the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, the word of God), the stage is set for determining the meaning of the other details of the parable and understanding its basic message.

The *man* going on a journey represents the ascending and returning Lord Jesus. The *servants* (literally, *slaves*) represent the disciples of Jesus.

The *ability* of each slave corresponds to the extent of a disciple's understanding of the secrets of the kingdom (the word of God), along with abilities and opportunities to proclaim them.

*Gaining talents* represents the growth and increase of the word of God through proclamation and response. In the history of the earliest disciples following the establishment of the church, we have some good examples of disciples who correspond to the two diligent slaves in the parable.

In Acts 6:7, we are told that "...the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." In Act 12:24, we learn that "...the word of God grew and multiplied." In Acts 19:20, it is reported that "...the word of the Lord grew and prevailed mightily." These observations indicate that disciples of the Lord were being very diligent and urgent in making use of the secrets of the kingdom.

The apostle Paul is perhaps the most remarkable single example. He wrote, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1). How diligent he was in his stewardship of the true riches! (Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 may serve as a description, under another figure, of what Jesus is stressing in the parable of the talents).

The secrets of the kingdom are pictured as a process of growth resulting in teaching and proclaiming the truth of the gospel and leading to the increase of disciples.

The *fear* of the one talent slave corresponds to an immobilizing fear of the rejection of the word of God by the hearers. The one talent slave's reprehensible *attitude* toward the man going on a journey represents the *erroneous* view, viz., that the Lord Jesus rewards only those whose proclamation produces conversions but he does not reward faithful proclamation even if most of those who hear do not convert. (In the background of this feature of the parable lies a failure to proceed with an understanding of the parable of the sower).

*Burying* the talent represents having been entrusted with the secrets of the kingdom (the word of God) but failing to proclaim them. There may be a hint of emphasis upon orthodoxy without evangelism. Those who are entrusted with the Lord's property indeed must be orthodox in doctrine.

Paul has much to say about “the deposit.” “Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us” (2 Timothy 1:14). “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20, 21). “I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me” (2 Timothy 1:12).

Yet, the Lord’s desire is for the secrets of the kingdom both to be guarded *and* to be communicated, thereby gaining disciples.

The *bankers* represent those who are devoted to the increase and growth of the word of God and who can be aided in their task by other disciples. *Investing with the bankers* represents lending aid and support to them. “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the friends, even though they are strangers to you; they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on in a manner worthy of God; for they began their journey for the sake of Christ, accepting no support from non-believers. Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may become co-workers with the truth” (2 John 5-8).

The Lord desires that his disciples be proclaimers of the secrets of the kingdom, yet, if we are unwilling or

unable to proclaim them ourselves, the very least we ought to do is to support those who are willing and able!

*Being found faithful over a little and being set over much* corresponds to increased understanding and opportunity to proclaim the word of God.

The parable presents three possibilities open to the one who knows the secrets of the kingdom. First, one may immediately begin to proclaim what one knows, and as the result, the word of God grows and increases. This pleases the Master most of all. The Master considers one to be faithful who proclaims the secrets of the kingdom according to one’s ability.

Second, one may aid others who proclaim the secrets of the kingdom and thereby indirectly give to the Lord “his own with interest.”

Third, one may neither proclaim nor support those who proclaim, thus being worthless to the Lord’s cause.

In light of the coming of the Lord, how important is the proclamation of the secrets of the kingdom (the word of God)! There is nothing more urgent to the Lord than this. This is how the Lord spent the years of his ministry. Here we see how to be a good and faithful disciple of our Lord who has gone into heaven, *has entrusted us with his treasure*, and is coming again to take account of our stewardship thereof according to our ability.

# The Good Samaritan

Andy Robison

A lawyer came to Jesus to test Him. If it were not for that specific Spirit-inspired notice of Luke 10:25, we would be bound to assume better motives of this scribe when he asked the all-important question, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). The question was asked of Jesus elsewhere (Luke 18:18), with similarly disappointing results. The rich young ruler was not willing to do what it took (Luke 18:23). Indeed, this lawyer was only interested in justifying himself (Luke 10:29).

Answering a question with a question often opens up the psyche of the original questioner. Jesus asks this legal expert, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:26). The one seeking to justify himself has his ready answer—the same two seemingly all-encompassing principles that Jesus referenced when questioned by a different lawyer as to the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-40). Loving God (Deut. 6:5) and loving neighbor (Lev. 19:18) arguably cover motives for all Ten Mosaic Commandments. The first four deal with man's relationship to God (Ex. 20:1-8); the last six deal with man's relationship with man (Ex. 20:12-17).

It seems like a good answer from

the lawyer. Paul would also seem to agree (Romans 13:8-10). Jesus commends the scribe (Luke 10:28), so it seems the matter should be over.

However, quite foolishly, the lawyer has a follow-up: "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29). These five words of infamy would prompt a parable central to Jesus' teaching, beloved by His followers, piercing in its viscerally emotive, undeniable logic.

A rich story that may actually have happened sets the scene for the soul-wrenching question (Luke 10:30-36). Readers know the story. Much of civilization knows the story, because its principles are key even to having civilization. A man of unidentified race, class, or name travels the craggy, rocky, thieves-laden, treacherous twenty-one or so mile road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Thieves strip him, wound him, and leave him half dead.

A good lesson in neighborliness could here be drawn by the Savior from a contrast to the evil robbers, but that would have lacked intensity of focus on the lawyer's corrupt heart.

A priest (tribe of Levi, son of Aaron; Lev. 8) walks by. This religious leader, perhaps returning from Jerusalem in performance of sacerdotal duties, saw him, inexplicably wanted nothing to do with helping him, and

just left him there to wallow in his misery, anticipating death. Perhaps the priest thought him dead, and did not want to be ceremonially defiled (Lev. 21:1, 11; Num. 19:11). Perhaps he was on his way to some religious duty and had no time.

This part of the story surely hurt the inquiring lawyer. As a scribe, he would have worked often with the priests (cf. Matt. 16:21; 26:3), and likely admired them. This priest, however, is obviously a villain.

Next comes a Levite, a broader reference than priest to designate anyone from Levi who was a helper to the priests (Num. 8:5-22). Once he “looked”, he departed with the same apathy toward the sufferer. This would surely be another dagger in the heart of the lawyer.

The wound of the lawyer, opened by the priest’s and then the Levite’s passing, is torn wide open by the mention of the next one to come upon the beaten man. “But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion” (Luke 10:33).

The Samaritans were hated vehemently by the religious elite of the Jews during Jesus’ day. There was racial tension: the Samaritan area had been populated by various outside peoples after the captivity of the northern kingdom (2 Kings 17:24ff.)

There was religious tension: the Samaritans had been their own temple on Mt. Gerizim as a rival to the Jeru-

salem temple (cf. John 4:20). Jewish leaders brandished about the term Samaritan along with demon possession as a pointed insult against their enemies, particularly Jesus (John 8:48). A good Jew—one in good standing with the religious leaders (cf. John 12:42-43)—considered the geographically close Samaritan people anything but neighbors.

This Samaritan goes the extra mile (cf. Matt. 5:41) for this wounded man. He, in contrast to the priest and Levite, actually offers kindness, compassion, and care to the injured victim, and does so at his own great expense. Perhaps the lawyer is beginning to sweat, anticipating the culminating question.

Jesus’ look must have been knowingly stern as he inquired, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” (Luke 10:36).

The lawyer who set out to trap Jesus is trapped himself. He himself has asked for a definition of a neighbor whom he must love. Perhaps he desired a loophole that allowed him to still hate certain designated enemies. (Some had apparently extrapolated an imagined “hate your enemies” command from the actual command to love one’s neighbor [Matt. 5:44].) It would have been a good lesson if Jesus had said, “The victim is your neighbor; you should care for him.”

Jesus’ soul-searching logic penetrates deeper, though. “Which is the



neighbor of the victim?" It can't be the priest; it can't be the Levite. It is the hated Samaritan—an offensive person to the Jews—who emulates the second greatest command (Matt. 22:39)!

The lawyer can't even bring himself to identify the person by his national and ethnic moniker, "Samaritan," but rather replies, "He who showed mercy on him." Jesus then wraps it up, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37).

If cartoon captions were available to announce the thoughts of the lawyer, what he felt like he heard might have been something like, "Proud lawyer, lower yourself to the level of a Samaritan in order to obtain the eternal life you seek." He would not get off easy from his testing of Jesus. No one ever did.

The instruction of these few simple verses has guided much thought in mankind's last 2,000 years. It is good to help someone in need. Good Samaritan laws are passed to protect passersby who become falsely accused while genuinely trying to help apparent victims. The Good Samaritan has had an impact on society.

It needs to have more impact—in society and the church. The parable addresses all the superficial, childish, ego-driven racial divisions of today and all time. A neighbor is most decidedly NOT defined by geographic, ethnic, or national origin. People of every race, place, and station are my

neighbors, and I must treat them as such.

There are horror stories that circulate about even those who call themselves Christians being so prejudice against people of a certain color that even when these good human beings are finally accepted as brothers, there is still resistance to them being treated as social equals. That is most certainly sin. Race must not divide the body of Christ. We are to be brought near together by the blood of Christ, regardless of heritage and genealogy (Eph. 2:14-17).

Christ's kingdom is the one in which obedient souls of every nation are welcome (Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 10:34-35)!

The church is humankind's best chance at overcoming the racial strife that infects the world. How dare we allow non-neighborly views to infiltrate the ranks of the redeemed.

Further, the story addresses some things about religious division: It is right, good, and required to help someone as a human being, even though religious disagreements might abound. They may not be brethren, but they are neighbors. Do good to them (cf. Gal. 6:10).

Justifying oneself in sinful attitude, as the lawyer tried to do, is never successful. He who searches the minds and hearts will reward each according to his works (Rev. 2:23).

# SURPRISING OPPOSITION TO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN WORSHIP

Gary McDade

The widespread use of instrumental music in worship today is met with a measure of surprise by some of its advocates when they learn it has no biblical support.

For example, the place to look for it is in the New Testament, the covenant under which we live today (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-12). The New Testament has nine passages on the subject but no instrumental accompaniment to the singing is to be found. The nine passages are: Matthew 26:30; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; 13:15; and James 5:13. (Revelation 14:2 is a symbolic presentation talking about events taking place in heaven among a select number and is unrelated to corporate worship on earth today).

So, within the applicable verses from the Bible, singing in worship is uniformly presented. Some are surprised to learn there is no biblical authorization for the use of instrumental music in worship today. Some are surprised to compare 1 Corinthians 14:7 and 1 Corinthians 14:15 where Paul says pipe or harp are without life giving sound meaning they add nothing by way of understanding in verse 7 and the process of understanding

cannot, therefore, be aided by an instrument but only through the words sung in verse 15.

An instrument of music can add no more understanding to what is sung than it would to what is prayed, for Paul wrote, "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

Some are surprised to learn that instruments of music in worship were never mentioned for the 2,500 years of the Patriarchal Age from Adam to Joseph, and were never a part of the Law of Moses, but were invented by David and censured by the prophet Amos (Amos 6:5).

Some are surprised to learn that instrumental music was never used in the Jewish synagogues through the biblical period and for 1800 years following it. The Presbyterian scholar **John L. Girardeau** informed, "The writers who have most carefully investigated Jewish antiquities, and have written learnedly and elaborately in regard to the synagogue, concur in showing that its worship was destitute of instrumental music" (*Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (1888), p. 39).

Some are surprised to learn that **Jerome** (A.D. 347-420), who among the Catholics is one of the most respected scholars of that period, apparently knew nothing of instrumental music in worship but urged respect for the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

In his commentary on Ephesians he wrote, "Let the servant of the Lord sing in such a way that it is not the voice of the singer which pleases, but the words which are read. Thus the evil spirit which was in Saul may be cast out of those men who are possessed by it as he was, and not enter into those men who have changed the house of God into a stage for the entertainment of the people" (Quoted in *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship* by James D. Bales (1973), pp. 267-268).

Some are surprised to learn that well-known reformers of the Catholic Church and founders of modern denominations were opposed to the use of the instrument in worship.

For example, at one time **Martin Luther** was so opposed to it that he said, "The organ in the worship service is a sign of Baal" (Quoted in *Instrumental Music and New Testament Worship* by James D. Bales (1973), p. 130). Unfortunately, he later recanted this view, but the point is that at least at one time he opposed the organ in worship.

Some are surprised to learn that **John Calvin**, reputed founder of

Presbyterianism, wrote in his commentary on the Psalm 33 and 1 Samuel 18:1-9, "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to Him. ...Instrumental music, we therefore maintain was only tolerated on account of the times and the people, because they were as boys, as the sacred Scriptures speaketh, whose condition required these puerile rudiments. But in gospel times we must not have recourse to these unless we wish to destroy the evangelical perfection and to obscure the meridian light which we enjoy in Christ our Lord" (Quoted in *Instrumental Music in the Worship* by M.C. Kurfees (1911), pp. 190-191).

Some are surprised to learn that **John Wesley**, founder of the Methodist Church, is quoted by the Methodist commentator Adam Clarke in his commentary on Amos 6:5 as saying, "The late venerable and most eminent divine, the Rev. [Clarke's appellation] *John Wesley*, who was a *lover of music*, and an *eloquent poet*, when asked his opinion of instruments of music being introduced into the chapels of the Methodists, said in his terse and

powerful manner, 'I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels provided they are neither HEARD nor SEEN' [emphasis in the original]" (*Commentary, Vol. IV. p. 686*).

Some are surprised to learn that **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**, one of the most recognized Baptist preachers of all time, upheld the apostolic simplicity of worship. Professor Girardeau said of Spurgeon, "The great congregation which is blessed with the privilege of listening to his instructions has no organ 'to assist' them in singing their praises to their God and Saviour. They find their vocal organs sufficient. Their tongues and voices express the gratitude of their hearts" (*Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church* (1888), p. 176).

Some are surprised to learn that the use of instrumental music in worship when the long history of the church is considered is a relatively recent invention that many of the founders of the denominational churches of today opposed.

If there is any wisdom to be gleaned, if there is any insight to be gained from these prominent religious leaders on their opposition to instrumental music in worship today, then there is no reason to follow any other guide in the worship of the church regarding singing than those nine passages of Scripture that speak to subject.

## "Institutional" or "Non-Institutional"?

Steve Gibson

What is an "institutional" church? Where did this terminology originate? Where was the first "institutional church"? When did it begin? Why was it so-called? What set it apart as a different sort of church? What was initially thought to distinguish an "institutional" church from a "non-institutional" church?

How did this terminology first come to be employed within the restoration movement? How did the term "institutional" come to be used as a label to describe a certain segment of churches of Christ? How has the term changed in meaning? What is its proper use today?

The term "institutional" is thought to have first been applied to describe a church about 1888. William Jewett Tucker (1839-1926), best remembered for his service as President of Dartmouth College (1893-1909), is credited with coining the expression in an address he delivered at the Berkeley Temple in Boston, Massachusetts: "*The so-called Institutional Church.*"

Note, "About a dozen years ago, President W. J. Tucker, in an address at Berkeley Temple, Boston, charac-

terized the newly adopted methods of that church as 'institutional.' A morning paper, reporting the address, referred to Berkeley Temple as an 'institutional church'; and this is said to have been the origin of the name now applied to a well-defined class of churches—a name which no one likes and everyone uses" (Josiah Strong, *Religious Movements for Social Betterment* [New York: Baker & Taylor, 1900], pp. 42-43).

St. George's Episcopal Church of New York City is crediting with being the first "institutional" church (G. Hodges and J. Reichert, *The Administration of an Institutional Church: A Detailed Account of the Operation of St. George's Parish in the City of New York* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906], 324 pages).

William Stephen Rainsford became rector of the church in 1883. Through his ministry the congregation first "engaged in the work of the Institutional Church" (p. xiv). "The most important contribution which Dr. Rainsford made to this parish ... was the contribution of a new method. He found the church trying to minister in the old way to new conditions, and he changed the way so as to fit the conditions ... The essential principle of the Institutional Church is in that change" (p. xxii).

In 1900, Josiah Strong offered historical explanations for the rise of the Institutional Church. He observed the "nature of the change in religious ac-

tivities." He noted that until recently religious activities had been "directed almost exclusively to bringing men into right relations with God" and effecting "the salvation of the *soul*" (p. 10; cf. 34-35).

Thus, even the church's philanthropic ministrations to the "needy" had been "directed to spiritual results" (p. 11). "Care for the body has been for the sake of the soul," he critically noted (p. 12).

With the advent of the Institutional Church, however, there was "more effort to bring heaven to earth" and effect "the salvation of society as well as that of the individual" (pp. 12-13). As a result of "the progress of science" [including the biologist's Theory of Evolution and theologian's Higher Criticism of the Bible—SG], modernizing congregations "extend their activities to include objects which a generation ago would have been deemed quite foreign to their proper work" (pp. 16, 22).

In particular, the rise of the Institutional Church provided impetus for a "new church architecture" which differed "widely from the 'meeting-house' of the past" (pp. 7, 27). An Institutional Church "added to the auditorium, parlors for the cultivation of the social life, reading-rooms, classrooms and shops for intellectual and industrial training, and, more remarkable still, facilities for physical culture and for recreation—a gymnasium, baths, very likely a swimming

pool, and perhaps a bowling-alley, which not long since would have been considered sacrilegious" (pp. 27-28).

As a result, churches "which have adopted these new methods are regaining or obtaining a hold on the multitude" [after the decline in attendance which had initially accompanied the church's acceptance of Evolution, Higher Criticism, and liberal theology—SG] (p. 32).

In 1912, the Presbyterian, Charles Stelzle, observed of his neighbor Congregationalists that "Congregational institutional churches have six times as many additions on confessions of faith as do the *noninstitutional* churches of that denomination" (*A Modern Church to Meet a Modern Situation* [New York, 1912], cited in Howard Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism* [New Haven: Yale, 1940], p. 252, emphasis added).

The Institutional Church also paved the way for increased cooperation and federation between progressive congregations of different denominations. Said Strong, "A fourth result of this change is religious activities is the drawing of the churches into closer relations" (p. 37).

Reflecting on the divided state of nineteenth-century American Christendom, he observed:

"Differences of creed are not eliminated by debate; discussion is divisive. Radical differences of belief

forbid cooperation in distinctively religious work. Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews cannot unite in evangelistic efforts. But when we come to social betterment, we find no historic differences separating religious bodies" (pp. 37-38).

On this basis there was formed "the Open and Institutional Church League" (New York City, 1894), a forerunner of the National Federation of Churches (Philadelphia, 1908), to allow liberal Protestants of all stripes to join hands in non-evangelistic social work (p. 43).

Was the Institutional Church distinguished by its support of orphanages? No, it was not. The Institutional Church was distinguished by its own expanded facilities and social work programs, not the sending of money to any entity outside of its own plant.

Quite the contrary, the Institutional Church regarded the traditional church-support of orphanages as a vestige of its unenlightened predecessors' narrow concern to care for the body merely "for the sake of the soul" (p. 12).

As another historian has noted, when soul-savers expressed interest in supporting orphans, they "almost invariably viewed such activities as a means to individual conversion and justified them on those grounds" (Richard Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], p. 279).

In other words, conservatives supported orphan's homes primarily because they wanted the unattached children there housed to be brought-up as Christians. Church-supported orphanages were seen as a means of gaining influence over impressionable youngsters, teaching them church doctrine, and grooming them to become church members.

While an Institutional Church might offer temporary housing in its "children's homes for waifs and strays," it eschewed the competition between Protestant and Catholic orphanages to control the religion in which the greater number of babes bereft of parental guidance would be reared (p. 122).

It was likely a professional social historian, David Edwin Harrell, Jr., who first suggested that brethren substitute for the pejorative term "anti" the more sophisticated term "non-institutional," a term with which he had no doubt become familiar in his academic studies of sociology. In course of time, this label gave rise to the standard "character" abbreviation "NI" used in recent directories of churches of Christ to indicate "Non-Institutional: oppose church support of institutions" (Mac Lynn, compiler, *Churches of Christ in the United States* [Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1991, p. xii).

Ironically, the term "institutional" has been adopted by some in the Res-

toration Movement to denote the very opposite of what sociologists originally meant when they spoke of an "institutional church."

What of a congregation that supports orphanages with the goal in mind of saving souls by seeing children reared in its faith?

Despite the current use of the term foisted upon brethren by those "formerly known as 'antis,'" would the sociologists who coined the expression "institutional church" not opine that those churches which persist in supporting orphanages for evangelistic motives are the ones that truly deserve to be called "non-institutional"?



"That was our contemporary service. Next is the traditional service, followed by a classical service, and a casual service with a sports emphasis."

# Clock Watchers and the Length of Worship

Mel Futrell

It should be obvious from the title what this article will be addressing. This is an issue many, if not most, have avoided discussing and writing about publicly because it is fraught with so much emotion. It is unfortunate that this is the case.

Extremists views abound on just about everything related to the church and her worship. Thus, we shouldn't be surprised that the amount of time we spend in the assembly each week (and more specifically the length of the sermon) would also be matters of some disagreement.

I am anything but naïve; thus I don't operate under the delusion that this article will settle the matter. But we can hope for more balance on the issue and more civility in our treatment of one another.

First off, what things contribute to a service that "goes long"? Before answering, remember two things: One, I am not among those who apparently think that a long service is in some way a wrong service. We are simply identifying certain specific items that may contribute to our services running long.

Secondly, surely we can all agree that it is helpful and orderly that we have a beginning and ending time for our assemblies and that we generally try to follow these times; while re-

membering that there will be occasions when we start late and end late.

Here are a few factors that can contribute to a worship service going longer than usual:

**1. The number of announcements to be made.** This can vary considerably from week to week. However, if a congregation has a weekly bulletin or announcement sheet then it is not necessary to go over every item in the bulletin. I know of congregations that utilize a projection system where the announcements can be viewed on a screen before and after the services. This way, time that was once spent in making and updating announcements can be devoted to actual worship time to the Lord. In my opinion, this is the best place to begin in an effort to stay on time.

**2. Whether the song leader leads all the stanzas of a song.** I recognize that singing is an act of worship (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19), but nothing in Scripture demands that we lead a certain number of stanzas of each song selection. You know from experience that the length of our assemblies can easily vary 10 minutes one way or the other depending on how many songs are sung and the number of stanzas of each that are led.

**3. Mini sermons before serving the Lord's supper.** The Lord's Supper



(Acts 20:7) is in my judgment oftentimes rushed through. We must always be careful to remember the Lord's death and examine ourselves in the act (1 Corinthians 11:24, 28). But, is it necessary to deliver a mini sermon before partaking of each emblem? Again, I'm not suggesting for a moment that it's wrong to make some comments—just that this may be a contributing factor to a service that runs long.

#### **4. The preacher may spend extra time in the delivery of his sermon.**

A twenty-five minute sermon and a forty-five minute sermon may be and likely will be viewed in a completely different way. One question preachers need to ask themselves is, "Is it regularly or occasionally even necessary for me to go longer with the sermon?" If he answers that it is regularly necessary for him to go longer, then perhaps he should consider splitting the sermon into two parts. This way, he could devote even more time to what will no doubt be a good and needed sermon. Also, those who regularly complain about the sermon going long will be silenced without compromising any truth or personal conviction.

These and several other things not mentioned can and do contribute to our services going long. Knowing this, it would not be fair or correct to assume that it is necessarily the "preacher's fault" that the worship service went long again.

Next, honesty demands that we acknowledge that some of the problem here is on the part of the "listeners" (Hebrews 5:11). In most, if not all, congregations there are those who might properly be classified as "indifferent clock watchers." Somewhere, unknown to me now, I collected these attributes of the indifferent clock watcher class:

- They are more concerned about when the service will end, than in how the service is conducted.
- They complain the loudest when the preacher goes over-time.
- They are known for trite statements like: "If a man cannot strike oil in twenty minutes, he is drilling with a dull bit." "When the sermon goes over thirty minutes, I turn it off." "Do you own a watch?"

Let me say that my experience is that the vast, vast majority of our brethren **are not** in this category. But the few who are make their voice heard again and again. Theirs is an attitude and priority problem to say the least (Matthew 6:33). When you have those who wish to take advantage of a "captive" audience and those who are indifferent about being there in the first place; you have the makings for trouble.

Finally, let me share a bit of my own practice and experience relative to our topic. On average, week in and

week out, most of my sermons will run between 30-35 minutes. And I don't anticipate this changing much.

Since I conduct a number of Gospel meetings each year, there are literally thousands of people who have never heard me preach except during a Gospel meeting. My point being, that that is not an accurate measurement of the average length of my sermons. I preach longer during these meetings and this is generally expected. But those preachers who do go long on a regular basis would be well advised to reevaluate this practice.

It has not been my intent here to "standardize" sermon length or any other aspect of our worship services. In many respects the brotherhood has already done this. As long as all the acts of worship are engaged in properly (John 4:23-24), the order and arrangement can be left up to our brethren's judgment.

However, what has been lacking too often is common courtesy, common sense, and good old fashioned judgment. God forgive us when we have bitten and devoured one another over a few extra minutes here and there (Galatians 5:15).

May our focus always be on praising God (Psalm 29:2), without nit-picking the very service intended to do just that.

## **"God Always Marshals His Forces"**

Ronald D. Bryant

R. C. Thompson, a preacher of the gospel of Christ, a dear friend of mine, was strong in faith, a ready defender of truth, and He loved the church very deeply. He was a positive force for good, and a great encourager. He knew how to encourage both good works and good men. If some difficulty arose he could be depended upon to stand firm. He could be depended upon to readily express his conviction that God was at work in His people. He often counseled, "Remember, God always marshals His forces according to His plan of battle and the needs of His people."

How does his conviction compare with your own? Biblically speaking, God is not far from us, though we cannot see Him (Acts 17:27). He is always at work, though we cannot see it. God has stated that He is at work in and through His people, calling them to His service, changing them into His likeness, preparing them and equipping them for servant-leadership (Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 2:10; 4:11ff. )

When crisis comes, does God fit His servants to meet the needs? Is God in control? If He is, He is not only calling us to ministry, but is equipping us for ministry. Is it true that while God's purposes and provi-

sion may not always be evident to us that it still remains that He is at work in us? Undeniably, God is calling each of us, to become His true servants, and to be fully at His disposal.

God's greatest gifts to Israel were the leaders God gave them. Where would the people of Israel have been without Moses, or Joshua, or Samuel, or David? God's greatest endowment to the church, in its infancy, was the gift of those men we call "the apostles"-- men He called to leadership. To name a hero of faith in the Old or New Testament is to name a person that God called to the role of servant-leader.

For forty years Moses led the people of Israel. For forty years the nation looked to him for direction and for answers. Moses explained God's will to them. They were a difficult people, but finally they neared the Promised Land. Before they could enter, Moses died. The crisis of leadership was real. What were they to do? However, in the biblical account that question is all but ignored, for God prepared another to lead the people of Israel. Joshua was that man, and the crisis brought him to the front.

How often have similar situations been repeated? Interestingly, in its own way each generation in the church faces crises. The absence of strong leaders produces fears and doubts. What will the church do in the face of such a crisis -- in the face

of the difficulties that difficulties pose? This is no small matter.

In time even the most effective of leaders will be removed. Death and infirmity comes to remove some. Some leaders lose their way, producing sadness and shock. Some begin to lord it over the flock. A sense of loss will be experienced, for a crisis has come. A crisis signals one undeniable fact--things are going to be different from this point on. In every crisis the concern is real. The changes to be faced, because of the crisis, are threatening.

The lessons that come as a result of a crisis make evident the lessons of life. No matter how effective a person may be, no matter how highly regarded he may be, no matter how numerous his achievements, by reason of ordinary events, his career will end. All careers are marked out as temporary.

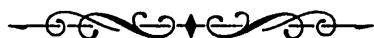
The time may come when the special contribution, or strengths, or knowledge, of some may not be the need of the hour. Even the most gifted people have their limitations. This does not diminish their worth, but points to the fact that God calls others also to serve. Necessity will call others to serve as leaders, but God's calling is higher than the call originating merely from necessity.

The abilities of those that arise to serve will become known. In time, as the weight of responsibility is borne

faithfully, a servant-leader finds his balance, develops his skills, and effectively serves God. In time, as he honors God, he will develop into the man he would never have been had the crisis not come, had the necessity of service not arisen. Burdened with the weight of responsibility, God's man learns to rely not upon his ability, but upon God, and his usefulness to God is multiplied.

Responsibility tempers expectations and changes priorities for the man yielded to God. Values are tested and tempered. In God's fire only the dross is burned out. In the face of life's trials, faithfulness is success for the servant of God, for God's will is his delight.

In the course of life, being yielded to God is the crowning purpose. When crisis comes God will provide. In every place the future is being entrusted by God into the hands of those that are yielded to Him. And, the people of God can choose to tremble and worry, or bow the knee and pray. They can fret and frown, or they can say with confident faith, "God is marshalling His forces according to His plan of battle, according to the needs of His people."



## HOW AMERICANS ARE SPENDING THEIR TIME

Andy Erwin

The following statistics are taken from the *Wall Street Journal* (June 24, 2016). Americans spend:

- .33 hours per day (**20 minutes**) are spent on religious/civic activities.
- .75 – shopping
- 5.21 – leisure activities
- 3.53 – work
- 1.84 – household activities
- 1.18 – eating
- 9.64 – personal care (includes sleep)

### THREE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How can we expect to overcome the devil on 20 minutes of spiritual mindedness per day (2.31 hours per week)?
- How can we expect to overcome the devil if we are only seeking God when we need something from Him or on *our* terms?
- How can we expect to overcome the devil without being influenced by the gospel regular basis?

# Remembering E. Claude Gardner

Andy Erwin

E. Claude Gardner was born January 16, 1925, to O.A. and Edna Gardner. At the influence of his parents and Elza Huffard, brother Gardner began preaching at age 15. His brothers Stanley, Don, and Albert, and his sister, Ethel Jordan, preceded him in death.

## Early Life and Education

Brother Gardner was valedictorian of his high school class in Marmaduke, Arkansas. He then graduated with a junior college degree in Bible from Freed Hardeman College in 1944. He then graduated with honors from Abilene Christian College in 1946. After receiving a master's degree at Southwest Texas University, he began his teaching career in 1948 in the Rosiclare, Illinois public school system.

## Sister Delorese

In 1945, brother Gardner married Delorese Tatum. They met in Chapel Hall when they were both students at Freed Hardeman.

Delorese is remembered by all as a kind and endearing Christian lady. She was from Perry County, Tennessee – reared on “Sinking Creek” near

the Flatwoods community. Tragically, sister Delorese died due to injuries sustained in a terrible car accident returning from brother Gardner's 350<sup>th</sup> Gospel Meeting near Walnut, Mississippi. They were married for 56 years. Their four children are Phyllis (Sam) Hester, Becky (Larry) Cyr, Claudia Goodson, and David (Pat) Gardner.



## Glenda Jacobs Gardner

Brother Gardner married Glenda after the death of Delorese. Glenda was also a kind Christian woman, also from Perry County, Tennessee. She too preceded brother Gardner in death.

## Freed-Hardeman

In 1949, N.B. Hardeman hired brother Gardner to head the Department of Education and Psychology and to teach Bible at Freed Hardeman College. That year, Hardeman also hired W.A. Bradfield and George W. DeHoff to join the faculty. A welcome party was held in the Hardeman home for the newest faculty members. This was the first time brother Gardner saw a television set!

Brother Gardner would be associated with Freed-Hardeman for the rest of his life. He served as registrar,

dean, dean-registrar, vice president, president, chancellor, and president emeritus.

### **A Gospel Preacher**

Brother Gardner was an outstanding preacher! He conducted 375 gospel meetings, wrote over 500 articles for religious publications, and authored eight books.

He loved the church. He was a preacher first. He sought to encourage the church and preachers of the gospel throughout the world.

One of his favorite sermons was titled, "The Scarlet Cord in the Window." Brother Gardner used the example of Rahab to show that acceptable faith is active and obedient to the will of God.

Brother Gardner was actively preaching one Sunday each month at Roby near Henderson until his death.

### **A Great Encourager**

Brother Gardner was an encourager of good works. It is because of brother Gardner that the West Fayetteville congregation became the home of the International Gospel Hour. Brother Gardner was charged with finding a replacement for V.E. Howard.

Recognizing the great ability of Winford Claiborne, brother Gardner encouraged the elders of the West Fayetteville church to oversee this work and allow brother Claiborne to be the voice of the Gospel Hour. Brother Gardner was right in this as-

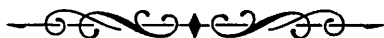
essment as brother Claiborne became a great spokesman through the Gospel Hour and the program grew to unprecedented heights.

It was not uncommon for brother Gardner to recognize students from years ago, call them by name, and spend a little time encouraging them in a most remarkable way.

He always had a place in his heart for preachers and sought to encourage men to preach the gospel. He was worried that too many of our preacher students were entering youth ministry and not the pulpit. He was also concerned that there was too much expository preaching at the expense of evangelistic preaching. Brother Gardner always believed there was a need for strong evangelistic preaching.

During my last visit with him, we conversed about my family, the church, and Christian education. He encouraged me in my work at West Fayetteville and with the *Gospel Gleaner*. He also gave me a stack of articles for consideration in the *Gospel Gleaner*. We hope to be able to print these for some time to come.

E. Claude Gardner died on December 31, 2017. He was 92.



# **The West Fayetteville Church of Christ**

## **Service Times**

Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 am

Sunday Worship: 10:30 am

Sunday Evening Worship: 6:00 pm

Wednesday Evening Worship: 7:00 pm

*Be Our Honored Guest!*

**24 Boonshill Road**

**Fayetteville, TN 37334**

*[www.westfayetteville.net](http://www.westfayetteville.net)*

(931) 433-6542

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WEST FAYETTEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST  
PO BOX 456  
FAYETTEVILLE, TN 37334

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***Celebrating 30 years of Christian Journalism***

A Work of the West Fayetteville Church of Christ



# Gospel Gleaner

## *For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



### **TOMORROW'S PREACHERS TODAY**

*Articles from Young Preachers with Bright Futures*

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## **“The Churches of Christ Greet You” (Romans 16:16)**

The West Fayetteville Church of Christ is pleased to bring you the *Gospel Gleaner*. Are you familiar with the churches of Christ? Have you ever attended our services before?

Faithful churches of Christ desire to return to the New Testament and to be the church of the Bible. In the Bible, we find that the church is the assembly of all those who have been called out of the darkness of sin by obeying the gospel. These souls are added by God to the spiritual body of Christ, which is His church (Acts 2:42, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23).

The church belongs to Christ. It is His church. We, therefore, seek to honor Christ as our Lord in our worship, teaching, and daily walk.

One can be added to this sacred assembly and spiritual kingdom by hearing the gospel preached (Romans 10:17); believing the facts concerning Christ as revealed in the gospel (John 8:24); repenting of sin (Luke 13:3, 5); and by being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:11-13; Galatians 3:26-27) to wash sins away by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 1:7).

For more information about the church, or God's plan of salvation, we offer free Bible Correspondence courses and personal Bible studies. Call or write to us.

### **The Gospel Gleaner**

PO Box 456  
Fayetteville, TN 37334

[www.gospelgleaner.com](http://www.gospelgleaner.com)

Andy Erwin, Editor

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com). The West Fayetteville Church of Christ reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, notes, and articles to publish.

## **Gospel Gleaner**

Vol. 30 ♦ No. 2

### **WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE**

**Ray Brantley**

*Cantonment, Florida*

**Raymond Elliott**

*Prattville, Alabama*

**Jackson Erwin**

*Elizabethton, Tennessee*

**Andy Erwin**

*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

**Timothy Gunnells**

*Athens, Tennessee*

**Drake Hofgren**

*Moundville, WV*

**Aaron Johnson**

*Denver, CO*

**Van Massey**

*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

**James R. McGill**

*Nashville, Tennessee*

**John T. Polk, II**

*Oneida, Tennessee*

**Roger Shepherd**

*Montgomery, Alabama*

**Jon Smith**

*Knoxville, Tennessee*

**Houston Welch**

*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

## **Tomorrow's Preachers Today**

**Andy Erwin**

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we wish to recognize some young men who are students in schools of preaching. One of these writers (Houston Welch) has already graduated and is working with the Friendship church of Christ in Lincoln County, Tennessee.

It is important that we encourage faithful young men to be servants in the Lord's kingdom. We especially need good young preachers.

I ask that you do all that you can to encourage young men who desire to preach the gospel. Support them through kind words and actions. Send them letters and care packages while they are in school. Allow them to preach often for you. Help them to realize the great importance of preaching the truth and saving souls. Help them to love the church and to realize the need to be encouragers.

If you are concerned about the future of the Lord's church and wish for its future to be bright, then see to the encouragement and development of young gospel preachers. These young men are "tomorrow's preachers today."

# The Fullness of Time

Ray Brantley

(Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies, Cantonment, FL)

The Bible contains many concepts that bring to mind all sorts of questions. One such concept is the phrase “the fullness of time.”

The fullness of time is a concept found throughout the Bible. The phrase is always found in connection with two different things: (1) the coming of the Messiah; and (2) the establishment of the kingdom of God. The coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the kingdom of God were both a part of God’s plan to save mankind from the very beginning.

The coming of these things can first be seen in the prophecy given in the book of Genesis (Gen. 3:15). God sent His Son when the fullness of time had come to redeem mankind (Gal. 4:4-5). In other words, God sent His Son when the time was right. But, what made the time when Jesus came to earth to live His fleshly life the fullness of time?

The Roman Empire was ruling when Christ came to the earth. What made the rule of the Roman Empire the perfect concoction of ingredients so that it was considered the fullness of time?

The Roman Empire was the newest world power in a long list of nations that gained control of the area where Christ was born. However, Rome differed from the other nations because

they incorporated features of all the previous nations. The Roman government capitalized on things created by the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek nations while also adding their own inventions that assisted in making it the fullness of time.

The nation of Assyria conquered many other nations while they were becoming a world power. After they conquered a new area they would take the ruling class and deport them to another area in order to keep conquered lands from rebelling. As a result, the nations began to intermarry with one another bringing about a mixing of religions.

Rome incorporated this into their rule by allowing for freedom of religion. Any religion that had already been established could continue to be observed under Roman rule. This allowed Jesus to teach His gospel freely as it was viewed by the Romans as part of Judaism.

The nation of the Babylonians took part in public worship to their false gods. This practice was adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity when they began publicly worshipping in synagogues. The Roman view on freedom of religion allowed the public worship to continue as long as the people did not cause any riots or trouble with their worship. This

allowed Jesus and His disciples to teach to large multitudes in public areas, which aided the spread of the gospel.

That the gospel would replace the Law of Moses led to contention between Christ and the Jews. This would eventually end in the crucifixion and the establishment of the kingdom of God through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

The Persian nation set forth the idea of "king worship." The Romans continued this practice with their worship of the emperor. This led to contention between the Christians and Romans because Christians taught that worshipping the emperor was wrong. This teaching led to Roman persecution of Christians. However, the kingdom of God spread quickly after its establishment due to widespread Christian persecution.

The nation of Greece provided the koine Greek language. This "common" Greek language came about after the conquests made by Alexander the Great united multiple nations under one common language. Although each nation spoke their own language, they also spoke the common Greek, much like the English language is spoken today.

"This Greek possessed a uniformity that made it possible to convey a fine distinction of thought and be accurately understood. The language itself possesses tenses and moods that enable an exactness of expression not possible in Eng-

lish" (F.W. Mattox, *The Eternal Kingdom*).

This common language meant that spreading the gospel of Christ became easier, as it could be spread in the common language and translated into other languages, when the need arose. The common language also aided in avoiding confusion for the teachings of Christ.

The Roman Empire took each of these aspects into their own culture in order to create their unique government.

Rome also added some ingredients. One such ingredient was their system of roads. Rome paved 50,000 miles of roads throughout their empire. This was the first nation to begin and complete a road paving project of such magnitude. They created roads from their capital of Rome to other large cities and into small towns surrounding those cities. This is where the saying, "All roads lead to Rome" comes from. This system of roads made travel easier than it had ever been in the past.

When we look at all these different things as a whole we can see why this particular period of time was known as the fullness of time. God, from the beginning, planned the death of His only begotten Son as the atonement for the sins of mankind. Along with His Son's death, God planned to establish His spiritual kingdom that would be made up of all nations of the earth.

The mixture of the nations through

marriage, the freedom of religion, freedom of public worship, the common language, and the system of roads all aided in the spreading of the gospel throughout all nations.

The public worship also led to the tense scenario that fulfilled the planned death of God's Son allowing for man to be redeemed.

Finally, the system of roads, and the persecution of Christianity that resulted from the freedom given to already established religions such as Judaism, helped the kingdom of God spread to every nation on earth.

After looking at all of the ingredients provided by each nation, and their mixing together over hundreds of years, it is easy to see how the time of the Roman Empire became known as the fullness of time.

This article lists only a small portion of the literally thousands of different events and circumstances that led to this period being known as the fullness of time. It is, however, enough of a glimpse behind the curtain to see the perfect mixture of events and circumstances that led to the establishment and growth of the kingdom of God. This is clearly something that God had been planning from the beginning, and it shows that He is an all-knowing God.

We have the advantage of being able to look back on these events with 20/20 vision. With the advantage of this hindsight, it is easy to see the all-knowing and all-powerful nature of God.

The omniscience of God should give man confidence in His promises. Knowing this about God and the steps He took to allow the fullness of time to come to pass leaves us with but one question: why wouldn't we choose to place our trust in God and obey His commands?

## **A Review of the CSB (Christian Standard Bible)**

Jackson Erwin

(Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development, Elizabethton, TN)

One new translation that has been gaining more and more popularity in the denominational world, and even in the Lord's church, is the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). In February of this year (2018), more copies of the CSB were sold than the ESV, NKJV, and even the KJV, placing it at #3 of the ECPA bestsellers list of Bible translations.

While reading this review, our readers should know that I am not against the concept of modern translations. My personal favorites in particular are the NKJV and 1901-ASV. I truly believe that the Bible should be in the language of today's Christian. However, one ideology that many modern translations have lost is that, while readability is important, accuracy of the original languages must be the main priority. This is where the CSB falls short, as will be seen; thus

making it useless for serious Bible study.

The CSB translation was finished in June 2016 and released in March 2017. It is a revision of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, which has also been proven very inaccurate. This translation was developed by 100 scholars from 17 denominations. According to its own website (csbible.com), "The Christian Standard Bible aims to draw readers into a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God. By translating Scripture into the clearest possible modern English, the CSB allows readers to experience God's Word at its fullest."

At a first glance, this would make the translation seem very reliable and trustworthy for the Christian. But, how does this translation attempt to "draw readers into a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God"? The Bible says, "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3; NKJV).

If keeping God's commandments brings one to a greater relationship with Him, it is then essential for one to have an accurate translation of said commandments. It will be the purpose of this article to see if the CSB meets this great requirement.

On their website they claim, "The CSB is a trustworthy text for both sermon preparation and serious study, translated straight from biblical languages by scholars who love God's

Word" [emphasis added]. Where will this "serious study" take the Christian?

1. A "serious study" from this translation will lead one to believe in the doctrine of total hereditary depravity (inherited sin). "Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me" (Psa. 51:5; CSB).

The NKJV reads, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

David is not saying that he inherited the "sinful nature" of his parents, thus causing him to commit adultery with Bathsheba. Rather, he is telling his readers that he was born into a sinful world and generation. Sin was always around him, attempting to subdue him, and it finally succeeded.

2. The CSB completely changes the meaning of Hebrews 4:2. The verse reads in the NKJV, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, **not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.**"

However, in the CSB, we read, "For we also have received the good news just as they did. But the message they heard did not benefit them, since **they were not united with those who heard it in faith.**"

The NKJV shows the true meaning behind what the writer of Hebrews was saying, that is, faith in the Scrip-

tures is essential to one's obedience to it. However, according to the CSB, faith was not the problem, but unity between the hearers.

3. The interpretation becomes the translation once again in Romans 12:1. Along with the HCSB, ESV, NIV and NASB, "worship" is used instead of service.

While the others previously mentioned translate *logikos* (from which the word "logic" is derived) as "spiritual," the CSB translates it as "true." Both translations of the word are incorrect, with "logical" or "reasonable" being the more accurate terms to use.

However, all of the noted versions translate the word *latreia* as "worship." Because of this, some have come to conclude, that everything a Christian does is a form of worship.

4. Like most modern translations (including the NKJV), the Greek word *pornea* is translated as "sexual immorality" instead of "fornication."

It is sexually immoral to look upon a woman to lust after her (Matt. 5:28), but it is not grounds for scriptural divorce (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Fornication is the act of illicit sexual intercourse and is not a difficult word for individuals to learn.

The NASB, one that many call "the most accurate translation," even refrains from using the term *sexual immorality*, and instead translates the word simply as *immorality*!

5. The CSB follows the NIV in John 3:16 in regards to the term *monogenes*.

*Mono* simply means "only" and *genes* "begotten." However, the CSB renders the term "one and only Son." The ASV, NKJV, KJV, and NASB read "only begotten."

6. Any "serious study" from the CSB will lead its readers to believe in the doctrine of "once saved, always saved." In 1 John 3:9 the CSB reads, "Everyone who has been born of God does not sin, because his seed remains in him; **and he is not able to sin**, because he has born of God."

This contradicts what John said earlier in 1:10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

The NKJV accurately translates this verse by saying, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; **and he cannot sin**, because he has been born of God." There is a great difference between "is not able" and "cannot." For example, if a father were to tell his child that he *cannot* go outside to play, he is not saying that the child is physically unable to do such, but simply that he is *not allowed*. Likewise, the Christian is *able* to sin, but is commanded by God not to do such.

7. Finally, in Matthew 10:41, the CSB translates, "Anyone who welcomes a prophet **because he is a prophet** will receive a



prophet's reward. And anyone who welcomes a righteous person **because he's righteous** will receive a righteous person's reward."

This is one of the worst errors in this translation. The Greek word translated "because" is *eis*, which NEVER means "because of." The word actually means "for," "unto," "into," "in," and "in order to obtain."

The Greek word that DOES mean "because of" is *gar*, which is NOT the word found in this verse. If *eis* were to mean "because of," then Christ did not die for/so that our sins might be forgiven, but because they were already forgiven (Matt. 26:28)!

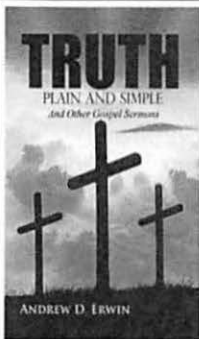
Also, in Acts 2:38, we are told to be baptized for (*eis*) the remission of sins. Faith only advocates have been trying to make *eis* mean "because of" for years, for this very reason. They would love to translate Acts 2:38 as "be baptized because your sins are forgiven." The "translation" in the CSB for Matthew 10:41 is only a step in that direction. The ESV, a Crossway translation and a translation that has gained significant popularity in the church, follows this inaccurate translation of Matthew 10:41 as well.

The NKJV accurately translates it saying, "He who receives a prophet **in the name of** a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man **in the name of** a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."

## Conclusion

There are many other problems to note in the CSB -- the denominational bias, the common paraphrasing, and the thought-for-thought translation philosophy. The CSB should not be considered for any "serious study" of the Scriptures. We all must realize that being modern does not necessarily mean being better, and readability does not guarantee accuracy.

The Bible is a book of its own kind, with its own language and literary style. Therefore, we must be willing to study it constantly and learn the language of its time if we are to be faithful and knowledgeable students of God's all-inspired Word.



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# I Am Not Conformed

Drake Hofgren

(West Virginia School of Preaching, Moundsville, WV)

In Romans 12:1-2 the apostle Paul makes an imploring statement to the disciples at the church in Rome, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you 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.”

As Christians we are called upon to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We have dedicated our lives to our Savior so that they are no longer our own. Our bodies are now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 6:19). It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal. 2:20).

The only way we can be a proper and acceptable sacrifice to God is if we are striving to be holy. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15,16). This is our logical and reasonable service that we strive to bring ourselves into subjection.

We strive to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of

Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). We must keep ourselves pure and uncorrupted by the world. We must strive to be holy, and faithfully serve our Lord and Savior because we are His “peculiar people” (1 Pet. 2:9).

In order to do this properly, Paul admonishes us further: “and be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

In order for our lives to be a pure and holy sacrifice to God, we cannot be conformed to this world. To be “conformed” means to fashion one’s self according to another’s pattern, to be molded.

Peter warned us in 1Peter 1:14 not to fashion ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance. As Christians we cannot be molded after the world! If we look like the world, walk like the world, and talk like the world, then, we are of the world, and at enmity with God (James 4:4). The word “world” in this passage is the Greek word *aion* and it carries more of the meaning of a period of time or an age. As Christians, we are not to be conformed to this present age. We are not to be “a product of our times.”

Instead, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We need to have a metamorphosis. As children of God, we have been born again to walk in newness of life. So, let us put off the old man of sin and walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7). Let each of us determine to be a new man in Christ (Romans 6:1-12).

## A Good Minister

Aaron Johnson

(Bear Valley Bible Institute, Denver, CO)

Anyone who aspires to be a minister for Christ should inevitably be faced with the question of what makes for a good minister. Ministry is not to be taken lightly, nor should it be assumed without an understanding of its magnitude.

Paul, perhaps the most prominent apostle of the New Testament, wrote that he was the aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:16). Yet, in that same verse, he asks a sobering question: "And who is adequate for these things?" Indeed, who among us is adequate, or good enough, for ministry? If Paul did not consider himself to be good enough, how can any of us be good enough today? Thankfully, even though Paul himself was not adequate, the letter of 2 Corinthians details the aspects of a good minister so that he can be made adequate by God (cf. 2 Cor. 3:5, 6).

Generally speaking, the good minister suffers well. Paul talks at length about his suffering (2 Cor. 1:3; 2:4; 4:7-12, 16-17; 5:2-4; 6:4-10; 11:23-29; 12:7-10), and uses his own example as a sort of standard for good ministry. These suffering sections are often the context of other passages that detail other aspects of a good minister. Suffering, then, is a kind of umbrella under which many other qualities flourish.

First, in 2 Cor. 4:7-12, as Paul describes the treasure of the ministry of the New Covenant as being contained in earthen vessels, it is clear that Paul does not place the emphasis on himself. When a good minister suffers, he does not take center stage or put himself on display. Rather, he makes every effort to let the excellence of the power of God show through his suffering. The natural tendency when our body is in pain is to fixate on whatever is hurting and to give that body part all of our attention. Then, when we ourselves are in pain, this natural reaction may be difficult to resist. Nevertheless, it is important to show people that we are keeping our focus on God and not emphasizing anything of our self.

In addition, proper emphasis should not only be present between us and our observers, but also between us and God. While enduring his affliction, Paul did not dwell on his affliction, but on God's provision of hope (2 Cor. 1:8-11). So then, the good minister is one who takes the empha-

sis off of himself, especially when suffering, and places the proper emphasis on God and His power.

Secondly, the good minister does not give up. Too many ministers suffer burn out, stop preaching after a bad experience, or otherwise leave the work. This ought not to be the case. In 2 Cor. 4:8-9, though Paul was afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. Yet, he endured. The phrase "struck down" literally means to be struck with sufficient force so as to knock one down. Therefore, Paul had been hit with something that was enough to knock him down, yet he had the stamina to get back up (cf. 2 Cor. 1:4, 16). Even while facing beatings, imprisonments, labors, sleeplessness, hunger, and other such things, Paul endured and continued in patience (2 Cor. 6:4-6).

There are countless horror stories of preachers and ministers being mistreated; but none so bad as Paul's. Shall we not also endure? Not only did Paul endure in his ministry, but he also had perseverance in proving that his ministry was legitimate. He was rigorous in conducting his business above board. He never gave up on trying to be as credible as possible to those he ministered to, for he says that "the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles" (2 Cor. 12:12). Likewise, we must never compromise our ministries by participating in that which could be objectionable.

A single accusation of moral compromise could severely damage one's ministry. We should therefore be persistent in conducting ourselves so as to leave no room for sustainable objection.

Paul had every reason to give up: physical abuse, extreme discomfort, false accusation, and near betrayal by those he converted; but a good minister does not give up and so Paul endured.

Thirdly, a good minister is sensitive to, and gentle with, those he is serving. Indeed, despite having intended to go back and see his brethren in Corinth, Paul decided against the idea in order to spare them greater sorrow (2 Cor. 1:23).

A good minister must not have any desire to be severe or rough with church members, but rather should do everything he can to avoid the member's unnecessary discouragement. Paul said, "I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow" (2 Cor. 2:2).

Indeed, he wrote the letter of 2 Corinthians so that, when he returned to Corinth, he would have no need to be sorrowful (2 Cor. 2:3). Not only this, but when he had no choice but to cause them sorrow, it caused Paul much affliction as well (2 Cor. 2:4).

Is this the typical attitude of ministers today? God takes no pleasure in causing sorrow. A minister should be sensitive to the condition of the mem-

bers and alter his behavior to be as gentle toward them as possible. Paul desired to use the authority that God had given him to edify the church, not tear it down (2 Cor. 13:10; cf. 10:1, 2, 8; 12:19). Truly, a good minister is sensitive and gentle.

Fourth and finally, a good minister maintains a proper focus. Paul recognized the seriousness of unbelievers accusing him of walking according to the flesh (2 Cor. 10:2-3). It was important to Paul that others knew his focus was on winning people to Christ. Indeed, to answer the charge of the unbelievers, Paul insisted that his focus was not on fleshly warfare, but on spiritual warfare. His objective was not to fight people, but to pull down everything that exalts itself above Christ (2 Cor. 10:2-5).

Like Paul, ministers today ought not to focus on that which is seen, but on that which is unseen (2 Cor. 4:18). Focus should not be on the preservation of the physical body, but on obtaining a new body from God (2 Cor. 5:1-8). Focus should no longer be centered on what we want, but on what God wants (2 Cor. 5:9). We should no longer regard anyone according to the flesh (2 Cor. 5:16).

The minister who desires to be prominent in the brotherhood, to be a known lectureship speaker, to preach for a large congregation, has lost his focus. Ministers must see the world through God's eyes. They must see people as God sees people. Like Paul,

a good minister keeps his focus squarely on the spiritual, not on the physical.

Much can be learned about a good ministry in 2 Corinthians. The good minister will want to emulate Paul and his companions. I am hardly adequate for the work of ministry, but I can be made adequate by the power of God in me. Any person aspiring to minister to God's people must realize that their adequacy, their goodness, can only be found in God. To that end, we should be ready to suffer well, never give up, to be sensitive and gentle, and to maintain a proper focus. If we will do these things, we will be good ministers of Christ.

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# Is Your Legacy All about You?

Jon Smith

(Southeastern Institute of Biblical Studies, Knoxville, TN)

When I was in grade school, it was not out of the ordinary for my grades to drop in temperature. They would start on fire! You know, in the 80's and 90's, and then make a plunge toward 70, which is a bit too chilly to go to college. So, it was thought by a number of adults in my immediate community to force me to think about the legacy I wanted to leave the school, whatever work I did in the future, or even just with those whom I come into contact.

What impact do I want to have on the people around me? What is the legacy that I want to leave? While I was still pretty apathetic, it gave me something to think about. It was almost impossible to ignore.

In reading John chapter 3 we find that John the baptizer does not seem to care much about his legacy. His disciples came up to him and said (my paraphrase), "More people are going to Jesus. We need to up our advertising game."

John responded by telling them that he was not responsible for the good things that Jesus was doing (John 3.27; James 1.17). Basically, "You know I'm not the Messiah, just the one sent before Him" (Jn. 3.28; Malachi 3.1). "The one you really

want to see is Jesus. He's the groom. I'm just the guy who gets everyone ready for Him. I couldn't be happier to be here, in *His* presence to hear *His* voice" (Jn. 3.29). And, "Since that's the case, this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3.29c-30).

Okay, that sounds great. But what does it mean? It means that in my life, whenever I do something, I should do it because my aim is to be Christ-like. I mimic Him.

How do I even do that? How can I mimic someone who walked the earth in perfection? I think a good place to start is Philippians 2.3-11.

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly

exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Why do I do it? Answer: Because Christ is above all.

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs" (Heb. 11.3-4).

So, "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1.27). "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Is your legacy all about you? Or is it about the One for whom you live? Do your actions ever overshadow Christ living in you?

### **Minister Needed**

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## **Ye Are the Light of the World**

Houston Welch  
(Memphis School of Preaching,  
Memphis, TN)

Light has always played a vital role for humanity. From the foundation of the world unto eternity we see light.

In Revelation, we find painted the imagery of heaven, and there God is shining brightly.

In Genesis, from the first day of creation, when God said, "Let there be light, and there was light and God saw the light, that it was good and He then divided the light from the darkness."

Then, on the fourth day when God no longer provided Himself as the source of the physical light, He created the sun and the moon to govern the day and the night, and it was good.

God has always known the necessity of light for man, but mankind has not always recognized this need. The first thing we do when we wake up in the morning is, perhaps, walk into the bathroom, and almost mindlessly we flip the switch to turn on the light then we shut the door behind us. Every day, we can walk outside and not acknowledge or appreciate that everything we see is caused by the light being reflected in our retina, magnifying the majesty and brilliance of our Creator.

We can go through our day to day lives walking mindlessly without *the Source* of light too, not understanding that we need Him to live.

In Scripture, Jesus tells us that we “are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). How do we give this light? Is it from within ourselves, or do we have a premier Source of light that we are to reflect?

Jesus stated just before healing the blind man, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world,” (John 9:5), and then He spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, anointed the eyes of the blind man and told Him to wash them in the pool of Siloam. The man did just that and the Lord gave Him sight to see the light.

While Christ is no longer in the world in the physical since, He has left us a responsibility to shine the light of God, to be the glory of God.

### **Light through Fellowship**

The fellowship of the brethren on a regular basis is a part of the doctrine of Christ. Acts 2:42—“And they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and in the breaking of bread and in prayers.”

You might have noticed that I left one of the four acts mentioned in this verse. Not only did I leave it out here, but some Christians today leave it out as well – *fellowship*. We believe that we can participate in services on Sunday and Wednesday night, take the Lord’s Supper, eat meals with one

another, pray without ceasing, but leave out the fellowship of the saints and think that everything is perfectly fine.

We have all heard the phrase, “bad company corrupts good morals,” well it works both ways, *good* company *promotes* good morals. One of the things which I appreciate dearly about the schools of preaching in America is that we are surrounded by Christians. We live in a community of saints. This helps substantially in terms of our spirituality. It is easy to be dark when you are surrounded by darkness. However, it is just as easy to do right when you are surrounded by light and want to do right.

I could see the increase in my spiritual life from the time I first arrived at the Memphis School of Preaching. I read the Book every day before attendance, and prayed often. However, always being around my brothers and sisters also helped my spiritual life greatly. When I see them acting for the glory of God, I want to do something for the glory of God too. After all, this is the whole purpose of fellowship.

The Hebrews writer wrote regarding fellowship on practical terms, “let us consider one another to provoke to love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some, and exhorting, and so much more as we see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25). This passage is not talking *only* about as-



sembling for worship, but it is also talking about the fellowship we are to share with one another. And why do we fellowship? We provoke one another *to love* and *good works* and the effect is that our Father in heaven will be glorified. And, every true New Testament Christian's goal is to glorify God.

God has flipped the switch! Before we were in darkness, but now we are obligated to shine the light into this dark world! We are the only hope that the world has. The Mormons sure aren't going to save them! The Jehovah's witnesses aren't going to save them! The Muslims don't want to save them. They want to kill them. The earth is not going *to see* the light except *we be* the light! The darkness is in the past and the true light now shines, and John said this light, which was Christ, is in you and me (1 John 2:8).

Jesus said, "[we] are the light of the world. A city set on the hilltop cannot be hid, nor does any man light a candle and set it under bushel, but he sets it on its stand that it gives light to all that are in the house" (Mat. 5:14 ff.).

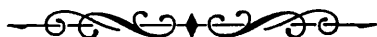
With us being likened to a city set upon a hill, I want us to think about the church as a chandelier. Not because of the beauty that a chandelier holds but because of its sole purpose, to reflect and to shine the source of light and to brighten the whole room. A chandelier consists of hundreds of

tiny prisms. A prism takes in the light and then scatters it. When you take hundreds of prisms, place them all together, shining and scattering light back and forth, you will have a light so bright that the folks in China are going to see it!

As the chandelier brightens a whole room we must reflect the light of Christ into the whole world! Individually, we are only as prisms. We emit no light from ourselves. A prism cannot shine, except through a source of light.

Peter proclaimed that we "do well that we take heed unto that more sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19). When that day star arises, He is going to bring into light the hidden things of darkness (1 Cor. 4:5). With that in mind, we should desire even more to be the light.

He has already sent the Light, now we need to be the light. Let us give thanks unto the Father, who has made us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:12-13).



# The Importance of Being on Time

Van Massey

Have you ever asked yourself, “If every member of the Lord’s church was just as I am, what would the church look like?” If they were just like me, could the church services start on time? What happens when I’m late for Bible class or worship?

## It Is Disruptive!

When I am late, attention is drawn towards me and away from God and His message being taught. Think about that. I have pulled my brethren’s spiritual thoughts and devotion away from God and as a result, have caused them to focus on me!

For acceptable worship to occur, our focus must be upon God. Psalm 89:7 teaches us that “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

## Worship/Study Is Missed

Not only do I do others a great disservice, but I, too, have missed part of it. I now have to settle in, settle down, gather my thoughts and try to catch up!

The habitual late-comer has not made Bible class or worship his number one priority. He is not prepared. Perhaps we need to pay closer attention to the Lord’s teaching of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Verse 10 says, “And while they (the foolish)

went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready (the wise) went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut.”

## A Missed Opportunity to Encourage

The late-comer isn’t there to meet, greet, or encourage anyone, or to be encouraged himself. God has a purpose for His people being together. As His people, we need one another. Christianity is a ‘one another’ religion. Read 2 Corinthians 13:12: “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” To greet is to draw to oneself, to clasp, or embrace (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:20; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; Titus 3:15; 3 John 14).

One thing we need to understand clearly is that even though we live in a hi-tech age, an email, a text message, or such like, can never do what a friendly smile, gentle handshake or hug, or a kind word spoken can do when we meet face to face.

We should always be a loving and encouraging people to one another. We can demonstrate this by example, especially to our young generation, who seem to need it most.

## The Wrong Message Is Sent

The habitual late-comer sends a message to all others that Bible class or worship is not really all that im-

portant! Each of us teaches something every day—if but by our example alone. You’ve heard people say, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one, any day.” Look at what the habitual late-comer teaches! Perhaps he has ‘preached his heart out’!

Quoting Isaiah, Jesus said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me” (Matthew 15:8). For what God has done for us, does He deserve anything less than our all? We owe our whole life to Him! Let us remember—A holy, prepared people worship the Holy God. The un-holy shall not stand before Him (see Leviticus 10:3, 13).

### **How Can We Do Better?**

First, prepare your heart for each coming Lord’s Day. In the business world, there’s an adage that says ‘Prior Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance.’ While there is no performance in our worship, surely we understand the importance of preparing to worship. Our preparation needs to start long before worship time. It needs to start before Saturday night. We really need to prepare ourselves all week long. For the child of God, the assembling of ourselves together on the Lord’s Day should be the focus and highlight of our week.

We should prepare physically. If God deserves no less than the best we can offer, we will not be out or up late on Saturday nights!

Perhaps we can lay out our clothes the day before. Does the car have enough gas in it, so we don’t have to stop somewhere to fill up on Sunday morning? Or, we can simply get out of bed early enough so as not to be rushed. This would solve a lot of problems.

Are we just being lazy? If so, how can our laziness be pleasing to God? Most of us aren’t late to work every day. The great majority wouldn’t dream of letting their children be late for school. Yet, how casually do so many of us approach each Lord’s Day—with apathy, indifference, and arrogance? How must God feel about us?

Lastly, prepare spiritually. Before Sunday arrives, pray to have the spiritual mind you need to worship. Have purpose in your heart to “give as you have been prospered by God” (1 Corinthians 16:2). Prepare all week to “proclaim the Lord’s death till He come” (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Prepare all week to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). If a person will “let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16), he will be eager to receive the word of God through preaching on the Lord’s Day (cf. James 1:21; Hebrews 2:1-4).

May God help us truly worship Him in spirit and in truth!

# *Remembering R. W. Comer*

James R. McGill

R. W. Comer (1860-1944) was born in the little town of Gamaliel in Monroe County in central Kentucky, just north of the Tennessee border. The village was named after the apostle Paul's famous teacher mentioned in Acts 5:34 and Acts 22:3.

After finishing high school Comer attended Burritt College in Spencer, Tennessee, a noted Christian college east of Nashville.

He next went into business, opening a store in Glasgow, Kentucky, before spending some time as a traveling salesman in north-central Tennessee.

## **The Move to Nashville**

Then, at the beginning of the 20th Century, at age forty, he made the last move of his life, to Nashville, where he founded the immensely successful Washington Manufacturing Company. He specialized in the manufacture of work clothing. He had factories in Kentucky and Tennessee with a central shipping house in Nashville.

Comer was active in the Russell Street church of Christ, located on the east side of downtown Nashville. He became one of the elders.

In 1911, seeing the need for a congregation in the Chapel Avenue area, farther out from downtown, he took the lead in buying a small building in

that location, where they began meeting.

Not long afterward, he again led in establishing the Chapel Avenue Home for the Aged. The principles on which the home was based were those named in the New Testament: That the residents would be (1) Christian widows, (2) at least sixty years of age (1 Timothy 5:9,10) and who (3) had no family members to care for them (1 Timothy 5:16).

Some exceptions were made. For example, at least one elderly never-married Christian lady was accepted. There was another lady, under age sixty, with a special need, who was taken in. The home for the aged was just across from the church building. It included a small auditorium for the ladies to assemble for worship. In addition, all the services of the Chapel Avenue church were broadcast to the home by means of a line across the street. In each lady's room there was a speaker that she could turn on if she desired to tune in to the services at the church building. Ladies who were physically able attended the Chapel Avenue worship regularly.

Comer held solid values, morally and doctrinally, in his personal life and in his preaching. One illustration he used is unforgettable. He said, "When I am walking downtown past a

movie theater, and I look into the ticket window, what I see is not a nicely dressed, well-groomed lady selling tickets. What I see is the devil himself!"

### **The Comer Foundation**

R. W. Comer prospered greatly in business. He used his wealth to do all he could to save souls. He took care never to advertise his giving. He devoted much of the last ten years of his life to establish a foundation that would provide for gospel preachers in need and destitute fields of endeavor even after his death.

When he died, the many support checks continued to go out in response to needs in America and in foreign lands. That was done quietly. I got a little insight into this good work since my daddy worked in Comer's Washington Manufacturing Company post office from which the letters went out each month to so many places in need.

Every December, R. W. Comer gave gifts to all his workers. One year, for example, he special-ordered 2,500 beautiful leather-bound Bibles to give to his employees. Besides gifts of candy, shirts, etc., the workers all often received a gift book. The company even acquired a printing facility for this purpose.

One year they would give a volume of sermons by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. At another time it would be a volume of N. B. Hardeman sermons. One gift my father received there was

a New Testament with his name engraved in gold lettering. On the inside front cover is this message: "REMEMBER: The greatest thing in all the world is the salvation offered to man by God through Jesus Christ."

N. B. Hardeman preached in five area-wide gospel meeting series in Nashville between 1922 and 1942. All five volumes of sermons were printed. In Volume 4 Hardeman wrote this dedication:

"To R. W. Comer...who, probably, was more responsible for the meetings in which these sermons were preached than any other man, and whose devotion to the 'old paths' is ever a source of inspiration—to him, my friend and benefactor, this volume is sincerely dedicated."

### **Comer's Funeral**

At Comer's funeral it was said of him: "His greatest concern was the need to impress all with the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ as God's Son, repenting of their sins, confessing His name, and being buried in baptism for the remission of sins, and then rising to walk in newness of life."

The editor of *The Nashville Banner*, Nashville's afternoon daily newspaper, wrote: "A true Christian gentleman has passed this way, and in passing left his stamp upon those countless lives he touched. Because personal modesty was a major attribute of Mr. R. W. Comer, he lived and

served... without ostentation... He was a follower of the Golden Rule in business as in private life."

N. B. Hardeman, speaking at R. W. Comer's funeral, thinking of the times they had been together at Chapel Avenue, said of him: "I can never forget how he sat over there and took such an active part in singing. I loved to hear him lead the prayer which he always began, 'Our dear, loving heavenly Father....'"

R. W. Comer died August 5, 1944. He was 84.

## **The Necessity of Assembling**

Raymond Elliott

An indispensable ingredient of the Christian life is to assemble with those of like precious faith for the purpose of worshipping God and to edify and exhort one another. God, in His infinite wisdom, created man to be a social being and to need fellowship with other men and women.

It is a misunderstanding and a disregard of the intent of God when we abstain from the assemblies of the Lord's people. The corporate worship of the body of believers is not the whole of Christianity; nevertheless, assembling together is necessary for the spiritual growth and welfare of the individual disciple. It has never been the design and purpose of God for His

followers to isolate themselves from other children of God. One can readily read of the various assemblies under the Mosaic economy and to learn the necessity of such gatherings (Exodus 5:1, 3; 12:6; Deuteronomy 16:8).

A proper investigation of the disciples will determine that various assemblies were in evidence in the first century. At the beginning of the church in Jerusalem you can read in Acts 2:44: "Now all who believed were together..." Following the first persecution, saints "assembled together" (Acts 4:31).

It is recorded in Acts 11:26, that Barnabas and Saul assembled themselves with the church for a year in order to teach the brethren. After the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch and "gathered the church together; they reported all that God had done with them (Acts 14:27).

All Bible students are aware that the early Christians met upon "the first day of the week" to break bread, that is, to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). In fact, when Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth, he admonished them to give as God had prospered them "on the first day of the week" (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). He knew that they were already meeting on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper because he mentioned this fact earlier in chapter 11.

Notice in 1 Corinthians 11:18: "For first of all, when you come to-

gether as a church..." Again in 11:20: "Therefore when you come to together in one place..." In chapter 14:23: "Therefore if the whole church comes together..."

One sure way to denote a Christian who was becoming unfaithful to Christ was in their habitual absence from the assemblies of the saints. Please study carefully the context in which you find Hebrews 10:24, 25.

In our assemblies, we can exhort one another in the matter of love, good works, and, in short, faithful Christian living. Even in our songs we can teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).

Redeemed people find joy, strength, and security in coming together to praise God the Father and the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Expressions of gratitude, honor, homage and devotion are natural for one whose heart is filled with love for God because of our salvation and the hope of eternal life.

It is God's desire that we worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24).

# In the Beginning Was the Word

Andy Erwin

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31)

John's introduction to his gospel narrative (1:1-18) reflects his purpose for writing. From the first sentence, the inspired writer sets forth the doctrine of the deity of Christ.

The deity of Christ is an essential doctrine in the writings of John. John records Jesus' personal testimony concerning His deity (John 5; John 8). His epistles also highlight the deity of Christ (1 John 1:1-2; 2 John 7-11). And, in the Revelation, John again records Jesus' testimony concerning His deity (e.g. 1:8; 22:12-13).

## The Word

"In the beginning was the Word..." Rather than choosing one of the other appropriate titles for Christ, John was inspired to refer to Jesus as "the Word." A word is first conceived as *thought*. God revealed His thought, i.e., His mind (purpose) in Christ Jesus. A word uttered is *speech*. God

revealed His speech, i.e., His truth through Christ Jesus.

Observe, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of **grace and truth**" (John 1:14). Grace denotes the thought/mind of God. Truth denotes the speech/language of God. Jesus is full of grace and truth. By referring to Jesus as the "Word," He is recognized as both God's thought conceived (grace) and speech uttered (truth) at once.

### **The Word In the Beginning**

"Before Abraham was, I **am**." (John 8:58). The Father asserted His deity in the same way (Exodus 3:14).

Genesis begins, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." As Genesis began by proclaiming the eternal nature of God, so too does the Gospel of John. Jesus was *in the beginning*. John uses a term for "beginning" which can also denote origin — *arche*. He is eternal. He is "from the beginning" (1 John 1:1-2).

Of Christ, the prophet Micah wrote, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

Jesus is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end

(Revelation 1:8; 1:17-18; 21:6-7; 22:12-13). Jesus is the Lamb of God (John 1:29) which was slain from the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8).

### **The Word was *With God***

The Word was not *before* or *after* God, but *with* God. From this passage the nature of the fellowship between the Father and the Son is revealed.

Being eternal, Jesus had to forfeit His home in glory when He came to this world. He took not upon Himself the form of a dignitary, but the form of a servant. Obediently, He suffered for our sins on the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5)

Again, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

A person cannot separate the Father from the Son. Jesus taught, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). And, "All things that the Father has are mine" (John 16:15). When we hear Christ, we hear the Father (John 12:49-50). To know Christ is to know the Father (John 14:7 ff.). To believe Christ is to believe the Father (John



12:44-45). Christ is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:3).

### **The Word Was God**

Jesus was not only with God, He was not only the image of God, He *was God*. Jesus is divine. He has the same divine nature as the Father. "The Word was God." Literally, "*and God was the Word*." The emphasis in this passage is not on any one article used, hence we find no article. Rather, the emphasis is on God. Christ is God. God is Christ. He is of a divine nature. He is deity.

Numerous passages teach the Godhood of Christ. Consider David's acknowledgement, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psalms 45:6-7). From Hebrews we know assuredly that this passage refers to Christ (cf. Hebrews 1:8-9).

Also take into account Psalms 110:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." By studying Acts 2:34 we can see this passage likewise refers to Christ.

Isaiah the prophet wrote concerning Christ, "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, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, The

Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

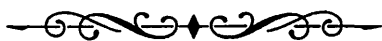
In Matthew 1:23 we learn that His name was to be Immanuel, or "God with us."

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." (1 Timothy 3:16)

### **Conclusion**

In order to understand the divine nature of Christ, we must understand these four points made by John in the first sentence of his gospel.

Christ cannot be separated from the Father in mind, word, deed, or judgment. He is not a created being. He is not merely an angel. He is not a "god." He is not a man, a good man, or merely a prophet. He is the eternal Word. He is in the beginning. He is with God. He is God. To accept Him is to accept the Father. To reject Him is to reject the Father.



# The Role of the People of God in Spiritual Formation:

## *Developing an Environment of Love and Accountability*

Timothy Gunnells

Individuals cannot be fully formed spiritually without participation in a strong community of faithful believers. The congregation impacts the spiritual formation of the individual within it by mentoring, building up, and providing an environment of love and accountability.

The apostle Paul stresses the role of the people of God, or faith community, in spiritual formation. His key thought on the role of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12) is that every member of the community is there to build each other up and so build up the whole. The people of God provide an environment of love and accountability, mentor others to be more like the Lord, and use their gifts to build up the body (Eph. 4:11-16). Therefore, spiritual formation occurs as we interact within the faith community.

Being a Christian means to be part of a community and to take responsibility and accountability in the community seriously.<sup>1</sup> God expects Christians to be there for each other "to spur one another on to good deeds" (Heb. 10:24).

Parker J. Palmer writes:

"...the community is a check against my personal distortions; it helps interpret the meaning of texts and gives guidance in my experience of prayer."<sup>2</sup> With the people of God, "I can live out (or discover I am lacking) the peace and joy, the humility and servanthood by which spiritual growth is measured."<sup>3</sup>

I need my brothers and sisters in Christ to love me, to keep me in check spiritually, and to model for me what it means to be like Christ. This is a sentiment shared by Paul in several of his epistles.

Jesus calls his followers to a life of spiritually mature faith evidenced by love for God and love for others. Practicing spiritual disciplines like solitude, hospitality, contemplative Bible reading, and prayer can help us live out these two great commandments and create a loving church community.

Practicing solitude (Luke 4:42) helps us to create a space for God and

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<sup>1</sup> Israel Galindo, "Methods of Christian Education toward Christian Spiritual Formation", *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 98 (2001), 418.

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<sup>2</sup> Parker J. Palmer, "Leaping High Walls: Education as Spiritual Formation", *Educational Horizons*, Vol. 82, no. 1, (Fall 2003), 56.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

deepen our relationship with him.<sup>4</sup> Extending hospitality to those in need (Matt. 25:31-45) demonstrates our love for others. Meditating on the Bible gives us the strength to serve God and overcome temptations (Matt. 4:1-10). Spending time in prayer, praising God and interceding for others, connects us with both commands (Matt. 6:9-16).

Paul believes that the transforming love of Christ is found in loving communities of faith. Certainly this is expressed even at the outset of his letters. John affirms that the ultimate test of authentic Christian community is love for one another (1 John 4:19-21).

Andrew Purves speaks emphatically about the importance of the faith community where Christians live in loving communion with God and each other:

“To assume one can be a Christian without attending church and participating in the life and mission of the fellowship is to misunderstand the meaning of being joined to Jesus Christ. Communion with Christ involves communion with one another and sharing together in Christ’s mission to and for the world. While Christianity provides a deeply personal relationship with God, Christianity is not to be con-

strued as individualistic and as an essentially private experience. Christian faith is lived as a communion in the body of Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

Purves argues further that “the congregation has the function of creating the community that is lacking in society, providing warmth and authenticity.”<sup>6</sup>

This rings familiar with themes found in Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and Philippians. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul puts great emphasis on the community living out a transformed existence, living out their heavenly citizenship in the present.

He explicitly describes ways for Christians to show love and support for each other. Paul encourages the believers at Philippi to follow his example, as well as the example of others, to be unselfish, to love one another, and to hold each other accountable.

This love and authenticity was also evident in the early apostolic church (Acts 2-4).



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<sup>4</sup> Jim Wilhoit, *Spiritual Formation as If the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ through Community*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008, 48.

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 41.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 142.

# Church Growth through God's Calling and a Godly Attitude

## *Selected Thoughts from Ephesians 4:1-3*

Roger Shepherd

The saints at Ephesus received a "calling" to ministry that resulted in church growth (Ephesians 4:1). What does it mean to be "called" to the ministry?

### **Our Calling**

Paul wrote to Timothy: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher" (2 Timothy 1:8-11).

Did Paul mean that he and Timothy received a special calling to ministry apart from all Christians? In 2 Timothy 1:9 of this text, Paul used first the Greek verb *kaleo* for "called" and the noun form *klesis* for "a holy calling."

The two terms are very closely related and complement one another by definition in this context as in the following:

First the verb form *kaleo* has five distinct meanings: 1) call, address, designate (Romans 9:26); 2) call someone by name (Luke 1:59); 3) to invite someone (1 Corinthians 10:27); 4) call together people as workmen ((Matthew 20:8); 5) to summon or invite someone by a calling (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 1:9; Galatians 1:15; Romans 8:30).

Second, the noun *klesis* has two related meanings: 1) call, calling, invitation (Luke 11:42; Romans 11:29; Ephesians 4:1-2; Philippians 3:14); 2) station in life, position, vocation (1 Cor. 7:20).<sup>1</sup>

It is clear in this context that all Christians receive a calling from God. They are saved, and then called to fulfill the purpose of Christ, not according to works of merit, but by the grace of God. However, the purpose

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon Of the New Testament*. (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1957), 399-400, 436-7.

of one Christian is different from that of another.

In this text, Paul was called to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher. Timothy was called to be a preacher. The minister is appointed to a specific work within this calling. Paul and Timothy were designated as preachers or ministers by God through the gospel.

How does God call Christians into service? It is through the gospel. Paul is clear in writing to the Thessalonians that "He called you through our gospel" (2 Thess. 2:14) in order to obtain the glory of Christ. Therefore, the calling of God is not done in secret. Notice the example of Paul himself, when he was taught by Ananias (Acts 9:1-19). It is true that he received a vision from Christ, but He instructed him that he would be told "what you must do" (Acts 9:6). Paul's "calling" was not separate from the teaching of Christ.

### Our Attitude

A positive attitude is about 99% of success in anything! You will either succeed marvelously or fail miserably based upon your attitude! Ninety-three percent of the Christians that I surveyed have an attitude that God rules and reigns in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

Paul taught a positive attitude toward life in general and the Lord's

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<sup>2</sup> Roger E. Shepherd. *Dissertation: Leadership Patterns In Growing Churches Of Christ*. (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2010), 101.

work. The world suffers enough in pessimism without coming to the church filled with doom and gloom. I suggest the following attitude words according to Paul's context to change your personal attitude.

*Humility* (Ephesians 4:2) is the motivating cause of the ministry Paul planned for the Ephesians. The New Testament usage of this term in its "theocentric view of man describes the Christian relationship with God and his fellow man."<sup>3</sup>

In humility a Christian "subordinates himself to others in service. Only by refraining from self-assertion can the unity of the congregation be established and sustained. Paul exemplified this attitude in the presence of God to the believers at Ephesus, Acts 20:19."<sup>4</sup>

In *gentleness* (Eph. 4:2) a Christian is considerate, humble, and meek toward another as they work together in the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3). "The devil is thwarted by humility."<sup>5</sup> The church disables the work of Satan by working together!

Christians work together with *patience* "showing tolerance for one another in love (Eph. 4:2). The word *patience* denotes longsuffering, stead-

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<sup>3</sup> Colin Brown. *The New International dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 260.

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Kittel. *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament*, Vol. VIII. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Bauer, 705.

fastness, endurance in bearing with one another in a forgiving relationship (cf. Col. 3:12-13). "It is said that in Greece *makrothymia* is concerned primarily with the molding of a man's own character; it is not a virtue exercised towards one's fellows."<sup>6</sup>

In the world at Greece it may not have been a virtue but is taught to be the character of the church. The greatest thing congregations can do to promote church growth is exercise patience to one another in *tolerance*.

Tolerance means to hold up or bear with and endure to help one another to deal with persecutions, tribulations, and false doctrine (cf. 2 Tim. 4:3-5). It does not mean to tear one another to pieces! Paul defeats the Greeks' humanism view of these terms, namely a virtuous attitude cultivated exclusively in one's own interests."<sup>7</sup> It's not all about ME, but others!

Christians who are in *love* with one another possess this attitude (Eph. 4:2). The phrase *en agapa* denotes a loving relationship. It is a "mutual relationship between God and man"<sup>8</sup> in the church under God's covenant.

Brotherly love is the motivation for the saints at Ephesus to do the work that results in the growth of the body (Eph. 4:16). "Brotherly love is the only relevant and forward-looking attitude in this time of decision between the cross and the *telos* (end). It is a readiness for service and sacrifice, for forgiveness and consideration, for help and sympathy, for lifting up the fallen and restoring the broken."<sup>9</sup>

The character of love gives us the forward march in the essentials of church growth!



The whole church watched with nervous anticipation as the visitors sat where the Martins have sat for 42 years.

<sup>6</sup> Brown. Vol. 2, 769.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 771.

<sup>8</sup> TDNT, Vol. I, 44.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 51.

# What Billy Graham Left Behind

John T. Polk, II

## Billy Graham's Legacy

Remembering the evangelist to millions after his death at age 99 by Edward E. Plowman, February 21, 2018, *World Magazine*:

"He was suddenly catapulted to national fame in 1949 by the news media, overflow crowds, and public 'decisions' by thousands of people to trust in Christ as Savior during a seven-weeks-long tent crusade in Los Angeles. Invitations to preach in other cities came pouring in. The board-governed Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) was formed in 1950 to service the outreach demands. Graham went on to preach over the next half century to live audiences of more than 200 million people at 400-plus crusades and outreach missions in 185 countries and territories, according to BGEA data—a live-speaking-appearances record still unequaled. Millions of others heard him on radio and television over the years. Asked in his sunset years what he hoped to be remembered for most, evangelist Billy Graham often would tell interviewers, 'that I was faithful in preaching the gospel throughout my life.'"

## A Response

Jesus spoke to His apostles a message millions of people never heard Billy Graham ever repeat: "And He

said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned'" (Mark 16:15-16). Jesus' message saves all who obey it.

Jesus Christ, "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5), has seen to it what we may know what His gospel is that saves us from our sins. "A faithful witness does not lie, But a false witness will utter lies" (Proverbs 14:5). Since Jesus Christ is "the faithful witness," then everyone who does not teach what Jesus taught "will utter lies." "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

Graham published 33 books, a few "best sellers." In not one did he teach as the apostle Paul wrote in one of his books in the New Testament: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

**Billy Graham Evangelistic  
Association Answers  
from June 1, 2004**

**Topics: Baptism, Salvation**

**Q: Is baptism necessary for salvation?**

**A:** Mr. Graham has stated: "I believe baptism is important, and I have been baptized. But I think we violate the Scriptures when we make baptism the prime requirement for salvation ... Paul's central theme was Christ and His saving power. Although he spoke of baptism, he said: 'I thank God that I baptized none of you ... lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name' (1 Corinthians 1:14-15)."

"Baptism is a conclusive act of obedience and witness to the world that we are Christ's. I believe in it wholeheartedly. In our crusades we don't baptize because we feel that this should be done by the local pastors—and that if I baptized, some people would say they had been baptized by me, and that would be putting the emphasis on the wrong person. To one who has received Christ, baptism is a necessary and meaningful experience. But, I must say with Paul: 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel' (1 Corinthians 1:17)."

"You may know that we urge immediate and extensive Bible study for each convert. As the Scripture is reviewed, the place of baptism will surely be discovered. If baptism were a requirement for salvation, we would certainly say that. But you couldn't

support that knowing, for example, that the thief on the cross had no opportunity for baptism or church membership. Yet on his confession, paradise was secured. Jesus said to him, 'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:43)."

**A Response**

Though Graham believed "baptism is important, and I have been baptized," and he did not baptize in his crusades using the apostle Paul's rationale: "some people would say they had been baptized by me, and that would be putting the emphasis on the wrong person."

Why would he have been baptized but not emphasize the same for countless sinners to whom he preached? Paul was referring to his personal handling of a baptism being mistaken for greater authority in that baptism, whereas Graham would never come in contact with any individual's baptism. Thus, he misused Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 1:17 as an excuse for not preaching the whole gospel of Christ.

Graham said, "If baptism were a requirement for salvation, we would certainly say that," but used the thief on the cross to negate what the resurrected Jesus commanded the world: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Before Jesus was crucified, a woman washed His feet with her tears (Luke 7:36-50) and He said, "Your



sins are forgiven.” Why did Graham never claim that people were saved by crying, like that woman?

### **From Graham’s Autobiography**

Billy Graham as a baby was sprinkled into the Presbyterian Church, at age 20, was baptized by immersion in a Baptist Church. The next year he was ordained to preach in a Southern Baptist Church. While doing college studies at Florida Bible Institute, he admits, “one thing that thrilled me [about Florida Bible Institute] was the diversity of viewpoints we were exposed to in the classroom, a wondrous blend of ecumenical and evangelical thought that was really ahead of its time” (autobiography, *Just As I Am*, p. 46). Though bursting into public prominence in 1949, his Billy Graham Crusade Committee in New York included over 100 theological modernists who denied the Divine inspiration of some, or all, of the Scriptures.

### **A Response**

His message was trimmed to be accepted in all denominations, and he never asked anyone to leave the church in which they already were members.

The *San Francisco News* for September 21, 1957 quoted a private interview with Dr. Graham in which he stated that “Anyone who makes a decision at our meetings is seen later and referred to a local clergyman, Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish.”

His appeal was broad enough to popularize (and include!) modernist

skeptics who were driving the “one church is as good/bad as all others” movement of Ecumenism in post-WWII America.

The National Council of Churches ignored doctrinal differences to bring all churches under one “umbrella,” and ready them for inclusion in The World Council of Churches.

Billy Graham Crusades never emphasized one church over another, but in the New Testament, when “those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41), “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Obedience to Graham’s gospel was not connected to any church, but those who obey Jesus’ gospel are added by the Lord to His church! Graham’s gospel completely ignores “the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28)!

Doctrines mattered to Jesus Christ, who 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. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Paul, wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Paul's legacy to Timothy was to: "Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

Billy Graham has received multitudes of accolades in his lifetime, but Jesus had warned: "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26).

Jesus also taught His disciples: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19). One who is widely acclaimed by men should re-evaluate his message, for Noah's ark saved "eight souls" (1 Peter 3:20); of all men above age 20 delivered from Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered the Promised Land (Numbers 14:30); Jesus taught: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and

there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Worldly popularity does not save. Purity in doctrine and faith does! Inspired Scripture explains: "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing" (1 Timothy 6:3-4).

"Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (Ephesians 6:24).

## Don Wallace

(1930-2018)



Don Wallace was one of our faithful elders at West Fayetteville.

He passed from this life on March 17, 2018.

Don was a guiding force for this good church, as he served us for nearly 40 years as an elder. He loved the Lord, His word, and His church. Don was a great soul winner and believed in evangelism.

Don was also a great encourager of young preachers. It seems fitting, therefore, to dedicate this particular issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* to his memory. It is with great affection and admiration that we remember brother Don Wallace – a great soldier of the cross.

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Sunday Evening Worship: 6:00 pm

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# Gospel Gleaner

*For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



## Ancient Sins in Modern Times

*The Dates May Change, but the Sins Remain the Same*

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Andy Erwin, Editor

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com). The West Fayetteville Church of Christ reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, notes, and articles to publish.

## **Gospel Gleaner**

Vol. 30 ♦ No. 3

### **WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE**

**Ronald D. Bryant**

*Prescott Valley, Arizona*

**Joshua Dement**

*Pocahontas Arkansas*

**Andy Erwin**

*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

**Timothy Gunnells**

*Athens, Tennessee*

**Scott Harp**

*Russellville, Kentucky*

**Mike Kiser**

*Sylcauga, Alabama*

**Gary McDade**

*Chattanooga, Tennessee*

**Owen D. Olbricht**

*Sherwood, Arkansas*

**John T. Polk, II**

*Oneida, Tennessee*

**Neil Pollard**

*Denver, Colorado*

**Andy Robison**

*Moundsville, West Virginia*

**Roger Shepherd**

*Montgomery, Alabama*

## **Just another Tribe in Canaan**

Andy Erwin

With the institution of the Law, God's message was clear to Israel — they were to be different from all the other nations. Israel was to be a unique people to the Lord. Israel was chosen and sanctified (Ex. 19:5; Deut. 14:2).

As we examine the history of Israel in the Old Testament, we find that this nation did not always appreciate their uniqueness in the eyes of Jehovah, and their place as His covenantal people. In fact, their ingratitude was displayed as soon as they were freed from Egyptian bondage.

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be analyzing the sins Israel committed in the wilderness as stated by Paul (1 Cor. 10:1-12). We do so with the same intention as Paul. We realize that their behavior serves as an example to Christians (v.11). As Christians, we are in a better covenantal relationship with God (Heb. 8:6). We are sanctified and chosen in Christ. Our law is the new covenant of our Lord. Yet, too often we can find ourselves committing these same ancient sins, albeit in modern times. We must take heed, lest we fall (v.12).

Indeed, the similarities between Israel and the church can be astounding. Not only can the church mirror

the transgressions of Israel in the wilderness, but we can also find ourselves doing as they did in the land of promise. Israel soon became just another tribe in Canaan and lost all of their distinctiveness through their marriages with the people of the land, their embracing of the false religions of the native people, and by being assimilated to the world around them.

Likewise, the Lord's church can become just another "church" in any given community if the people are not committed to their covenant with God. If we choose to embrace the false religions, doctrines, and teachers who espouse them, we will become just another church in town.

A Christian can find himself dressing like the world, talking like the world, acting like the world, and thinking like the world. All Christian piety and distinctiveness becomes lost to such a one. Yet, we have not so learned Christ (Eph. 4:14 ff.). Let us take heed, lest we fall.

As we study 1 Corinthians, we observe that the potential loss of distinctive faith and a subsequent blending with the world around was a matter of utmost importance to Paul. The issue he placed firmly before the church is that of being *in* the world and yet not *of* world.

The only way this can be achieved is by making a clean break with the world through a continual and disciplined commitment to our relationship with the Lord. Our minds must be

trained, disciplined, and committed to the Lord. The mind is the primary instrument with which we serve God. If we have given our minds to God for spiritual transformation, then the works of the flesh will be put to death (Galatians 5:16, 24; 6:14), and a clean break from the world will ensue.

Israel failed to make this break with the world. God commanded them to destroy the inhabitants of the land, knowing that if these native people remained, Israel would be blended into their society. God did not want His people being influenced by the worldly practices of the Canaanites. Nevertheless, Israel was stubborn and refused to drive out the people of the land. They refused to make a break with the world. They chose to blend with the world, and as a result, they became just another tribe in Canaan.

You will also observe that God chose to leave the Canaanites among Israel. God was not going to do Israel's work for them. If Israel did not desire to follow God, then God would allow them to reap the consequences of their decision. The remainder of the Old Testament is the result of God's judgment upon Israel (Judges 2:20-23). All of the heartache that followed was because of Israel's refusal to be God's distinctive people. As a student of Jewish history, Paul summarizes their transgressions with a single admonition: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).



# **Are We Any Better than They?**

Owen D. Olbricht

In every age of the world one generation may serve the Lord, but the next one may become wicked (e.g. Judges 2:10, 1-20). When we think of cultures of the past, and that of ancient Israel, are we better than they? (Rom. 3:9)

## **At Mount Sinai**

The people of Israel heard God's voice. They saw the Ten Commandments on the two tablets of stone that had been written by God (Deut. 5:22). When Moses read God's word to Israel they said, "All the words the Lord has said we will do" (Ex. 24:3). However, they did not keep their vow very long after leaving Sinai. They were enticed by the pleasures of this life, which led them to crave and "lust after evil things" (1 Cor. 10:6). Because of His displeasure with them, God destroyed them in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:10).

## **This Generation**

This present generation is no different than Israel. It desires to follow after evil things. A person is either blind or has closed his eyes if he does not realize this. The appeal to the flesh is not only present among those who do not believe God exists, but is also among those who say they believe in God. Around 84% of Americans say they are believers, but only around 40% say they regularly

attend church services. Many of them live "having a form of godliness, but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5).

Yet, this does not show the whole picture of what is happening. Of the preachers in churches who were asked, 50% admitted having watched pornography the week they were polled. A higher percent was found among university age men.

## **Present Attitude**

Moreover, the present attitude toward evil is lacking. Instead of abhorring evil things (Rom. 12:9), the present mindset is to "not only do the same but approve those who practice them (Rom. 1:32).

A young lady who was in a Bible class I taught in a "Christian" university announced to the class that women on campus should be given the same right as the men not to wear a shirt, to go topless. Back in the 40's and 50's the students properly clothed their bodies without guidelines being given. Now short shorts can be seen on most of the campuses.

I heard a talk show host on the radio ask a stripper if she felt embarrassed when she first became a stripper. She answered, that she had, but that that finally wore off. Such statements remind me of God's message through Jeremiah to Israel,

when they became morally decayed. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush" (Jer. 6:15; 8:12).

God has built within us a moral code. When we go contrary to it, we go contrary to our very nature (Rom. 1:14)

I recall a university girl that a member arranged for me to take to church when I was a young preacher telling me (when I took her back to her campus, because I made no advances toward her), "I have ruined myself for someone like you. I have been free with the college men on my campus." She had followed her lust, but inside she condemned herself (Rom. 7:19). A society can become so corrupt that anything goes. Their "own conscience" can be "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2).

### **An Accepting Society**

The old saying, "I'm OK, you are OK" is still alive. Compare the dress of actors in the older movies with today's actors. The bathing suit of Esther Williams was condemned by preachers of the day who concluded it would influence women to wear one like it. Now, women on the beach may wear a few straps to cover certain parts of their bodies and not be embarrassed.

Notice the language that is accepted in movies and songs. In the movie, "Gone with the Wind," the use

of "damn" was considered scandalous. Almost any word is accepted today unless it is considered a racial slur.

Dirt found on a politician, like Dan Quayle, in the recent past, could be used to end his career. A talk show host pointed out the "accepting" attitude of today that anything goes. He said a politician having a consensual affair with a prostitute will not have the effect it would have had in the Victorian culture of the past.

### **Aiding Immorality**

In Massachusetts, high school students went on strike in order to be given free condoms, which is a practice in some schools and colleges. The debate is still going on whether this is a good practice. Some parents give them to their teenagers with the excuse that this is better than dealing with child birth. Instead of helping curb sensuality, they encourage it.

In the earlier years of the United States, parents did not allow their teenagers to go on dates without an adult known as a chaperon. With the coming of cars, some "Christian" colleges forbade females riding in cars with males. It was allowed only under certain circumstances and restrictions. Today, that is considered old fashioned.

### **Moral Decay**

Within our present culture we have become no different than Israel of old after they left Sinai. As long as what we do seems to be enjoyable, even

though justified by a lie, we should do it anyway. Israel had a desire to do evil and justified it with a perverted sense of right and wrong. Isaiah wrote God's cry against them, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20).

They followed their passions with no thought of the consequence. Words in an old song, "Kiss of Fire," by Hugh Laurie, are expressive of an attitude that creates such an immoral atmosphere that has encouraged thoughtless living. "Love me today and let the devil take tomorrow." This is the way Israel lived, and it describes the way many live today.

### Conclusion

History shows high and low points in different cultures. Our country has reached a low point with killings, sexual exploitation, godlessness, and all that Paul described in a letter to Timothy would happen in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-7, 13).

As Christians we should learn, from God's dealing with Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:5-11), to avoid the sinful excesses of the world (Heb. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:15-17). Instead of being like the world, we are to be lights to show the way (Matt. 5:16).

## Idolatry

Andy Robison

In the context of a discussion about whether or not Christians should eat meat offered to idols, Paul lays out a stern admonition against the temptation to idolatry in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. The message is that some might think they are strong enough to avoid being drawn into consciousness of an idol, but they might want to think again. After all, look at the Israelites from generations prior. Although seeing many of the miracles of God during tumultuous times, and in spite of seeing God's victories in manifold ways, the people often fell.

In fact, idolatry consumed much of Israel's history, from the time of Abram's father and his gods on the other side of the Euphrates River (Gen. 11:27ff; 31:31-35; Josh. 24:2, 14-15; Ezek. 20:36), until the captivities of the northern and southern kingdoms (2 Kings 17:7-12; 24:3; 21:1-16).

In Ezekiel 23, where the picture of a harlot is used to indicate idolatry, God astonishingly sums up Israel's history: "She (Israel) has never given up her harlotry brought from Egypt" (v.8). Even though they were God's chosen people, with the oracles of God (Deut. 7:6; Rom. 3:1-2), they were subject to the temptation. New Testament Christians, instructed by Paul, needed to learn not to follow their example. As a friend once told

me, "You need to learn from other people's mistakes, because you don't have time to make them all yourself."

### **Examples Cited by Paul**

Two particular instances of Israel's idolatry are referenced by the inspired apostle in 1 Corinthians 10.

Verse 7 cites the incident in Exodus 32 (verse 6): "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Afraid Moses may have been lost to them, the people begged Aaron to "make them gods" and Aaron obliged with the manufacturing of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1-8).

The "play" in which the people engaged was likely sensuous, promiscuous, and perverted, with dancing (32:19), and a lack of restraint (32:25) involved. Such usually occurred in idolatrous worship. This was a colossal affront to the holy nature of the God giving the law, and to some of the early commandments themselves (Ex. 20:3, 4, 14).

Numbers 25 records Balak, the king of Moab, seeking a diviner, Balaam, to curse Israel spiritually, so that he might defeat them militarily. God would not allow that to happen, but spoke through an unwilling prophet's mouth just as he spoke through the mouth of a dumb donkey (Num. 22-24). God "turned the curse into a blessing" (Deut. 23:5; Neh. 13:2).

After that incident had passed, and apparently Israel's endangerment was

done, Israel essentially cursed themselves by their involvement in fornication with the women of Moab, and their allies, Midian (Num. 25:1-9). Balaam had led the effort.

Apparently, when he was unable to verbally curse Israel, he counseled Balak, Moab's king, to seduce the people into idolatry and immorality (Rev. 2:14; Num. 31:16). This idolatrous debauchery was met with swift justice from an angry God, including a plague that killed a total of 24,000 (Num. 25:9). Among the dead were two exhibitionists thrust through with a spear by righteous Phinehas (Num. 25:6-8).<sup>1</sup>

These examples of idolatry, along with the tempting of Christ and the complaining (1 Cor. 10:9-10; cf. Num. 14, 21), became "examples...written for our admonition..." (1 Cor. 10:11). God's New Covenant people are to learn at least this lesson from these Old Covenant examples: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

### **Applications for Today**

It may be that Christians in luxurious, scientific, advanced Western society think themselves immune to temptations of idolatry. If so, this may prove to be disastrously overconfident. Both Israelite errors referenced in this chapter happened to God's chosen people just after they accomplished some great victory—the first being after the Exodus and at the Sinai

law-giving; the second after the defeat of the sorcerer Balaam. Just when they were doing their best, the deceitful one subdued them with subtlety.

Christians should bear in mind these sobering truths: First, there does not have to be an image of wood or stone involved for an act or a mindset to constitute idolatry. Covetousness itself is idolatry, according to Colossians 3:5. Any idea, attitude, mentality, or way of thinking can take God off of one's personal throne and replace Him with an impostor.

Frighteningly instructive, secondly, is the notice that God's people were the ones seduced into idolatry immediately after pagan enemies were defeated! The plagues and the Red Sea crossing had decimated polytheistic Pharaoh and Egypt. Yet, Israel turned to a golden calf. Sorcery could not be effective against God (Num. 23:23). But, Israel worshipped the enemies' gods and fornicated with their people (Num. 25:1-3).

Third, descent into idolatry is by seduction and deceit. Straightforward battles (against Pharaoh, Balaam) did not work, but appeals to the desires of God's people did. Notice the irony; heed the warning! Innocence can all too easily yield to idolatry.

Activities which are good in and of themselves may become idols when removing God from His prominence. Athletics, music, and similar extra-curricular activities are good for human development. Yet, sometimes

they can so dominate the Christian's thinking and schedule that a personal walk with God is shoved aside piecemeal. It begins with the abstinence from the public activities of the church, and becomes an absorption unto attaining the next level of extra-curricular success.

Godly people cognizant of the biblical requirement to provide for their families (1 Tim. 5:8) may find themselves focusing solely on the amount of money amassed, to the exclusion of church and even family activities (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9-10; Prov. 30:8-9).

Those with the talent of preaching may gather a little too much ego-boosting from the compliments at the door. Those who sing may want to break out from the congregational mass and perform in the assembly of the Lord's people. Instead of using God-given talents to worship God, they gradually elevate themselves to positions where they feel they deserve to be praised.

In all cases, the change is so subtle as to be unnoticed to the daily observer. The Christian can be slowly desensitized by seemingly innocuous activities into becoming a full-fledged idolater. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

It doesn't have to be that way: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will

also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). God's power stands ready to help those determined to be faithful (cf. Jude 24-25; Eph. 6:10).

Traditional idolatry is, to be sure, making inroads in Western society. Pantheism rules New Age philosophy. A palace to Krishna stands within fifteen miles of where I sit. Buddhist statues reside in many American homes—cleaned, dusted, and watered by their worshipers.

Even if these usurpations do not tempt the Christian, the devil yields not. He will allure by perverting and/or elevating the otherwise most innocent and noblest of activities into god-like status. Before long, apostasy

to idolatry—while often unnoticed and unrecognized by its practitioners—is nevertheless complete.

<sup>1</sup> The charge of contradiction between Paul's "twenty-three thousand" (1 Cor. 10:8) and Numbers' record of "twenty-four thousand" is shallow and frivolous. Perhaps 23,000 fell in a twenty-four hour period, and a thousand more the previous or next day. Perhaps round figures are being used, much as the Israelites were said to be in captivity 400 years and 430 years [Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17]. At any rate, Paul was not wrong. If 24,000 died, then 23,000 certainly did.



*"Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!..." (Nahum 1:15)*

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# Dying for Lust

John T. Polk, II

**“Nor let us commit sexual immorality [fornication], as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell” (1 Corinthians 10:8 NKJV)**

In the wilderness wanderings, the Israelites’ progress lingered, so they found “fun” nearby! “Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel” (Numbers 25:1-3).

Rejecting God’s laws about sex, leads one to reject God’s worship laws! Sexual relations unite two people physically, for “he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For ‘the two,’ He says, ‘shall become one flesh’” (1 Corinthians 6:16).

Becoming “one flesh” is a bonding of the relationship God created between Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:22-25). The declaration that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife” is God’s decree for a marriage. Since “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27), God only recognizes a one male to one

female marriage! Therefore, any and all sexual relations outside of a heterosexual commitment are “fornication.”

The sin of Israel in the wilderness was becoming “one flesh” with foreigners outside of the sanction of marriage. So great was God’s displeasure, 23,000 were killed “in one day” (Numbers 25:6-9). God’s anger against Israel was due to their rejection of His pattern for human sexual purity. Those whom God makes “in His own image,” through “sexual immorality” degrade themselves to purely animal behavior!<sup>1</sup>

God showed how pure marriage is by mentioning that “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). Nakedness, like sex, should only be acceptable within the purity of marriage, and then in the private intimacy between husband and wife! Otherwise, like the Israelites, nakedness is acceptable in those who have rejected God!

All who paint, picture, pose, prefer and profit by revealing their nakedness to create lust outside, and in violation of marriage, have rejected God! Medical studies are not parallel to, nor an excuse for, so-called “art,” for the former concentrates on curing, and the latter on coveting, the physical body. Truly, Solomon warned sons

that God's commandments were: "To keep you from the evil woman, From the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, Nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life" (Proverbs 6:24-26).

An "evil woman," "seductress," "harlot," and "adulteress" are terms that describe any female who has been "liberated" so that she uses her sexuality to create "lust" outside of marriage.

Jesus said, "I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). A man may accidentally see, but must not become fixated on "a woman."

Women should also, "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation" (1 Timothy 2:9). "Modest" means a letting down, orderliness or planned; "propriety" means with reverence, able to be ashamed; "moderation" means using sound judgment, sobriety. A Christian woman must seriously consider how she presents herself.

Men who look to lust, and women who present themselves as objects of lust, have rejected God's pattern for purity! With nakedness, and near-nakedness abundant on the page, screen, and street, lust crowds out love!

"Adultery" is "fornication" that takes intimacy outside of marriage. Jesus used both words for that which mars a marriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). "Adultery" is the act of being joined to another while the first spouse lives (Romans 7:3; Matthew 19:9).

God began marriage with a "wedding ceremony" (Genesis 2:22-25) that consisted of: (1) Presenting the woman to the man; (2) Making a vow of intimacy; (3) Stating the rule of separation from parents which makes this union unique; and (4) Becoming "one flesh" to bond closer than to anyone else on earth.

People who want marriage benefits without ceremony of any kind have no commitment, thus are only a delay on the way to someone else! By rejecting a ceremony of declaration, thus cohabiting without ceremony, they reject God's plan for their security in the relationship.

Anytime people "did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality" (Romans 1:28-29). Pre-marital sex (fornication) and extra-marital sex (adultery) are rejections of God.

Today's "fill-in-the-blanks" internet dating services only match up information. How many times are internet-ordered products delivered "not as advertised"? Unfortunately, spous-



es cannot be “sent back postage paid.” Solomon said, “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes 6:9).

Wants and wishes blow with the whim; whereas, seeing lets us evaluate and calculate personality, conscience and character. Catalogs come and go, but there will always be a place for “brick and mortar” shopping. The “social skill” of finding out information for oneself is undeveloped in those who only seek “data dates!”

The Israelites literally died for lust. God’s plan prevents “dying for lust.”

## **Tempting Christ**

Ronald D. Bryant

A true follower of Christ seeks above all else to honor Him in every aspect of his life. He endeavors to be loyal to Him, to do His will, and endeavors to be one with Him. It is unthinkable that a follower of Christ should desire to resist Christ, or to reject His will, or to compromise His authority, or to speak against Him. While such is unthinkable, it is not impossible.

In 1 Corinthians 10:7-11, Paul categorically warned the Corinthian Christians of the dangers of immorality, of idolatry, of presumptuous sin,

and of murmuring. It is doubtful that Paul was merely giving a checklist of sins to avoid, for God’s purpose and aim is to the end of turning man from all sin. In the same context, Paul proceeded to warn the Corinthians of the very real danger of temptation, and he posited the fact that temptations do come, and God Himself will provide a means whereby they can be overcome (vv.12-13).

While the Jews pledged to do the will of God (Exodus 23:8; 24:3, 7), the record is clear, they did not. The Jews typically offered little more than lip-service and complaint. They were “overthrown in the wilderness,” for they failed to understand and to value their relationship with God. Individually and collectively they tempted God, and in reality, turned from Him in their unbelief (Hebrews 3:12 ff.).

Being devoid of reverence for God, they served themselves and sought their own way. In Psalm 106:14, it is stated that they “lusted exceedingly and tempted God.” In the place where they were absolutely dependent upon God and were daily fed by His direct provision, they had the presumption to provoke Him. They wanted Him to change the plans of His wisdom, satisfy their sensual appetites, and work miracles to meet their unbelief.

The Lord God would not do as they demanded, yet they continued to insist upon their own will and way. They failed in their wicked attempts because God “cannot be tempted with

evil.” Temptation has no power over Him. He yields not to man’s threats or promises.

However, it is correct to insist that in all these things they “tempted God” (1 Corinthians 10:9). The word “tempt” literally means “to tempt beyond endurance.” The Jews repeatedly presumed to have the right to do as they did.

It is amazing to consider the number of times the Jews presumed upon the love and mercy of God. Presumptuous sin has ever marked the way of the disobedient. The danger of deliberate sin is repeatedly set forth in the Old Testament as an example to those who sin willfully today.

The presumptuous sins of this text are regarded as the worst of all sins. While a remedy was provided under the Law of Moses for every kind of sin, there was this exception: “But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.” (Numbers 15:30-31).

David also prayed, “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression” (Psalm 19:13).

Paul was warning the Corinthians against sins that are calculated to put God to the test; sins in which they presume upon God. Certain specific questions seem to be in order:

- How many modern practices of those who posture as servants of God are in fact willful sins?
- How many “acts of worship” offered by men, actually set truth aside and exalt the plans of men?
- Are such actions the product of reverence for God?
- How many organizations, projects, and “good” works are in fact attempts to corrupt God’s government, and are truly works of the flesh and not of God?
- What of the attempts of men to rewrite and restate the clear teachings of God?
- Worse, how many people are doing so believing these to be “minor” sins which God will forgive?

To ask these questions may prove to be beneficial, but there is more. Consider the following:

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26).

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Galatians 6:7-8).

# Complaining/Murmuring

Gary McDade

Murmuring is “a half-suppressed or muttered complaint: grumbling” (Webster’s Dictionary, Ninth Edition, p. 781). Since murmuring is condemned in the Bible, the underlying complaining necessarily is sinful also, and the words “murmuring” and “complaining” are used interchangeably in the King James Version and the New King James Version of the Bible.

A moment with a detailed description of what murmuring is highlights why murmuring warrants concerted avoidance.

Linguist Karl Heinrich Rengstorff in volume one of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* discusses what it is to murmur, from the word in the Hebrew Bible and the subsequent Greek translation of it known as the Septuagint.

“When the people murmur, it is always because it thinks that justice has not been done or is not being done to its claim. The texts leave us in no doubt, that the claim and this assessment of the situation are both wholly subjective. Yet they also leave us in no doubt that in such an attitude God is reduced to human standards and is robbed, or is in the process of being robbed, of His sovereignty in relation to the people. This is why the murmuring of the people is a tempting of God (Ex.

17:2 etc.) or a scorning of God (Nu. 14:11). This is why it is severely punished. For murmuring is an attitude of the whole man. Hence it incurs guilt which must be punished. Finally, this helps us to see why the right attitude, in contrast to murmuring is . . . unconditional acceptance (Nu. 14:11) or obedience, hearkening to the voice of God (Nu. 14:12).” (p. 730).

A concentration of the sin of murmuring occurs in the wilderness wandering and vividly illustrates the New Testament command for Christians not to murmur or complain. Paul speaks to the point in 1 Corinthians 10:6-11 (NKJV).

Five sins are enumerated by Paul in this text: 1) lusting after evil things, 2) idolatry, 3) sexual immorality, 4) tempting Christ, and 5) complaining. While murmuring, defined as a “half-suppressed or muttered complaint,” may be presented and accepted as harmless today, few would view unbridled lust, idolatry, sexual immorality, or tempting Jesus Christ in the same light.

## Murmuring in the Wilderness

At the very beginning of the wilderness wandering the exultant song of the glorious victory of God over the Egyptians who had held the Israelites captive for 430 years (Galatians 3:17)

sung by Moses and the children of Israel scarcely had ceased reverberating over "the face of the wilderness" until three days from the Red Sea in the wilderness of Shur at Marah the waters thereof were bitter "and the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" (Exodus 15:24).

As observed earlier, a consistent element of murmuring is that the people feel like an injustice has been done to them and their complaining serves to reduce God to human standards and robs Him of His sovereignty in relation to the people. Such murmuring is a tempting and a scorning of the living God!

The waters of Marah were made sweet when God showed Moses a tree which he then cast into the water (Exodus 15:25), but forty-five days later in the wilderness of Sin once again the people murmured for food (Exodus 16:3).

Quail and manna were supplied by God. The people seemed oblivious to the fact that God was proving or testing them to know "whether they will walk in my law, or no" (Exodus 16:4). And again, at Rephidim there was no water for the people to drink "wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" (Exodus 17:2).

Again, as pointed out at the beginning, "Murmuring is an attitude of the

whole man. Hence it incurs guilt which must be punished."

The tenth time the Israelites tempted God in the wilderness was when the spies were sent to gather reconnaissance concerning the Promised Land. The favorable report by Joshua and Caleb was deflated in the eyes of the ten faithless spies who convinced the people that once again they had been handed an injustice, and they exclaimed, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!" (Numbers 14:2)

Adding insult to injury, they solicited a captain to lead them back into Egypt and its unconscionable slavery! Moses narrowly averted the Israelites' annihilation by pleading for God's longsuffering and mercy and willingness to forgive and pardon sin when God said, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Numbers 14:11-12).

Observe the consequences of their murmuring, God said to Moses, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers,

neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. ...How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me" (Numbers 14:22-23, 27).

Therefore, God said to them, "Your carcasses shall fall I this wilderness" (Numbers 14:29a).

### **Murmuring in the Church**

The New Testament commands Christians not to "...complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer." Consider how the all-too-common and deadly sin of complaining can be avoided. In Philippians 2:1-15, we find the Christian attitude that prohibits complaining described in verses 1-4 and verses 12-15. This attitude has at its very center the Deity of the Son of God in verses 5-11. A deep understanding of the love of God as demonstrated in the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ, convincingly is presented in verses 5-11 in order to prevent the disrespect for God, which lies beneath the sin of complaining, from ever arising.

### **Applications for Elders**

The children of Israel seemed to focus their complaining on their leadership, Moses and Aaron. Such may comprise the burden of leadership, for not only did these leaders have the monumental task of pleading with God for the strategy that would allow

them to exit Egypt and provide them with safety from Egypt as their new and powerful enemy but sustaining what was quite possibly three to five million souls in an unsettled wilderness only to hear them profusely complain about their conditions would have significantly tested their patience.

God knew the man He needed for the job because "the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

Perhaps the elders within a local congregation identify with this burden. Unfortunately, elderships at times become ineffective and nonresponsive in the midst of a complaint riddled congregational atmosphere. The resulting stagnation of the mission of the local church carries a tangible price of the loss of the souls of the membership through poor or absent convincing and instructional Bible teaching from the pulpit, in the classrooms, and in the homes of the membership.

No one appreciates receiving the brunt of baseless and useless hypercriticism including the men the Holy Spirit through His word has made elders (Acts 20:28). A measure of both protection and respect is put in place in the New Testament uniquely for them (1 Timothy 5:17-21).

Not only may an elder who invests a sufficient measure of his time in teaching the Word of God be finan-

cially compensated, but also none of the elders—for in the New Testament the eldership must contain a plurality of qualified men (Acts 14:23; 1 Peter 5:1)—is to receive an accusation in the absence of two or three corroborating witnesses.

When church members engage in undermining the influence of one or more of the elders through the use of hypercriticism, murmuring, and complaining the dangerous ground on which they stand should be recognized, and they need to repent before the congregation for having done so. If one thinks murmuring about the eldership is a private sin, consult the Scriptures already reviewed on the attacks against Moses and Aaron. Be mindful of their example, “Nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.” If such sins were private, their destruction certainly was public!

Scripturally qualified elders overseeing the work of the local congregation should be serving “with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

### **Business Meetings**

One expedient that can mean “boon or bane” to the local church is the business meeting. Not only congregations blessed with qualified elders but also those that do not yet have them may avert an undercurrent of murmuring by ensuring these meetings properly are advertised and conducted orderly and by doing so reap a

great harvest of constructive information and energy to propel the congregation into the future. A convenient and regular date and time can be set, a chairman selected, an agenda compiled prior to the meeting, a secretary to record the business appointed, and a predetermined amount of time allotted for the meeting.

The chairman is responsible for keeping the meeting orderly and timely. Old business is reviewed for disposition and completion; new business is presented for discussion from the predetermined agenda. The meeting closes on time; items neglected are tabled for the next meeting. The chairman or other designee can concisely relate the business discussed to the whole congregation. Although the business meeting is an expedient, the Bible enjoins “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

If someone has something to include in the meeting, out of respect for the chairman responsible for keeping the meeting orderly and timely and respecting those in attendance, he should write it down beforehand and give it to the chairman so an appropriate amount of time may be allotted should discussion on the item be needed.

Spur-of-the-moment, off-the-cuff statements sometimes can be emotionally charged and intellectually shallow requiring extra effort to understand and organize into useful input.

Thinking through concerns and ideas enough to write them down before the meeting not only helps avoid misunderstandings that might lead to unfruitful complaining but, moreover, keeps what may be an excellent idea circulating in the minds of those present.

Good leadership among all those interested enough in business matters related the Lord's church to attend a business meeting will insist on maintaining constructive guidelines like these.

### **The Preacher**

As part of the leadership of the local congregation, the preacher may be a vulnerable target for murmuring and complaining. The apostle Paul found himself "in perils among false brethren" and requested prayer from faithful brethren "that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith" (2 Corinthians 11:26; 2 Thes. 3:2).

Since the preacher has a divine charge to declare "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27, NKJV, ASV), lessons presented may from time to time challenge the attitudes and lifestyles of some within the congregation evoking dissatisfaction and disfavor toward the preacher.

While he labors under orders to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3), the murmuring member can stifle the purposes of God for that congregation.

Most preachers try very hard to be "giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed" (2 Corinthians 6:3). Yet, on one occasion even Paul had to ask, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16).

He wrote to the Philippians, "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2). Do you think that if Euodias and Syntyche had given enough serious thought to the fact that whatever it was that stood as a squabble between them was going to have their names forever recorded in an unflattering way in Holy Writ, that they could have been more charitable toward each other? A little understanding goes a long way in wholesome inter-congregational relationships.

### **Every Christian**

Every Christian has the responsibility to be "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Discord has always been an abomination in the sight of God (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The apostle John admonished, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John 11).

In this short epistle he gave a brief character study of two men (both Christians) Diotrophes and Demetrius.

Diotrephes demanded to be the center of attention in the congregation and, in addition to that, he maliciously lied against the apostles and drove certain Christians out of the church! (3 John 10). John's promise to him was ominous, "Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth." No Christian should ever think of being like him.


On the other hand, Demetrius enjoyed a "good report of all men, and of the truth itself" (3 John 12). Good judgment and true discernment should be exercised in making the choice of character because eternity is being weighed in the balance.

### Conclusion

In Numbers 14:12, when God was seriously considering destroying the Israelites for their complaining, He said to Moses, "I...will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than

they." An observation to be made is that the absence of murmuring and complaining in God's spiritual Israel today, the church of Christ, elevates the people of God to a greater standing and mightier position than those nursing feelings of injustice due to unalterable circumstances and shows undying respect for the sovereignty of the living God.

In closing, the exhortation of Paul to the Ephesians seems fitting here: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks" (Ephesians 5:1-4).



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"Therefore said he unto them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest.'"  
- LUKE 10:2

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# The People of God Mentor Each Other

Timothy Gunnells

Spiritual formation is influenced by the people of faith with whom an individual engages.<sup>1</sup> This is evident in both the Old and New Testaments. Several examples of mentoring relationships in the Old Testament bear out this truth. For instance, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, mentored him by giving him practical leadership advice. Moses then mentored Joshua, grooming him not just to lead the people but to be a servant of God (Num. 27:15-23). David and Jonathan mentored each other as peers in loyalty and friendship.<sup>2</sup> Elijah the prophet mentored Elisha to take his place (2 Kings 2).

Moses, Aaron, the priests, and the Levites were charged by God to be spiritual guides and mentors for the Israelites.<sup>3</sup> The covenant God made with the Israelites was intended to form them into a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). God expected the spiritual leaders of Israel to help form this people He had delivered from slavery into the "holy na-

tion" He desired them to become.

Jesus' understanding of community led Him to choose the twelve apostles "so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach."<sup>4</sup> Their spiritual formation within the community of the apostles, led by Jesus, was evident to the Jewish ruling council in the early days of the church.<sup>5</sup> The council was surprised by their spiritual strength. They had been spiritually formed by being mentored by Jesus, through their mutual experiences, and by the work of the Holy Spirit.

For instance, Jesus mentored them in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and solitude by not only teaching them but by practicing them Himself (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He mentored them in the discipline of hospitality (service) when He girded the towel around His waist and washed their feet.<sup>6</sup> Just like those early disciples, we become more like Christ when we practice these same spiritual disciplines.

The apostle Paul was mentored from an early age by his teacher Ga-

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<sup>1</sup> James Riley Estep, Jr., "Spiritual Formation as Social: Toward a Vygotskian Developmental Perspective", *Religious Education*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (2002), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Paul D. Stanley and Robert J. Clinton, *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), 70-71.

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 10:10.

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 3:14.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 4:13.

<sup>6</sup> John 13:5-17.

maliei.<sup>7</sup> Later, Paul's mentor was Barnabas who knew the type of environment, people, and experiences he needed to develop spiritually.<sup>8</sup>

Paul had his own mentoring relationship with Timothy (1 Timothy 1:1-2; Philippians 2:19-23) and Titus (Titus 1:1-4). By calling Timothy and Titus "true children in the faith," Paul makes it clear that he takes a personal interest in their spiritual development. Paul's view and practice is to provide role models for the spiritually formed life.<sup>9</sup> This is his instruction to Timothy and Titus and it is his practice in his writings. Paul mentors Timothy and Titus, and he expects them to mentor others (1 Tim. 4:12-16; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:6-7).

He urges the Philippians to follow his example and the example of those who follow him in conforming to Christ.<sup>10</sup> Following the example and instruction of a more mature believer is essential for an individual Christian to be spiritually formed.

The Spirit also creates and builds up the community of faith into Christ (1 Cor. 12-14). Paul stresses that the Spirit's gifts are given so that the body of Christ will function properly. He also speaks of how the church should "pursue love" and desire gifts

that build up the church (1 Cor. 14:1-4).

Ephesians 4:12-16 serves as a clear picture of some of the spiritual gifts in action. Paul uses words (in reference to church leaders using their gifts in the church) like "equipping", "building", "attain", "mature", and "grow." Christians use their talents and gifts to strengthen the body of Christ so that all aspire to the full stature of Christ.

Some of the spiritual gifts listed in Ephesians 4:12-13 have become, in many instances, "formal positions charged with forming" believers.<sup>11</sup> These gifts (sometimes referred to as offices) are for the purpose of spiritually forming other believers. What is clear in Ephesians 4 is that spiritual growth is important for the whole community, not just individual Christians.

As Paul teaches, the greatest spiritual gifts are those that edify the whole church (1 Cor. 14:2-12; Eph. 4:12). Christian spirituality is "conceived, nurtured, and realized within the body of Christ."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, true Christian spiritual formation cannot be achieved on an individual basis; it can only be achieved in the communal setting where every member utilizes

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<sup>7</sup> Reggie McNeil, *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders*. (Jossey-Bass, 2000), 37.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 9:27.

<sup>9</sup> Galindo, 418.

<sup>10</sup> Philippians 3:8-17.

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel M. Powell, *A Theology of Christian Spirituality*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 129-130.

<sup>12</sup> Stanley P. Saunders, "'Learning Christ': Eschatology and Spiritual Formation in New Testament Christianity", *Interpretation* (April 2002), 158.

his or her gift to help others mature.

When every part is “working properly,” the result is both bodily growth and spiritual building up in love (Eph. 4:16). The beautiful reality is that believers are not only united to Christ the head, they are also united, like the physical body, to all other members (Eph. 4:16).

Within the community of the church all “members touch and ‘sympathize’ with one another.”<sup>13</sup> Just like a hand must be attached to an arm, and fingers attached to a hand, so must every member of the church be attached to the rest of the body.

Two pivotal passages of Scripture where Paul addresses the role of the body of Christ in the maturing of Christians are 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Romans 12. Paul explains how each member plays a role in building each other up and, by so doing, builds up the entire body of Christ. A key phrase for Paul is: “For the body is not one member, but many.”<sup>14</sup> According to Paul, God has placed every member in the body “just as He desired.”<sup>15</sup>

Paul’s view is that one person can-

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<sup>13</sup> Arthur F. Glasser, Dean S. Gilliland, Shawn B. Redford, and Charles E. Van Engen, *Announcing the Kingdom: The Story of God’s Mission in the Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 310.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:14.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:18.

not possess all of the gifts needed to edify themselves. The gifts that belong to individual Christians serve to promote formation of the community of faith.<sup>16</sup> He emphasizes the idea that gifts are given for the building up of the body of Christ and are not meant for the individual.

In 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:8, Paul declares that gifts which are not exercised with the love of the church in mind are not being used with the proper intention. The gifts will eventually be done away with, but love will remain (1 Cor. 13:8-13). Paul further emphasizes the importance of love and the use of gifts in 1 Corinthians 14:1-4.

In Romans 12:1-13, Paul elaborates on the church’s role in spiritual formation. The members of the church were to be diligent in using their gifts for building each other up and for seeking “harmonious relations” with one another and those outside the church.<sup>17</sup>

Christians are not given gifts for selfish purposes but for serving purposes. The church was established with the idea that its members would use their gifts to spiritually form each other.

Thus, members of the body of

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<sup>16</sup> James W. Thompson, *Pastoral Ministry according to Paul: A Biblical Vision*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 124.

<sup>17</sup> Glasser, 324.

Christ are to provide an environment of love and accountability for one another, to mentor and model the spiritually mature life, and to use the gifts given by God to strengthen the individual members and thus build up the entire body.

## An Evangelistic Church

Roger Shepherd

Evangelism is one person talking to another person about his or her need for the salvation that is only in Christ with the intention of bringing him or her to a positive decision. Evangelism is personally teaching the lost. This is significant to church growth because Christianity is a taught religion. The mission of Jesus is "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). This is an imperative! He left us no choice! Therefore, I ask, "What is an evangelistic church?"

The Restoration Movement reminds us of the need for evangelism. Traverce Harrison and C. J. Sharp said, "By evangelism we do not mean merely the conduct of revival or protracted meetings. We do not mean alone the work done by professional evangelists. By evangelism we do mean the use of the word of God by as

nearly as possible every Christian to win to Christ as nearly as possible everyone who is unsaved. The thought needs to be restored and reemphasized that every minister of the gospel is an evangelist first of all, and that, second of all, every Christian is capable of being, and therefore, ought to be, a winner of souls for Christ." (Traverce Harrison and C. J. Sharp, *EVANGELISM* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, 1924), 39.)

It is little wonder why the church grew so dynamically in the first century and in the Restoration Movement. Christians taught the lost the gospel!

### A Disciple Making Church

The first church of Christ was all about making disciples. Luke said, "Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying...Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:1, 7). The "number of the disciples multiplied" because the "word of God" kept spreading. Is the church multiplying where you worship?

How do we make disciples? A disciple is a follower, pupil, learner of Jesus, and adherent to the gospel of Christ. Therefore, we encourage the lost to follow Jesus and teach them to be "obedient to the faith." They are taught to obey the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 10:17).

## A Teaching Church

Disciple making includes teaching. Disciples are not born into Christ. They are taught to follow Jesus and “observe” everything commanded by him. In the book of Acts alone there are more than ten occurrences of the disciples teaching others to be faithful followers of Jesus. Please note the following six:

1. Luke recorded “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (1:1).
2. The “Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people (4:2).
3. The disciples were asked “not to teach in the name of Jesus” (4:18).
4. The “high priest asked, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man’s blood on us!’ (5:28)
5. Disciples “daily in the temple, and in every house, did not cease teaching Jesus as the Christ” (5:42).
6. “Paul and Barnabas (*evangelists*) remained in Antioch, teaching the word of the Lord, with many others” (15:35; 28:31).

What do we learn to motivate evangelism from these passages? We learn significantly that evangelism with the early disciples was intentionally following the example of Jesus.

Teaching the gospel disturbs and threatens the growth of the enemies of Christianity and the denominational world. Christ is taught in the assembly and in every house in an evangelistic church. The church grew because preachers were involved in personal teaching and “other” Christians followed their example.

The teaching of the gospel begins with the elders or shepherds of the church. It is followed by the preachers or in better terms the evangelist. Paul told Timothy “do the work of an evangelists, fulfill your ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5). The word “evangelist” means a “proclaimer of the gospel, evangelist.” (BDAG, 403).

This is first exemplified by the preacher and elders. An evangelistic church motivates individuals to teach the gospel person to person and by group teaching such as in Acts 16:11-15 when Paul and Timothy taught a group of women of which Lydia and her household were immersed into Christ as a result.

## An Outreach Church

The evangelistic church is involved in community outreach. How was this accomplished? First, the church reached out to the community in daily evangelism. For example, “praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Second, in benevolence "all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (Acts 2:44-45). Who is needy in your community?

Evangelism outreach applies to those hungry, naked, homeless, sick, in prison, lonely, *lost*, discouraged, and millions of others! An evangelistic church reaches its community with the good news of Jesus!

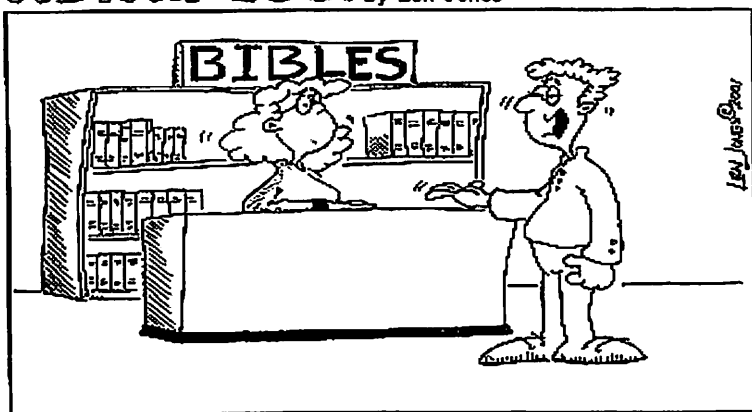
The Bible school was created to be an evangelistic outreach for the local congregation (Heb. 5:12). The Restoration reminds us that "the richest and most fruitful field for evangelism is in the Bible school. Indeed, if the school

is awake to its opportunity with an intelligent evangelistic program, it will make the early ages a period of careful preparation, so that when the proper age is reached, there will be little difficulty in winning every boy and girl to Christ." (Harrison and Sharp, 60)

## Conclusion

An evangelistic church is active in at least three areas: first, making disciples; second, personal teaching the lost and the saved; and third, reaching out the saving gospel of Jesus to the community. How does your congregation measure up the teaching of Jesus, the apostles, and the early church?

## ALTAR EGO. by Len Jones



"What I really need is a translation that won't leave me feeling guilty, convicted, or in need of making some kind of decision."

# Preaching Evangelistic Sermons

Neil Pollard

When we were students at Faulkner University, brother Wendell Winkler told us about sermons he classified as “Bring Them Down The Aisle” sermons.

These were sermons designed to convict the heart of the lost sinner and the wayward Christian, eliciting a public response. Such preaching was characteristic of the days of tent meetings, protracted meetings, and the days and years of the church flourishing in so many locations.

These sermons were made effective when combined with the evangelistic efforts of preachers and members who were “plowing the soil” during the week, softening hearts to these specially-designed sermons which taught eternal truths about the plan of salvation, the reality of the judgment, heaven, and hell, the singular, undenominational nature of the church and its organization, work, nature, and purpose, and much more of a similar vein. They were sermons designed to bring people into the obedience of the truth, to be won to Christ or restored to Him.

The place for such preaching is not dead, but rather is as pressing as ever. Along with that need is the need for the church to practice what it did in former generations to partner with such preaching. Preaching is part of

God’s saving plan (1 Cor. 1:21), but it must be accompanied by the rank and file of members practicing the Great Commission and bringing hearts and minds into alignment with the mind of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-13).

However, inasmuch as the focus of this article is evangelistic *sermons*, notice the onus placed upon the preacher in this aforementioned equation.

## **What Classifies As An Evangelistic Sermon?**

The words “evangelistic” or “evangelism” do not appear in English translations; however, it is a transliteration of the Greek word meaning “to communicate good news concerning something (in the NT a particular reference to the gospel message about Jesus)—‘to tell the good news, to announce the gospel’” (Louw-Nida, 411).

The first to do this in the New Testament was the angel Gabriel, who broke the good news of the impending birth of John to Zacharias (Luke 1:19). An angel of the Lord does the same for the shepherds concerning Christ’s birth in Luke 2:10. That word “preach” found throughout the New Testament, reveals various ones, starting with Jesus (Luke 4:43), who “proclaim the divine message of salvation” (Arndt, 402). So, generally speaking,

sermons centering on the good news of the gospel, the message of salvation, are evangelistic sermons.

Yet, we have come to think of especially persuasive, urgent sermons in that general sphere, like the sermons preached by Peter in Acts 2 and 3, Stephen in Acts 7, Philip in Acts 8, or Paul in Acts 17, as examples, as more pointedly persuasive in their evangelistic thrust. Paul makes a defense for such preaching in places like Romans 10:10-17 and 1 Corinthians 1:21-24.

### **How Does One Construct An Evangelistic Sermon?**

Great texts of the Bible which especially persuade the lost person about the nature of God, the grace of God, the sacrifice of Christ, the eternal plan of redemption, the nature of man, the purpose of man, the sin of man, and the duty of man are excellent places to launch from in order to build such a sermon.

Consider Revelation 21 with regard to heaven, Luke 12:41-48 with regard to hell, Matthew 25:31-46 or 2 Corinthians 5 with regard to the judgment, Mark 15 or one of the other gospel accounts with regard to the crucifixion, Acts 2 with regard to the establishment of the church, Matthew 16:13-18 regarding the nature of Christ and His church, or passages like 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 or 2 Peter 2:19-22 regarding disobedience and its consequences. Mining those texts and exposing the content provides a powerful, textual way to lay God's

mind before the hearers and convict them of its truth.

As with any other type of sermon, finding appropriate, fresh illustrations and making relevant application will amplify the great truths of those passages and subjects.

### **Why Does One Choose An Evangelistic Sermon?**

One simple reason is "balance." There must exist a balance in what we preach. All sermons should not be devoted to church members' needs, felt or otherwise. There is a vital place for sermons which reach to the hearts of all estranged from Christ. Another reason is "growth."

Churches which do not appeal to the lost or appeal to the saved to reach the lost are almost certainly stagnant, declining bodies. As evangelism is God's means of growing His church, what are we doing who avoid such lessons?

A third reason is "motivation." Not every motive is equal with others. Surely love will be one's highest motivation to serve God, but there is room for other motives. Duty is a proper motive (1 Cor. 9:16). So is the terror of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:11). All that the Lord provides for us as motivation is fodder for sermon material. Evangelistic sermons lay out these various motivations.

Evangelistic sermons may be exegetical, expository, textual, bibliographical, or topical. Yet, as we have



seen, they have a central place in the pulpits of every local congregation.

May we be convicted of the loss-ness of the lost and reach their hearts through "the foolishness of preaching."

## *Remembering Flavil Nichols*

(1919-2018)

Scott Harp

Flavil Hall Nichols was born near Carbon Hill, Alabama, February 2, 1919. He was the third child, and first son of Gus and Matilda Nichols. Named for a gospel preacher from Hall's Valley, Georgia, Flavil Joseph Hall (1876-1952), it seemed with the environment of his influence that preaching was to be his life's work. He preached his first sermon at the age of fifteen.

For a time, brother Nichols studied in Hal P. McDonald's Business College in Jasper, Alabama. He later attending Freed-Hardeman University for two years, and completed the third-year preacher tract that the college offered in 1939. He continued his studies for a time at the University of North Alabama, and later at Beville State Community College. In 1962, he finished a Dale Carnegie Course in salesmanship.

While a student at Freed-Hardeman, he met Mary Hardin of Rector, Arkansas. After graduation, the two of them were married, November 28, 1939. They were blessed with two children, Jimmy Mardell born May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1951, and Peggy Jean (Champion) born December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1952.

Within a short time after preaching his first sermon, Flavil Nichols was preaching regularly. In March of 1935 he reported to the *Gospel Advocate* that he had preached somewhere every Sunday since the previous October. He included among the locations as Manchester, Dora, Gorgas, Eldridge, Berea, Oak Grove, Flat Creek, Bethel, and Winfield (all in Alabama).

In 1937, he and his father attended the first annual lectures program at Freed-Hardeman College. Except for one year, due to inclement weather, he attended the lectures for around seventy-five years, and would have continued had his health allowed. A highlight of every year of his adult life was his annual trip to Henderson, Tennessee for the Lectureship.

During his time at Freed-Hardeman as a student, he sought every opportunity possible to preach gospel meetings, and at other locations as time and opportunity afforded itself. Over the years of his labor, he preached in more than twenty states, two foreign countries, and on fifteen different brotherhood Lectureships.

Among the congregations of

churches of Christ he served was the church in Tuckerman, Ark., 1939-40, Fayette, Berry and Hamilton, Ala., 1941, Tuscumbia, 4th St., 1942-46, Fairview, Birmingham, 1947-49, Belview Heights, Birmingham, 1949-52, Ridgedale, Chattanooga, 1952-57, Allen and Edgewood, Jackson, 1957-1962; 7th and College, Mayfield. Ky. 1962-1967; East Walker, Alabama, 1967-1977; College View, Elizabethtown, Ky, 1977-1983; Sixth Avenue, Jasper, Alabama, 1983-1989. In many of the places he preached, he conducted daily radio programs, and for four years he conducted weekly television broadcasts. He preached full-time for 58 years and continued preaching well into his retirement years on lecture-ship programs, in gospel meetings, and assisting churches who needed him.

Brother Nichols participated in four public religious debates during the years of his ministry. He debated Mr. Scoggins (Baptist), in 1937, on the subject of "Faith Only" and "Baptism." He also debated Mr. Pipkin (Oneness Holiness), in 1947, on "The Godhead." He was also involved in two others. Over the years he moderated in several debates involving his father.

Adding to his many talents was his very capable pen. He wrote reports on his meeting work to the *Firm Foundation* and the *Gospel Advocate*. Several articles were also published in these journals, as well as, *Spiritual Sword*, *The World Evangelist*, and other

brotherhood magazines. In the later years of his father's life, he served as associate editor of *Words of Truth*. After the passing of brother Gus Nichols, he served as editor until May 1976 when Bobby Duncan (1934-1999) took on that role. He continued to be an associate editor of the paper until 1983 when he became sole editor. He served in this role until May 1989. Several books were published while he served as partner in the Nichols Brothers Publishing Co.

For a number of years brother Nichols served as Director of the annual Gus Nichols-Words of Truth Lectureship at Sixth Avenue church of Christ. He also served on the Board of Directors for the children's home at Childhaven, Cullman, AL. He was also a member of the Board of Trustees for Faulkner University (formerly Alabama Christian College), Montgomery, AL.

On January 15, 2004, sister Mary Nichols passed away and was buried in the Circle of Honor next to Flavil's parents in Walker Memory Gardens, north of Jasper. The two were in their sixty-fifth year of marriage.

For the last years of his life, brother Flavil lived in northeast Huntsville, with his daughter Peggy and her husband Don Champion. He thoroughly enjoyed his opportunities to be near his three grandchildren.

Brother Nichol's health declined over the last couple of years of his life, passing away at around 2 pm on

Saturday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2018. A family visitation followed on Monday the 30<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-8:00 pm at Kilgore-Green Funeral Home in Jasper, AL. The funeral was Tuesday May 1<sup>st</sup> at 11:00 am at Sixth Avenue church of Christ in Jasper. Burial followed, between his wife and his parents in the Circle of Honor, Walker Memory Gardens.

Only eternity will see the extent of good this man and his family have given the church of our Lord. No finer spirit could be found in a man than that which dwelled in Flavil Nichols.

## Thoughts on Conducting Funerals

Joshua Dement

As a funeral director I have witnessed the good, the bad, and the ugly when it comes to preachers. Preachers can be a funeral director's best friend or their worst nightmare. Due to the fact that conducting funerals falls within the responsibilities of a gospel preacher, we should know how to do it and how to do it well.

From my experiences on both sides of this subject, as both a minister and a funeral director, I would like to share some information that will benefit you as a preacher when you conduct funerals.

- 1) Arrive early. There is nothing more frustrating for a grieving family, nor for the funeral director, than to have a preacher who runs late or arrives at the last minute.
- 2) Have your order of services written or typed out and available to the funeral director. And PLEASE stick with your order of service!
- 3) If you plan to read the obituary, make sure you know how to pronounce all the names listed therein. If you question a pronunciation, ask the family or the funeral director.
- 4) Unless the family requests your presence, let them meet with the



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The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses,  
entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Tim 2:2

funeral director alone to make the arrangements. Too often the preacher is an unwelcomed addition in the arrangement conference and generally causes more problems than he solves.

- 5) If there are other people participating in the service, fellow minister, eulogist, singers, etc., speak with them prior to arriving for the service. A well prepared minister makes for a well prepared and well executed funeral.
- 6) Remember that you are the preacher not the funeral director. You are there to offer words of comfort and support to the family. The funeral director is there to "direct" the funeral. In other words, the funeral director is in charge...you are not.
- 7) Honor the family's wishes. Unless a request is deemed as inappropriate, honor what the family wants. You may not like their choice of songs, their choice of times, their choice of the order, their choice of fellow officiant, or even their choice of funeral home, but it is not your call. Allow the family to honor their loved one as they wish, and simply be appreciative of their asking you to speak.
- 8) Do not turn the funeral into a gospel meeting. Funerals are not times for evangelizing. Unless a family asks you to preach a sermon, keep the focus only on the deceased.

9) If you are officiating with a denominational preacher do not speak against his beliefs. There is a time and place for that and a funeral is not the place.

10) If you do not know where the cemetery is do not try to lead the procession. This one should be common sense, but sadly with many it is not.

11) If there are military honors presented at the graveside do not interject yourself into their service...even if you served in the military. THEY are the honor guard, not you.

12) At the graveside be mindful of the weather. If it is hot, cold, rainy, etc., people do not want to sit and listen to another sermon. Do the most of your talking at the funeral home or church building. When you get to the cemetery keep it short and sweet.

13) NEVER say that the deceased is in Heaven! Even if they were strong and faithful Christian people, the scriptures teach that we do not go straight to Heaven. The faithful are carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom or as Jesus called it, "Paradise." The unrighteous will close their eyes in death and open their eyes in torment.

These are just a few of the things that we as ministers can do to better ourselves as funeral speakers. Do not overstep your bounds. Honor the wishes of the family. Never be afraid to ask questions.

# The Home as God Would Have It

## Ephesians 5:33 – 6:4

The home is a divine institution (Genesis 2:7, 8, 15, 18, 22-24), and should be governed divine rules (Romans 7:1-3). Sin wrecked the home, and still wrecks homes today.

A look at your home is a look at your life. We are talking the home, not as Hollywood would have it, but as God would have it.

### **I. Two Great Principles That Should Be Known:**

- A. Authority. Genesis 18:19, (Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2; Proverbs 1:7-9; Eph.6:2).
- B. Example. Matthew 5:14-16. Children learn by observation.

### **II. Two Great Forces in the Home:**

- A. Husband and father.
  - 1. Head and provider. 2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Timothy 5:8.
  - 2. Measure of love: sacrificial, caring, unbreakable. Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33.
  - 3. He is to put into the children's mind a respect for the Lord and discipline with fairness. Colossians 3:1
- B. Wife and Mother.
  - 1. And exalted position. Proverbs 31:10.
  - 2. Her role has been assigned by God. Titus 2:4, 5; Ephesians 5:22, 24, 33.

### **III. These Principles and Forces Make For:**

- A. Peace. Matthew 12:25; Proverbs 19:13; 21:9; 25:24; 27:15.
- B. Piety. (Reverence for God) 1 Timothy 5:4
- C. Purity. 1 Timothy 5:22
- D. Love. Proverbs 15:17
- E. Devotion. Deuteronomy 4:9; Proverbs 22:6; 1 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.

The home has been called "The vestibule of heaven"; it also could be called "The vestibule of hell!"

Is your home and home governed by God's will?

- Mike Kiser

## Brown Trail School of Preaching Searching for New Director

From the School's Website: Robert Stapleton passed on to his eternal reward on the 31st of December, 2017. He faithfully served as our director for 13 years and worked with the school for a total of 15 years. We greatly appreciate his service, and we are deeply missing him.

The elders are currently searching for a new director. Please keep them in your prayers as they search for the right man to fill this position.

Heath Stapleton is serving as the interim director. He is available for presentations on behalf of the school and preaching engagements.

## 70 AD Debate

Bill Lockwood will be debating Holger Neubauer on the subject of the second and final coming of Christ in AD 70.

The debate will take place June 11-12 at the church building of the Iowa Park congregation in Iowa Park, Texas. Check out their website and Facebook page for recordings of the debate.

## *Upcoming Events at West Fayetteville*

June will be a busy month for the West Fayetteville church of Christ in Fayetteville, TN. Our Summer Series, Gospel Meeting, and VBS will occur during this month. Make plans to attend if you are able.

**June 6-August 29:** Summer Series on Wednesday Evenings

**June 10-13:** Gospel Meeting with Mike Hixson of Olive Branch, MS

**June 17-20:** VBS

**West Fayetteville church of Christ**

**24 Boonshill Road**

**Fayetteville, TN 37334**

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## Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies

Classes for the summer term will begin June 4 at three locations: Meades Chapel in Nashville (Monday), Smyrna in Culleoka (Monday), College Grove (Thursday). Classes start at 6 pm.

# **The West Fayetteville Church of Christ**

## **Service Times**

Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 am

Sunday Worship: 10:30 am

Sunday Evening Worship: 6:00 pm

Wednesday Evening Worship: 7:00 pm

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# Gospel Gleaner

*For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



## Characteristics of a Strong Church

*What Makes a Strong Church Strong?*

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## **“The Churches of Christ Greet You” (Romans 16:16)**

The West Fayetteville Church of Christ is pleased to bring you the *Gospel Gleaner*. Are you familiar with the churches of Christ? Have you ever attended our services before?

Faithful churches of Christ desire to return to the New Testament and to be the church of the Bible. In the Bible, we find that the church is the assembly of all those who have been called out of the darkness of sin by obeying the gospel. These souls are added by God to the spiritual body of Christ, which is His church (Acts 2:42, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23).

The church belongs to Christ. It is His church. We, therefore, seek to honor Christ as our Lord in our worship, teaching, and daily walk.

One can be added to this sacred assembly and spiritual kingdom by hearing the gospel preached (Romans 10:17); believing the facts concerning Christ as revealed in the gospel (John 8:24); repenting of sin (Luke 13:3, 5); confessing faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10); and by being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:11-13; Galatians 3:26-27) to wash sins away by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 1:7).

For more information about the church, or God’s plan of salvation, we offer free Bible correspondence courses and personal Bible studies. Call or write to us.

### **The Gospel Gleaner**

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Andy Erwin, Editor

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com). The West Fayetteville Church of Christ reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, notes, and articles to publish.

## **Gospel Gleaner**

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### **WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE**

**Stephen Bradd**

*Clinton, Illinois*

**Raymond Elliott**

*Prattville, Alabama*

**Andy Erwin**

*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

**David Hester**

*Montgomery, Alabama*

**Mike Kiser**

*Sylcauga, Alabama*

**James R. McGill**

*Nashville, Tennessee*

**Tom McLemore**

*Selma, Alabama*

**David Pharr**

*Rock Hill, South Carolina*

**John T. Polk, II**

*Oneida, Tennessee*

**Andy Robison**

*Moundsville, West Virginia*

**Roger Shepherd**

*Montgomery, Alabama*

## **Personal Evangelism**

Andy Erwin

The Lord's church will grow in any place, and at any time, if each member of a congregation will work together to save souls. By everyone doing a little, together we can do a lot.

For example, let's take a congregation that numbers 100 in attendance on Sunday morning. Of this 100, let's say seventy persons are Christians. If these seventy souls will each determine to bring just one soul to Christ in the next year, in one year, the church will number at least 170 for the same services. If they teach those they have taught to do the same, in two years, they could number at least 310 for the same services. This plan will work in congregations of 20, 200, or 2,000.

In order for more Christians to become evangelistic, many will have to change their attitude and understanding of the church and what it means to be a Christian. Saving souls is a subject about which no Christian can afford to be indifferent.

### **Being an Evangelistic Church**

We must also realize there is a great difference in being a church that supports evangelistic efforts and being an evangelistic church. While, every church should support evangelistic efforts according to their opportunities and abilities (Galatians 6:10), we must never settle for merely being support-

ive of evangelistic efforts. Until the local church itself becomes evangelistic, it will not reach its soul-winning potential.

Personal evangelism is not a work that can be done by proxy. We cannot place our responsibility upon another. The careless attitude so many have toward evangelism is sad indeed. "Church" is for many nothing more than a social exercise. Any hope for a spiritual experience has long sense faded.

### **The Priority of Preaching**

Brother A.T. Pate used to say, "God had but one Son, and He made Him a preacher." Let us realize and prioritize the importance of preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom.

For our Lord, no other facet of His personal ministry was as important as preaching the gospel. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, He taught Nicodemus to be born again. This is crux of the Christian message to the world. A man can and must be born again.

As Christians, no other work should come before the proclamation of this message. For the apostles, no other work came first. When the dispute arose between Grecian and Jewish widows (Acts 6), the apostles would not leave the ministry of the word to wait on tables (v.2). Nothing

was more important to them than the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

We can rid the world of hunger and even cure cancer, and still not add a single soul to kingdom if we do not teach them the gospel of Christ. Good works alone do not save souls and we simply cannot stop at good works.

Sometimes we might hear a person say that he does his preaching and teaching by setting a good example. We have probably heard the old saying, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear a sermon any day." Such sentiments are usually spoken by goodhearted and fine people. However, the reasoning is insufficient to the task at hand. A person can never learn how to be born again unless they are taught the commandments of the gospel (Acts 8:31; Romans 10:14-17).

Paul was a great gospel preacher who taught others by what they "learned and received, **and heard, and saw**" in him (Philippians 4:9). We want the world to see Christ living in us *and* to hear the gospel of Christ coming from us. Being a faithful Christian requires our loving in deed and truth (1 John 3:18).

### **Conclusion**

Strong churches will be dedicated to personal evangelism. Let us honor our Lord by keeping His mission and ministry alive. Let us realize that being a faithful Christian requires a commitment to His cause.

# Developing Future Elders

Roger Shepherd

The most significant work in the world is being an elder in the Lord's church! Paul said, "it is a fine (good, honorable) work", one whose heart's desire to be a leader of God's people (1 Tim. 3:1).

I have worked forty-five years with young men who aspire to be preachers and elders. The idea they express in the type of leadership desired in the twenty-first century is participatory (shepherding).

Shepherding transforms the people of God into servants. It is time to change what is not working successfully in the church. I was once taught a good model of leadership which said, "That the church will never get to heaven riding a dead horse!" These leaders were willing to change methods when one failed, even leadership styles. They would even change the leader if necessary.

What is leadership? I asked people from the young men in Future Preachers Training Camps to senior adults at church and the following are the most common answers: One, a leader is a man who leads. He is out front or the head of a team. Two, a leader is a man who has a following. A leader without a following is only taking a walk. Three, a leader is a man guiding or directing the service of others. Four, a leader is a principal

player of an organization or team. He is in front of the team showing the way to work. Five, a leader is a person of determination and action. Six, a leader is a person with vision and a mission. Seven, a leader is one with goals. Eight, a leader is one who trains others to take his place. How are these men developed today?

## Develop Quality Elders

Most people do not desire to be managed. They want "a spiritual leader." Therefore, people desire shepherding to develop spirituality. Leadership is not the ability to achieve a position. Those who work toward a position, rank, or title upon arrival only think they have become a leader, experience the frustration of a few followers, and never develop their leadership skills. A leader is not a boss that takes little skill. It takes skill, personality, character, and servant hood to be an effective leader! The church must develop spiritual men beginning early in life.

In experience of ministry and training young men, the church has a lack of spiritual leaders for two reasons. First, very few men "desire" the work of an elder or church leader (1Tim. 3:1). The word for "desire" means to earnestly aspire to do the work from an inward impulse (heart or spirit) rather than the glory of an

outward object (honor of men or position). It is the man who has his heart right with God and desires to work as a spiritual shepherd. For example, Paul wrote: "you who are spiritual restore such a one (fallen Christian) in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1). Second, the church has not developed men in regard to quality of character and ability to do the work (1 Tim. 3:2-7).

In respect to the leader's ability to lead he must have at least three qualifications: 1) able to "shepherd, feed, or take care of the church"; 2) "able to teach"; 3) "have children who are believers" (Titus 1:9-11); 4) able to "delegate the care of others to be managed down to other leaders such as deacons."

### **Develop Servants without Hierarchy**

Hierarchy means any system of persons ranked one above another such as a "Pastor" or "Head Elder"; government by religious rulers; the power of a hierarchy; ruling by an elite group; and ecclesiastical officials in successive ranks or orders. The challenge for the church is evaluating this style of leadership as valid in seeking to reach the contemporary society with servant, participatory elders.

Elders are challenged to sacrifice values for power and expediency. Hierarchy enables leaders to ignore the needs of the people for dominion.

The idea of hierarchal leadership lives on in the contemporary world today. "Leadership is readily seen in the contemporary concepts of pastoral care, pastoral counseling, and Christian psychology."<sup>1</sup>

In the church it is seen in the "head elder" philosophy. It is a "Do as I say, not as I do" type of leadership. This idea is as old as the first century of early believers emerging from ancient Egypt, Babylon, and Persia. It was later carried over into the Greek and Roman culture where it was perfected.

"The social world into which Christianity spread was governed by a single ruler-the emperor. Soon after Constantine took the throne in the early fourth century, the church became a full-fledged, top-down, hierarchically organized society."<sup>2</sup>

God gave the church "pastors" (Eph. 4:11-12) or shepherds (1 Pet. 5:1-4) who lead under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus for church growth. Shepherding is not a hierarchy.

### **Develop Transformational Leadership**

Christ challenged His listeners to stay young in their thinking, to accept truth with audacious minds (John 8:32). The church is challenged to march toward a transformational style of leadership building on the strengths

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Viola and George Barna in *Pagan Christianity? Exploring The Roots of Our Church Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Tyndale, 2008), 134.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

of others. Leaders raise the awareness of organizational goals and consequences of not reaching these goals. Elders enable the people to transcend their own self-interest for the interest of others (Phil 2:4).

The church in the contemporary society is challenged with transformational change. In biblical terms transformation denotes a change in directions. Paul used this term to mean a physical change by the renewing of the believer's attitude and mind to serve (Rom. 12:1-8).

Leaders that succeed remember when they encounter a problem along the way; change their direction, but not their destination. The believer that can change his thoughts can change the world. To survive, congregations must periodically change to meet the challenges of a changing world. People within the organization must also change beginning with leaders.

### **Develop a Ministry Leadership**

New Testament ecclesiology is biblical, according to the teaching of the Bible, historical-value in what has taken place in past cultures to equip Christians for the contemporary culture, the gospel being translated into culture, and new insights concerning the doctrine of Christ will convert the church to its true mission.

However, people today are not so much wary of church as they are wary of churches that do not practice what they preach. This generation church

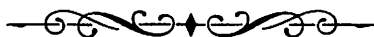
will be highly organized and structured operating with spiritually gifted leaders to rely heavily on ministries with emphasis on relationships (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

Elders should emphasize realness, holistic worship and service, knowledge, relationships, and doctrine, while having a great respect for the traditions without going beyond the teaching of Christ.

### **Conclusion**

People want godly leadership. They want to know how much the leader cares before knowing how much he knows. Christians want the opportunity to be heard to express their ideas and knowledge of a particular ministry. When these opportunities are granted, they will produce their best. Followers are led to think and do what is right having their needs met. This begins with transforming them spiritually.

God taught participatory, servant, and transformational leadership to Moses and he led Israel to great success (Exodus 18). The church is a better place to minister with a biblical model of leadership.



# Doctrinal Preaching

Tom McClemore

It seems that some disparage “doctrinal preaching” and belittle those whom they consider to engage in “doctrinal preaching.” One gets the impression that many of those who are in the pew today are not interested in “doctrinal preaching.”

## What Is Doctrinal Preaching?

What do these folks consider to be “doctrinal preaching?” Do they consider it to be preaching that declares the matters which distinguish New Testament Christianity from denominationalism? Do they consider it to be preaching that condemns worldliness and immorality and that contends for the truth of the Bible in the face of political correctness? What do they consider to be “non-doctrinal preaching?” Do they not consider it to be preaching about the things with which everyone who claims to be a Christian would agree? Preaching that makes everyone who hears feel good about themselves as they are?

The word “doctrine” simply means “teaching.” Anyone who *preaches* anything is *teaching* something. One cannot *preach* without *teaching* something, and therefore, ALL preaching is in this sense “doctrinal preaching.” The issue lies in the fact that some preaching includes *false* teaching (teaching that is contrary to, or in addition to, what the New Testament

reveals) and some preaching is *incomplete* in teaching (teaching some things that are revealed in the New Testament to the neglect of other things).

Jesus preached, and what he preached was his doctrine or teaching (Matthew 7:28; 22:33; Mark 1:22; 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; Luke 4:32; John 7:16; 18:19). Jesus was a *doctrinal* preacher. He is the model in all things, and preachers would do well to look to him as the model for their preaching. The apostles preached, and what they preached was their doctrine or teaching (Acts 2:42; 5:28; 2 Tim. 3:10). *New Testament* preaching is *doctrinal* preaching. No one can preach anything from the New Testament without preaching *doctrine*.

## The New Testament Emphasis on Doctrine

Regardless of impressions and trends, the fact remains that the New Testament is the God breathed, authoritative, exclusive, and all-sufficient declaration of teaching or doctrine (2 Timothy 3:14-17). Every word of it is *doctrine* (*teaching*), and this fact implies that the New Testament, and all of it, is to be preached by preachers who would promote the cause of Christ. When they preach



any of it and all of it, they are preaching *doctrine*.

The New Testament emphasizes doctrine (teaching). References are made to "the doctrine" or "the teaching" (John 7:17; Acts 13:12; Romans 16:17; 1 Timothy 4:16; 6:1, 3; Titus 1:9; 2:10; 2 John 9). This doctrine is "the standard of teaching" (Romans 6:17). It is the *sound* doctrine (1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) and the *good* doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6). It is *God's* doctrine (1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:10; cf. John 17:7), and it stands against *every wind* of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14), whether doctrines of *men* (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:22), doctrines of *demons* (1 Timothy 4:1), or *strange* doctrines (Hebrews 13:9). No other doctrine is to be taught (1 Timothy 1:3).

This doctrine is "the faith" (Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Romans 1:5; 2 Corinthians 13:5; Galatians 1:23; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:23; 2:7; 1 Timothy 1:2; 3:9, 13; 4:1, 6; 5:8; 6:10, 21; 2 Timothy 3:8; 4:7; Titus 1:13; 3:15; James 2:1; 1 Peter 5:9; Revelation 14:12). The faith has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

This doctrine is "the truth" (2 Corinthians 4:2; Galatians 2:5, 14; 3:1; 5:7; Ephesians 4:15, 21; Colossians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:4; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5; 2 Timothy 4:4; Hebrews 10:26; James 5:19; 1 Peter 1:22).

### **The Necessity for Modern Preachers to Preach New Testament Doctrine**

Many passages could be considered in identifying the need for modern preachers to preach New Testament doctrine, but Ephesians 4 may serve to make the point. This passage illustrates the necessity of preaching *the doctrine* and *all of the doctrine*. Paul emphasizes "the unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3). This unity of the Spirit is unity in *doctrine* (i.e., "the unity of the faith," Ephesians 4:13). That doctrine must be preached as a means of leading the church to the unity of the faith. The unity of the faith is the genuine unity of the Spirit, and it fulfills God's purpose for the church.

The major doctrines of the faith are listed by Paul in Ephesians 4:4-6. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." Today, many preachers emphasize some of these doctrines to the neglect of others. It is not enough to preach one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, and one God. One body, one faith, and one baptism are also involved in the unity of the faith.

We cannot have ANY of these unless we have ALL of them. Some who claim to be New Testament Christians are not preaching the New Testament doctrines of "one body"

and “one baptism.” Preaching a Lord who has more than one body is not preaching the Lord of which we read in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18). The “one Lord” has only “one body,” and the “one Lord” commands the “one baptism” which is administered in his name (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38; 10:48). The “one Spirit” dwells only in the “one body” (1 Corinthians 3:16), and the “one baptism” that the “one Spirit” teaches is into the “one body” exclusively (1 Corinthians 12:13). The “one hope that belongs to your call” is the hope to which God has called people in the “one body” (Colossians 3:15).

Preaching a Spirit whose revelation provides for *more than one faith* is not preaching the Spirit of which we read in the New Testament (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2:13). Preaching a God and Father who has children who *have not been baptized* is not preaching the God and Father of which we read in the New Testament (Galatians 3:26, 27). Preaching a God and Father, a Lord, and a Spirit other than those revealed in the New Testament does not represent a call to *the hope* revealed in the New Testament. Yet, such preaching goes on continually, promising a hope to the hearers that it cannot deliver!

It may be that what detractors consider to be “doctrinal preaching” is not heard in the big, thriving, metropolitan churches. No doubt many

preachers who desire for the congregation they serve to draw large crowds of participants and for all who attend to feel good have been moved to abandon “doctrinal preaching.”

Whatever preachers may preach from the Scriptures, at the end of the day, if hearers have not been taught to be baptized into Christ and into the “one body” and have not been taught to believe and to practice what the New Testament church believed and practiced, *all is in vain*.

The church needs *doctrinal* preaching today. The church must have preaching of ALL of the doctrine today.



*This picture was taken in Savannah, Tennessee on July 4, 2018.*

*“You shall know them by their fruits”  
(Matthew 7:16)*

# Dedicated Servants

Andy Robison

Timothy may have heard Paul preach through the ruckus that accompanied the apostle's first trip to Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:6-20), but the entrance of the young servant into the Paul's life would come in Paul's second appearance (Acts 16:1-3).

This young disciple had been trained in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:14-15), apparently by his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5), and had a good reputation in his area (Acts 16:1). Paul was inclined to take this man on the journey of mission work, but something needed done first. Being the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man made Timothy an outcast in the eyes of many of the zealous Jews. Paul "took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region" (Acts 16:3).

Here is an indication of commitment. A young adult male was willing to have painful surgery just so the gospel he was carrying would be more appealing to the folks to whom he was preaching. He did not want to be a stumbling block to Jews who still believed it necessary (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

Dedication further characterized Timothy's life. He was with Paul off and on through remaining journeys (Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess.

1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). He was characterized by Paul as one who worked for the Lord (1 Cor. 16:10), and a son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 1:22). He was lauded by Paul for his selfless sincerity (Phil. 2:19-21). On that occasion, he was being sent by the imprisoned apostle to spiritually care for the Philippian brethren. No one else could match his qualifications of character (Phil. 2:20).

Yet, there was another man who almost died taking care of Paul in the name of the Lord. Epaphroditus had brought a gift from the Philippians to Paul (Phil. 4:18), and while ministering to him, became so sick that he almost died (Phil. 2:25-30).

Although the apostle Paul knew those who were insincere and even maliciously ambitious (Phil. 2:21; 1:15-17), he also knew some very dedicated servants.

The church is supposed to be separate from the world (John 17:15; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). There is supposed to be a distinction of behavior that impresses even critics (1 Cor. 5; 1 Pet. 2:15). Most often, there is. Most often, those in the Lord's church practice a higher moral standard than the profane world around them. Yet, sometimes, those even with higher

morals lack a dedication that is needed in the kingdom.

One must be very cautious not to judge another man's heart, unless the fruits of life make plainly manifest either the goodness or corruption (Matt. 7:1-5, 15-20; John 7:24). Some generalizations might be speculated, though, based on behavior patterns throughout a preaching career.

I thus sometimes wonder if even some long-standing members of the Lord's church could be a little more dedicated to the work. Questions upon which I sometimes ruminate include:

- Are there Christians raised by godly parents who, though duly baptized, lack the zeal their parents or grandparents had when they were first converted out of the world? Are they the kind of people who are at services Sunday morning simply because that is habit—the thing to do on Sunday morning before going to Grandma's house to eat?
- Are there church members who spend more time arguing their way out of responsibility than they do living up to the expectations their talents have afforded them? They argue against the need for any attendance other than the Sunday morning service. They downgrade elders who try to call them to higher levels of dedication. They criticize the works of the church. Yet, in all this, they never ask what they can

do to help, nor ever seem eager to study in the company of brethren. Do they know they are to spend eternity together in heaven?

- Is apathy the problem that will kill yet another movement of godliness in a luxurious society? As the Laodiceans were good for nothing due to their wealthily lukewarm nature (Rev. 3:14-22), do these brethren find more comfort from couches than pews, from shows than studies, from entertainment than involvement?

Nearly thirty years ago, I was sent to a small-town mission work that was dying. A church that had invested much in this work was concerned if there could be anything to do to save it and so sent me to evaluate. My job was to contact remaining members of the church, preach on Sunday, and take an inventory of the property. The condition of the property (meeting house and preacher's home) was depressing enough, but the response of the few remaining members was more disheartening.

Many were busy; many gave the regular excuses. As a young man, however, one particular conversation impacted me. Speaking on a pay-phone (remember those?) to a man whom I believe had been a leader in that congregation, I heard him say phrases like, "Well, my wife and I go to the college football games on Saturdays, and we often stay overnight, so we really can't help out until foot-

ball season is over, and we're not sure we can, then."

The church in that community folded not long thereafter. Though the devil's tentacles are many, I would still trace much of the reason for that church's demise back to the single problem of apathy. People just did not care to work.

This decade, I traveled in my work for three and one-half years, speaking somewhere different every Sunday. I was privileged to meet good, hard-working people, who often labored strenuously to keep a shrinking church going. Though these few were zealous and hard-working, the churches suffered from declining numbers and waning interest.

Many factors may have played roles. A devastated economy kept workers from moving in and kept the young people going out. They went off to college and had nothing at home to which to return. The numbers of deaths mounted. These were more than lame excuses; they were good reasons these congregations struggled.

Still I wonder if a defeated spirit of apathy reigned in some places. We went through the motions; we worshiped in truth. Although, again, one cannot be sure of hearts and/or all causes of a phenomenon, it seemed to me that half-hearted Christianity was often an unnamed culprit—perhaps the proverbial elephant in the room

(that everybody sees, but no one dares mention).

Society's leanings play a role in these things. Due to America's secularization, there are more atheists and agnostics than there are people concerned with true spirituality. Although we may sow and water, and sow and water, and sow and water, sometimes the seeds just hit the hardened highway, and its careless travelers flippantly pass.

Still, one reasonably wonders if some of the Bible-class skipping, Sunday morning only, late-in, early-out crowd would take some cues from Timothy and Epaphroditus, if the work might not only survive, but progress. If some would help with the burden of dedicated elders, work to make one another's jobs easier, how much would love be engendered? How could outreach and service to the community be multiplied if more people realized the dedication required of true servants of God?

The part about which I do not wonder is this: All Christians need to be dedicated wholly, and repent of any possible half-heartedness. Jesus demands all (Luke 9:23-24; 14:25-35; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

If the church will thrive again, if there will be revival, if Christians will "hold forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:16 KJV), the collective whole will need individuals who are willing to step up their devotion to the Lord.

# Unity

David Hester

In September 2010, Christopher Hitchens—then the world’s most prominent atheist—came to Birmingham, AL to debate the existence of God. Prior to the debate, he was interviewed by local media. Asked why he was an atheist, he gave an interesting reason. Hitchens noted the many divisions in the religious world, and (correctly) said that they all cannot be right. But, he then said that would mean that only one could be right, if there is a God and the Bible is His Word—a conclusion Hitchens rejected out of hand (likely because of him equating that with the Roman Catholic Church, which he hated). Thus, he rejected all religion and became an atheist.

The current state of affairs in Christendom spawns atheism and agnosticism. While we strongly disagree with the now deceased Hitchens on the existence of God, can he be faulted for seeing through the disunity that exists in religion?

Religious unity is not a pipedream; something that is good to philosophize about, but impossible in practice. If it weren’t feasible, the Savior would not have made it a focus of his prayer in John 17. Creeds, catechisms, confessions of faith (whether written or unwritten)—these are the impediments to true unity.

In Ephesians 4:1-6, the apostle Paul sets forth the platform for unity. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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.”

Much focus has (rightly) been given to verses 4-6, which describe the action of unity; yet, not as much has been said about verses 1-3, which describe the attitude of unity. There cannot be true unity without proper attitude! Paul begs them to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” The Christian life is a walk with God, and with others.

- “Lowliness” indicates the spirit of humility that must be present in every child of God.
- “Gentleness” describes the disposition that we must display to all people, but especially fellow Christians.
- “Longsuffering” sets forth how far the child of God is to go in

disagreements with fellow Christians.

- Likewise, “bearing with one another in love” further buttresses this thought. We must be willing to go far beyond the norm, or what is expected. Are we facilitators of unity, or division?
- “Endeavoring (making every effort—dh) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is a very critical phrase. Unity is not something that we bring about; it is the work of the Spirit, when the Spirit’s words (from the New Testament) are carried out. We must make every effort, in love, to maintain that unity! Again—are we willing to make that effort?

In all too many cases, congregational disputes are commonplace. And, in the vast majority of those disputes, the root cause is brethren not following the inspired instruction of Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3. If those traits described by the apostle are followed, unity in love will result.

The exhortation by Paul in Romans 14 concerning matters of no consequence is vital along these lines. “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19).

When we put our own egos aside, our wants and wishes will take a backseat to the maintenance of unity. Without the attitude described in

Ephesians 4:1-3, formality and cold ritualism result. The spirit of popery thrives in such a fetid swamp. That being said, unity cannot be achieved by attitude alone. Thus, the apostle continues his description of how it can be practiced.

“There is one body.” In verses 4-6, Paul mentions seven items—each of which is preceded by the number “one.” The pertinent question to ask is, “does one mean one?” That is to say, does “one” mean that there are many differing viewpoints, ideas, denominations, or doctrines, all under “one umbrella? Or, does “one” mean only one?

To those in “Christendom,” the question of the “one body” is beyond dispute. They would assert that all of the denominations are part of the one body—the mysterious, universal body of Christ.

Yes, they would acknowledge, there are many different doctrines and practices; yet, they would have us believe, we are all going to the same place—just traveling down different roads. Yet, when this reasoning is applied to the other items in Paul’s list, it falls apart. The apostle declares that there is “one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all...”

Suppose, for a moment, that your preacher were to mount the pulpit and declare the following: “I have done much careful study of the world’s

religions. There are many differing views on so many subjects. I have arrived at the conclusion that there are many Spirits. The Holy Spirit is important, but so is the spirits of the Navaho nation...the spirits of the Sioux nation...these are equally viable. Or, consider all of the Lords that people follow – Muhammad; Buddha; Vishnu; Christ. Certainly we can agree that they are equal. And, in our pluralistic society, to declare that one faith is superior to all others is unthinkable. The faiths of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity are parallel. God? Why, all of the gods of all major religions are equal to one another.”

I think you know what would happen if such were said next Sunday from the pulpit. The preacher would be called on the carpet, and summarily fired. I daresay that in the vast majority of conservative evangelical denominations, such a declaration would touch off a war. Yet, those who would (rightly) oppose such have no issue affirming that there are many bodies that make up the one body; and, some of them would go so far as to say that there are many baptisms that make up the one baptism. “Consistency,

thou art a rare jewel indeed.”

When Paul said “one” in Ephesians 4, he meant one! There is one God, no other. There is one Lord, no other. There is one faith, no other. There is one Spirit, no other. And, there is one body (the church—Eph. 1:22-23) and one baptism (immersion for salvation—Mk. 16:16; Rom. 6:3-4), no other!

Why won't all people accept this platform for unity? Power, prestige, popularity—these are all factors. Devotion to family and friends are strong distractions from doing the right thing. Yet, our Savior's prayer in John 17 must be kept at the forefront. To achieve unity—true and lasting unity—all people must determine to follow the instructions in Sacred Writ. Only then will we realize what Jesus desired.



“I prefer to work behind the scenes at church...  
So, if someone makes a scene, I'm usually behind it.”



# Determined Christian Parents

Stephen Bradd

“If one does not know to which port he is sailing, no wind is favorable.” – Seneca

What is true in sailing is likewise true with parenting. If you don’t know the end-goal and keep it fixed in your mind every day, life’s circumstances will toss you to and fro with distractions and many cares (cf. Matthew 13:22) and critical years in the lives of your children will be squandered where your influence is the greatest and their hearts are the most pliable.

We need to have a clear destination in mind as parents: eternal life with Almighty God for every member of our family (and any others we can persuade on the journey; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:11)! And then we must submit every aspect of our lives to the test: Will this help us or hinder us on our spiritual journey?

Solomon instructed in Ecclesiastes 9:10 – “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” If something is worth doing at all, do it right by doing your best. If everlasting life is a worthy aim (and it is!), seek it passionately not lackadaisically.

Don’t adopt an undisciplined parenting style like the culture around you but be intentional! Know what port to which you are leading your family! Remain determined and seek excellence, no matter what course others around you chart!

If God has blessed you with children, He has entrusted you with an awesome stewardship; that is, the nurturing and training of a child as he or she develops and eventually matures into an adult (cf. Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6). But what does excellence in parenting look like?

I’ll quickly tell you what it isn’t: It’s not about providing name-brand clothes or the latest tech gadgets or taking expensive vacations or providing a fancy house or any number of physical gifts or luxuries. Parenting excellence is about sanctifying the Lord God in the hearts of your children. And you must demonstrate that holiness in your life first (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). Your determination is lacking if God isn’t your highest priority in life (cf. Luke 14:26-33). You cannot lead your children to where you yourself are unwilling to go.

It is certainly the case that good parents will be cognizant of the reality that personalities and abilities differ in children and they will make appropriate adjustments along the way in their parenting. Training up the second child in the way he should go might look different than how the first child was trained, and that’s perfectly fine as long as we’re still sailing for the ultimate port and keeping our eyes and hearts fixed on Jesus (cf. Hebrews 12:1,2).

Wise parents that are determined will walk circumspectly and redeem the time because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:15, 16). We must learn to differentiate between the urgent and the important. The undisciplined will squander precious time on the urgent and leave important matters of eternal significance unfinished (e.g., favoring sports participation over Bible study or secular academics over opportunities to serve, etc.).

A spiritually-determined parent is one who is deeply involved in the lives of every member of his family. They eat dinner together every night where possible to stay connected. They have family devotionals together every night where possible where they discuss and meditate on spiritual truths. They worship together and serve their fellow man together regularly. They work through challenges and problems together with God's word and prayer. This is how training and nurturing in the Lord takes place. One day at a time and one step after another. Determined Christian parents keep on keeping on!

Friend, you need to hear these words: If you aren't determined, you won't be a great Christian or a great parent. A strong, zealous determination is critical to spiritual success in this world that is overflowing with religious apathy and ignorance. If your commitment to Christ and His church is moderate (or less), you'll drift from the Lord and raise children with even less spiritual discipline than

you possess (can there be a greater tragedy?). Not to mention, if you lack determination you'll make Jesus sick (e.g., Revelation 3:16).

Colin Powell once said: "There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."

This is certainly the case with Christian parents. There are no shortcuts. You will make mistakes. But with a sincere passion for the Lord, His word, and your children, you can overcome your errors, continue growing in grace and knowledge before God, and have real success as a father or mother. It will be a lot of hard work, prayers, and even some tears, but unrelenting dedication can make success a reality.

Remember, it's not about raising a Rhodes Scholar or a professional athlete or anything like that. When you raise a child with good character who follows Jesus with every fiber of his being because he has his own faith and who is compassionate toward his fellow man (cf. Matthew 22:37,38), you've succeeded beyond measure.

Such a child should successfully navigate the difficult teenage years and the faith-testing, young-adult years and remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ as he sails out on his own with his own determination. And what could be better than that for a Christian parent?



# LEARNING THE "INSIDE AND OUTSIDE" OF THE CHURCH

John T. Polk, II

A Christian's "quiet life" means we must "walk properly toward those who are outside" (1 Thessalonians 4:12). This means Christians need their overall conduct to show non-Christians they have changed.

Peter wrote: "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Following Jesus Christ will make a good impression on those who will be impressed with goodness. On Pentecost, "those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). They were "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Jesus had drawn the line with the Gospel when He said: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). There is a distinction between "believers" and "unbelievers," depending upon the individual's hear-

ing heart! God adds the baptized "into" the church, leaving those who have not obeyed the Gospel "outside." God has drawn the line and has made it permanent!

People of faith have had no difficulty in recognizing the difference between "inside" and "outside:"

Noah built the ark and covered "it inside and outside with pitch" (Genesis 6:14); the angels led Lot and his wife and two daughters "out and set him outside the city" of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:16-17); under Moses' Law, the leper "is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp" (Leviticus 13:46); and Rahab of Jericho was told "that whoever goes outside the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we will be guiltless" (Joshua 2:19).

Doesn't that mean that our soul-salvation depends upon our knowing "that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4). God promised salvation to none who remain "outside" Jesus' death!

Those Jews who had Jesus crucified knew the difference between “inside” Jerusalem, and “outside.” “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:10-14). What God rejected under Moses’ Law was “burned outside the camp,” so Jewish leaders sent Jesus “outside the gate” of Jerusalem for crucifixion.

Proper conduct toward “those who are outside” requires recognition that there are those who are “outside.”

Jesus knew it when He said to a great multitude of disciples, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables” (Mark 4:11). Paul taught the Corinthian church, “For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person’” (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

A major problem in the churches of Christ occurs when those “outside”

claim the salvation and privileges of those “inside,” and some “inside” adopt the faith and practices of those “outside!”

1) “Insiders” know “that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3), but “outsiders” claim to be cleansed by His death before and without baptism!

2) “Insiders” know I should not “boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14), but “outsiders” claim salvation through the thief on the cross!

3) Don’t “insiders” know “that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), but “outsiders” claim that those who continue in their “unrighteous” ways without repentance should be accepted as church members with no change!

4) “Insiders” know that God-pleasing music in worship involves “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and mak-

ing melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19), but "outsiders" insist upon bringing instruments of entertainment and making such occasions man-pleasing concerts!

5) "Insiders" know that God only recognizes heterosexual, monogamous marriage, for "from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:6-9), but "outsiders" claim that marriage exists: between homosexuals; because of living together and having children; or regardless of previous marriages and divorces!

6) "Insiders" know that in Noah's day, "by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water" (2 Peter 3:5-6), but "outsiders" claim that nothing has changed since "the beginning of creation," and "willfully forget" by claiming that physical evidence for the world-wide flood took "millions and millions" of years to evolve without any God!

There is a world of difference between being "inside" and "outside" of Jesus Christ. "Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.

And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.' But He answered them, saying, 'Who is My mother, or My brothers?' And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother'" (Mark 3:31-35).

Everyone who "does the will of God" is drawn closer to Jesus than even those who were physically related to Him! Every heart opening to Jesus Christ and conforming to His teaching and example for the rest of that individual's life will know the difference.

Jesus said: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that

his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:16-21).

Jesus also said, "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17).

It is the difference between spiritual "darkness or light," "day or night." It is only when a person understands they are "outside" Christ, and appreciate what it means to be "inside" Christ, that they are motivated to come "inside." Christians must help them learn and see that difference!

# The Kingdom and the Church

David Pharr

The words "kingdom" and "church" are not synonyms. They are not interchangeable in all contexts. The church is the company of the saved. The term embraces all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (Acts 2:47; 5:11; Rev. 5:9). These are the people who comprise the "general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23). The emphasis in "kingdom" is toward divine sovereignty, meaning the rule of God. "The words more often refer to the 'reign' rather than to the 'realm' in which the rule is exercised, to the dominion rather than the domain" (Fer-

guson, 19). But this does not mean there is no overlapping in their application, because the church consists of people who have accepted heaven's dominion in the saving of their souls. God rules over all, but there is a singular sense in which Christ rules in the hearts and lives of Christians.

The issue before us is the nature and existence of the kingdom in the present age. The kingdom was prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus' own ministry focused on kingdom principles, with frequent assurances that its coming was imminent. The kingdom is spiritual in its nature and is the rule of Christ over the redeemed of all nations (Revelation 5:9-10).

Having been made possible by Christ's ascension to the promised throne, the kingdom, the government of Christ among the world's redeemed, was established on the day of Pentecost, which also marks the beginning of the church. Clearly the church is identified with the kingdom. It is as the church that the kingdom is manifested in this present world.

In contrast to these straightforward truths, there are popular doctrines which deny the relationship of the kingdom and the church. It is asserted by many, especially in the speculations of premillennialism and dispensationalism, that the kingdom foreseen by the prophets and promised by Jesus has not yet come and that when it does come, it will be an earthly, political, kingdom, much like the Old

Testament kingdom of David. Their theory is that Jesus came expecting to establish such a government, but the plan was thwarted by the unbelief of the Jews.

Premillennialism regards the church as a substitute arrangement until the second coming, at which time the kingdom plan will be reinstated. This denies any direct relationship between the kingdom and the church. A careful review of the evidence, however, will clearly establish the relationship of the church of Christ with the kingdom of God. All members of the church are the citizens of the kingdom and all citizens of the kingdom are members of the church.

### **Interchangeable Terms**

The identity of the church with the kingdom can be seen in passages where there is an interchangeable application of the terms. The first use of "church" in the New Testament is in Jesus' promise: "And upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). In the very next line he speaks of Peter's commission in the church, but switches to the term "kingdom," saying, "And 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" (Matthew 16:19).

Peter was the one who had responded to Jesus' question and for this reason he was personally assured

of his commission in the kingdom, but Matthew 18:18 shows that all the apostles assured of the same responsibilities. This delegated authority, indicated by "the keys of the kingdom," pointed to their position in the church. The apostles were "set. . . in the church" (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11) to administer the keys of the kingdom.

Another interchangeable application of the terms is found in Hebrews 12:23 and 28. Those who are "the church" are those who are in "a kingdom which cannot be moved ..." This kingdom, which "cannot be moved," is the kingdom Daniel said would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:43; 7:14). This has its parallel in Jesus' assurance about the church: "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

Again, when John addressed the letters of Revelation to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 1:4), the members of these congregations were, of course, members of the universal body of Christ, as was John also. This is what he is affirming when he names himself as, "I, John, who also am your brother . . . and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:9). In verse 6 he spoke of the members of the church as having been "made to be a kingdom" (ASV).

### **Government**

The identity of the kingdom with the church is evident in references to the authority of Christ. The

idea inherent in “kingdom” is government by a king. Jesus Christ is the anointed King (Messiah) and has absolute authority (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20ff; I Peter 3:22; cf Isaiah 9:7). This corresponds with his being head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). Just as the church is subject to Christ (Ephesians 5:24), so these subjects of the King are under his command. (Colossians 1:13; Ephesians 2:19).

### Beginning

The kingdom is identified with the church because the time frame for the kingdom’s presence in the world corresponds to the church age.

David had been promised an everlasting kingdom for his seed (II Samuel 7:12f), but to Daniel was given a specific time frame when that kingdom would be established. He explained to Nebuchadnezzar that the four part image in the king’s dream represented a succession of four kingdoms beginning with his own Babylonian empire.

Every student of history knows these to be the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. He then explains the significance of the “stone [which] was cut without hands” and which smote the image. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it

shall stand for ever” (Daniel 2:44). This meant that the kingdom would be established sometime within the block of history encompassed by the four succeeding empires (i.e., “in the days of these kings”).

Dispensationalists, who argue that the kingdom was postponed, argue that the fourth empire will be some yet future Roman government. What must be remembered, however, is that the image vision pointed to regimes in succession, not to some imagined Roman administration separated from the other empires by twenty-one centuries.

Jesus knew it was his mission to bring the kingdom prophecies to fruition. He told Pilate, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born . . .” (John 18:37). Thus from the beginning his preaching emphasized “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

This “at hand” pronouncement was always prominent in the preaching of John the Baptist, of the twelve, and of the seventy as well as Jesus himself. Jesus identified this with the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand . . .” (Mark 1:15).

What “time” was fulfilled? This was not a vague suggestion that it was merely a convenient time. Jesus knew Daniel’s prophecy required that the kingdom would come during the period of Roman rule.



Mark 9:1 gives another statement by Jesus which is even more specific: "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."

The time was narrowed to within the lifetime of persons in his audience. How it would come "with power" is explained in the Lord's promise regarding the Holy Spirit. Just before Christ's ascension, the apostles asked about the time for the kingdom (Acts 1:6). It was not in the divine purpose to give them a date. Instead, he instructed them to wait until they received the empowerment of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49). The correlation between Mark 9:1 and Acts 1:8 points to Pentecost for the coming of the kingdom.

Another wonderful prophecy in Daniel connected the establishment of the kingdom with the return of Christ to heaven. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13f).

Obviously this is the same kingdom "which shall not be destroyed" as

named in Daniel 2:44, which was to come in time of the Roman Empire. It was established upon the Lord's return to the Father and his coronation on David's (symbolic) throne. In his Pentecost sermon, Peter connected the fact of Christ's resurrection and ascension with that coronation and, therefore with the kingdom having been given to him. The kingdom came on Pentecost, the church began on Pentecost.

This conclusion is further proven in the fact that prior to Pentecost references to both the beginning of the church and the beginning of the kingdom always pointed forward toward Pentecost and all references to the church and the kingdom after Pentecost demonstrate present existence.

### **Duration of Christ's Reign**

Peter also cited Psalm 110:1 as evidence of Christ's enthronement (Acts 2:34-35). In that text, however there is not only proof of the beginning of his reign, but also a clear marker as to the length of his tenure. Paul gives a precise explanation in I Corinthians 15:23ff. First he shows that it is Christ's resurrection that assures our own. "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." This will be at the time of the Second Coming, which in the next verse he identifies as the time of "the end." "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall

have put down all rule and all authority and power" (24). That at "the end," "at his coming," he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father shows that, until then, it is in his present possession. Daniel 7:13f foretold that in his enthronement in heaven he would be given the kingdom from the Father, and Paul shows us that his reign will have its culmination when he gives the kingdom back to the Father.

Thus, it is explained that the tenure of Christ's reign is to be until "he hath put all enemies under his fee. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (25f). The destruction of death will be the resurrection. The resurrection will be at Christ's coming. The only possible conclusion is that the rule of Christ over his kingdom is during the present church age.

### **Spiritual Nature**

Jesus acknowledged his kingship before Pontius Pilate, but explained: "My kingdom is not of this world." Pilate pressed the matter, and Jesus continued: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:36f). His reign is administered through truth. Those who hear his voice, who submit to his rule, are those who are "of the truth."

Earlier, when the Pharisees had asked him about the coming of the kingdom, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It

is not outwardly visible, such as how one might recognize an earthly government. "Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20f).

The spiritual nature of the kingdom is evident in all of Jesus' teaching on kingdom principles. This is seen in the parables, in which Jesus explained, "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ." Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, for example, he shows what is expected for participation in the kingdom. Yet these are the same principles that guide participation in the church. Faithful conduct as a member of the church is no different from loyal conduct as a citizen of the kingdom.

When he had instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus told the apostles: "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" (Matthew 26:29). He would be with them in a "new," spiritual relationship. In the observance of the Supper in the church, they were (and we are) with Christ in the kingdom. To deny the church-kingdom connection is to exclude Christ from the fellowship of the Supper.

### **Requirements for Membership**

The requirements for admission into the kingdom are the same as required for entering the church. Entrance into the kingdom is by the new birth (John 3:3-8). Members of the

church are persons who have been “born [begotten] again” by their obedience to the truth (I Peter 1:22-25). Since it is by the new birth that people enter the kingdom and since people who obey the gospel are born again, it must follow that all such are in the kingdom. There is also a parallel in the reference to the “seed” in Jesus’ kingdom parable, which is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The seed of the kingdom is the seed by which we are born again.

Jesus defined this as being “born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5). This is what Paul described as “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5cf; Ephesians 5:26). This refers to a penitent believer being baptized into Christ. When Philip preached the kingdom, “they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). The parallel is perfect in that it is by this obedience in baptism that people come into the body of Christ, the church (I Corinthians 12:13). This is demonstrated in Acts 2 when Peter preached the Messiahship (Kingship) of Jesus (36). The people that accepted his Kingship in being baptized were added to the church (41, 47).

These points are brought together in Paul’s assurance to the “saints and faithful brethren in Christ” at Colosse (Colossians 1:1), which were at the church of Christ in that place. He said

that Christ “delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” This meant that in Christ “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13f). To be redeemed is to be in Christ, to be in Christ is to be in the church, to be in the church is to have been “translated into the kingdom.”

### Finally

It matters that we know the truth because truth is essential to faith. The better we are grounded in the truth, the better our faith can stand. By knowing, believing and obeying the truth, we can share in the hope that comes with having heaven’s kingdom “within” and of being citizens of “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

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# Remembering Barney Morehead

James R. McGill

Barney Morehead (1897-1991) was born in Metropolis, Illinois. He obeyed the gospel when he was fifteen. He attended David Lipscomb College.

World War I was a life-altering event for him. He was inducted into the military and sent overseas. The experience made him aware of the world outside the borders of America. For the rest of his life his emphasis was on *world* vision. A biography of Barney Morehead by Gurganus and Carringer bears the title *A Man with World Vision*.

Barney began preaching in 1921. He married Nellie in 1924. The next year the couple went to Japan to devote themselves to doing their part to carry out Jesus' command to teach all nations. They were supported by the Waverly-Belmont church in Nashville.

A number of other Christians from America had preceded them in taking the gospel to Japan. The J. M. McCalebs had entered that mission field in 1892, and they did much to encourage others to come.

## The Bible School

An enduring contribution of the Moreheads to the work in Japan was their establishing the King Bible School in Ibaraki which eventually became Ibaraki Christian University.

After five years in Japan, the Moreheads returned to America in 1930.

Barney Morehead devoted the next sixty years to encouraging world evangelism. He said he began writing to churches in 1930 to encourage foreign mission work. He visited an amazing **4,500** churches of Christ, speaking on behalf of world evangelism! His encouragement motivated many Christians to devote their lives to this great work.

## The Bookstore

I first met Barney Morehead when I had the opportunity to attend David Lipscomb High School in south Nashville in 1945, and Morehead's World Vision Bookstore was just across the street from the Lipscomb campus.

The store had such a wealth of so many hundreds of great books on tables and on bookcases around all the walls. It was a wonderful place for any book lover to visit.

Barney also maintained a self-service lending library with perhaps about two hundred basic books. The fee was five cents for each book borrowed plus two or three cents a week for each week the book was kept. This was such a special, unique concept!

Despite the great number of books in stock, rarely someone would inquire

about a book he didn't have at the time. He would not say, "I don't have that book." He said instead, "I can have that book for you in two hours."

He would write down the information and give it to a high school student who worked for him. The student would drive directly the few miles over to the Gospel Advocate Company where they maintained such an enormous stock. He would buy the book and bring it back.

### Get Both Sides

Sometimes, if a customer expressed an interest in a book on a controversial subject, Barney Morehead would sell two books. He would show the customer a book whose author held an opposite position and say, "You should also purchase this book that gives the other side of the subject."

For twenty-seven years Morehead published a periodical called *World Vision*. One day he received a message from a publisher in the Northwest who also had a periodical bearing the same title, demanding that Morehead quit using that name. The matter was quickly resolved when Barney sent that publisher a copy of his own *World Vision*, Volume One, Number 1, which bore a much earlier date than that of the other publisher's first issue.

### World Vision Pictorial

Besides his regular *World Vision* magazine, Morehead published three *World Vision Pictorial* volumes

through the years. These books attempted to tell about every known work in all the foreign fields, including photographs of each evangelist and his family and including biographical sketches. The pictorials were about one hundred and fifty pages, and they looked somewhat like a school yearbook.

The pictorials gave special recognition to pioneer missionaries such as the John Sheriff family who entered Bulawayo, Rhodesia in 1896. That pioneering effort has grown over the many years until there are now more than thirteen hundred churches of Christ in what is now Zambia.

### The Last Visit

The last time I saw Barney Morehead he was elderly. He no longer had the bookstore, but he did come just about every day to the pharmacy next door to where his bookstore had been.

The drugstore maintained a soda fountain, some tables and chairs, and one large booth. This booth was where five or six older Christian men would get together most afternoons to visit for about an hour.

Barney had walked the two blocks from his house to the pharmacy, as usual. This particular afternoon was no exception. But when he left to return home it was raining. I happened to be nearby, and I offered him a ride home.

I knew he had encouraged so many to go into mission fields. Some Lipscomb College students had lived in

Morehead's garage apartment while they were in school. In that last conversation, we talked about one of these, David Dowdy.

David was preparing to go into the mission field in Germany, and he was majoring in German at Lipscomb. He

continued until he received his Ph.D. in German from Vanderbilt. He went to Munich and also preached in Berlin. Morehead remembered David very favorably as I did.

Barney Morehead died on October 26, 1991. He was 94.

## "BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER"

Raymond Elliott

The apostle Paul, after he had given directives to "put off" the "old man", that is their former way of life; and, to "put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness", he continues to list certain sins that should not be descriptive of the life of a Christian (Ephesians 4:22-31). Paul concludes this section of his letter to the Ephesian brethren by giving them this positive exhortation: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

It is the word, "kind", that I want to emphasize presently. It is an adjective that describes the heart and action of a devoted Christian. Paul stated that "love is kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4). In 2 Peter 1:7, we are admonished, in our Christian growth, to add faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and "to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." In Galatians 5:22, we read that "kindness" is one of the "fruit of the Spirit". The apostle Paul, in Colos-

sians 3:12, instructs us to "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."

Albert Barnes, in his 'Barnes Notes on the Bible', commented on the word "kind" as found in Ephesians 4:32: "There is no religion in a sour, misanthropic temper; none in rudeness, stiffness, and repulsiveness; none in violating the rules of good breeding. There is a hollow-hearted politeness, indeed, which the Christian is not to aim at or copy. His politeness is to be based on "kindness;" His courtesy is to be the result of love, good-will, and a desire of the happiness of all others; and this will prompt to the kind of conduct that will render his conversation with others agreeable and profitable".

One of the most important reasons as to why we should be kind to one another is found in the word itself. Please remove the letter (d) from "kind" and what do you have? You

have 'kin'. One definition of the word 'kin' is, "a group of persons of common ancestry". Jesus said, "But you, do not be called Rabbi"; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matthew 23:8). He saying that we are not to elevate one brother above another; rather, we are all brothers and sisters on the same level. But how did we all become 'kinsfolk', spiritually speaking?

The answer is found in Galatians 3:26-29: "(F)or in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as

many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

And being 'kin' to one another, we will also be "tenderhearted" and "forgiving", because we are brothers and sister in Jesus Christ. We are God's family! (Ephesians 3:14, 15)

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# Apathy and Its Cure

Hebrews 6:11

The book of Hebrews proves the “possibility of Apostasy.”

## I. The Dangerous Attitude.

- A. The word *NORTHOS* occurs twice in the book of Hebrews:
  - 1. Hebrews 5:11- “dull of hearing”
  - 2. Hebrews 6:12- “slothful”, “sluggish”
- B. Where does unbelief or a rejection of the Gospel begin? It is not with a refusal to hear the word. Matthew 13:15
- C. Where does apostasy begin? Is it not with the turning away our minds from Christ to something more pleasing. (Galatians 1:10)

## II. The Worthy Examples.

- A. Faith- Abraham. Note these characteristics of Abraham’s faith:
  - 1. Prompt. Hebrews 11:8
  - 2. Implicit. When did he ever question God. Hebrews 11:17
  - 3. Strong. Romans 4:19
  - 4. It directed his affections toward heaven. Hebrews 11:10, 16
- B. Perseverance- Moses.
  - 1. The choice he made. Hebrews 11:24-27
  - 2. The ordeals he suffered. Exodus 32:32

## III. The Promised Inheritance.

- A. What promises?
  - 1. Galatians 3:29
  - 2. Acts 2:39
  - 3. 1 John 2:25
  - 4. 1 Peter 1:4
- B. What do we know about these promises?
  - 1. They are exceeding great and precious. 2 Peter 1:4
  - 2. They are sure and certain. Hebrews 6:17; 2 Corinthians 1:20
- C. With these promises in view:
  - 1. Let us not be weary, but rather press toward the mark. Galatians 6:9; Philippians 3:13
  - 2. Let us keep faith and perseverance tightly joined together.
  - 3. Let us cast our anchor on solid ground. Hebrews 6:19
  - 4. Let us meditate on our promised inheritance. “Just a few more days...we shall go to Him in glory...and with Jesus reign forever.

The words of the prophet Amos are a warning even for today. Amos 6:1

- M. W. Kiser



## NEWS & NOTES

### *NCSBS Seeks New Director*

**Clemmons, NC:** The North Carolina School of Biblical Studies (NCSBS) is seeking a full time Director/Recruiter to work with the school with an emphasis on student recruitment from North Carolina and the nearby states.

The candidate must be willing to raise a portion of their support. Travel expenses will be covered. NCSBS is 10 years old with over 15 graduates. They offer a two-year tuition free program that emphasizes the study of the biblical text, Apologetics, Homiletics and other courses of study that are directly related to the work of the preacher and his family.

The NCSBS is overseen by the elders of the Warners Chapel Church of Christ in Clemmons, NC. Please send a resume and letter of interest to info@ncsbs.net or NCSBS Director/Recruiter Search 8999 Lasater Road Clemmons, NC 27012.

### **Larimore House Destroyed by Fire**

**Florence, AL:** The historic home of the late gospel preacher T.B. Larimore was destroyed by fire on July 20.

The house was built in 1870 and was used as a residence and school house after the Civil War. The school Larimore conducted was known as Mars

Hill College and operated from 1871 until 1887.

Larimore lived in the house until his wife's death in 1907. His son, Virgil, lived in the house until 1946, when it was acquired by the Lauderdale County Bible School, which opened in the house in 1947.

The school's name changed to Mars Hill Bible School in 1951, and the house still stands at the entrance to campus. From 1948 through the late 60s, it was used for classes by Mars Hill Bible School.

Just over a week before, the house suffered a fire in the basement caused by electrical problems. Firefighters were able to keep damage to a minimum, but unfortunately, this time firefighters were unable to extinguish it in time to save the building. As of the time of writing, plans are unknown concerning the future of the house.





## Catoma Street Church of Christ Closes

**Montgomery, AL:** On May 20, the downtown church on Catoma Street closed. The congregation was first organized by J.M. Barnes in 1881. At first, the church met in the court house, then on Herron Street. In 1901, they purchased what had been a Jewish Temple on Catoma Street. The building was dedicated in 1862. George (and Nina) Herring preached for this good church for the last 57 years. Please keep these brethren in your prayers.



### *The Ivory Domino* by Gary Henson

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# Gospel Gleaner

*For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



## Evil, Pain, and Suffering

*The Consequence of Sin in the Present Age*

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## **The Gospel Gleaner**

PO Box 456  
Fayetteville, TN 37334

[www.gospelgleaner.com](http://www.gospelgleaner.com)

Andy Erwin, Editor

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com). The West Fayetteville Church of Christ reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, notes, and articles to publish.

## **Gospel Gleaner**

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### **WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE**

**Ronald Bryant**

*Huntsville, Alabama*

**Roy Davison**

*Herselt, Belgium*

**Andy Erwin**

*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

**Owen Olbricht**

*Sherwood, Arkansas*

**John T. Polk, II**

*Oneida, Tennessee*

**Corey Sawyers**

*Denver, Colorado*

## **The Problem of Evil**

Andy Erwin

[Dear reader, I apologize in advance for the unusual length of this article. Rather than asking others to address the various issues associated with the problem of evil in separate articles, I chose to address them in one article. I pray it will not be a laborious read, but will bless your growth in His grace and knowledge.]

If an all-loving and all-powerful God exists, why do we find evil, pain, and suffering in the world He created? Some suggest that "Evil remains a mystery."<sup>1</sup> And it has been conceded, "Any attempt finally to explain evil must be an oversimplification and a falsification."<sup>2</sup> Herein is expressed a common frustration among biblical scholars and philosophers who have attempted to explain the problem of evil.

Atheists believe this question poses a logical contradiction, and thus deny the existence of God. Pantheists also believe this question poses a logical contradiction, and therefore deny the reality of evil. If evil is real, God is not good; and if God is good, evil is not real.

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<sup>1</sup> A.D. Verhey, "Evil," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (revised edition), Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 210.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The Bible takes neither of these directions and it rejects both of these hypothetical generalizations. It affirms God is good and that evil is real. Indeed, precisely in the context of the worst evil, the Scriptures discover and announce that God is good – i.e., in the cross of Christ. In this event, the Scriptures discover and direct the people of God to a faithful reaction to evil, that of patient love.<sup>3</sup>

If we accept the reality of evil, we must explain its reality as it relates to the existence of God. We must logically prove that it is not contrary to the nature of God for evil to exist.

We propose to provide a logical answer to the problem of evil by studying (1) the definition of evil; (2) the nature of God; (3) the nature of man; (4) the nature of His created world; (5) the work of Satan; and (6) the Christian's ambition while living in a world with evil, pain, and suffering.

By studying these six points in order, we hope to harmonize the existence of God and evil in His creation, while also answering a few misconceptions which have resulted from various age-old theories.

## DEFINING EVIL

If not for a universal standard of good, we would not be discussing evil. Robert Waggoner explains, "The nature of evil can be understood only because God exists. Were there no

God, there would be no consistent universal standard by which to measure whether or not any thought or action is either good or bad."<sup>4</sup>

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew synonyms *aven*, *beliyaal*, and *ra* (and its derivatives) are translated "evil."<sup>5</sup> *Aven* is a word that can refer to that which is a misfortune, or calamity (Proverbs 12:21). *Beliyaal* is a word that conveys the thought of being wicked, or wickedness (Psalm 41:8).

*Ra* is the most often used Hebrew word which is translated "evil" in the Old Testament. However, it can also convey a number of ideas; e.g. calamity (Psalm 141:5); distress (Nehemiah 2:17); adversity (1 Samuel 10:19); grief (Proverbs 15:10); affliction (Numbers 11:11); misery (Ecclesiastes 8:6); sadness (Genesis 40:7); sorrow (Genesis 44:29); trouble (Psalm 41:1); soreness (Deuteronomy 6:22); noisome (Ezekiel 14:15, 21); hurt (Genesis 26:29); heavy (Proverbs 25:20); vex (Numbers 20:15); wretchedness (Numbers 11:15); also harm, ill, and mischief in almost every place where these words are found in the King James Version<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Waggoner, *The God of the Bible* (Montgomery, AL: Amridge University Press, 2010), 130.

<sup>5</sup> William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 150.

<sup>6</sup> R.B. Girdlestone, *Girdlestone's Synonyms of the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 95.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## THE NATURE OF GOD

Two key facts to understanding the nature of God must be accepted. God has revealed to man that He (1) possesses certain attributes, and (2) is infinite in all His attributes.

Concerning God's revelation to man, we speak of that which is natural and that which is supernatural. God's natural revelation – His creation – in some ways can confirm His supernatural revelation which is found in His word, the Bible. Likewise, the Bible confirms what we find to be true in nature.

Concerning God's attributes, let us begin with a study of His power. God is all-powerful. He is "Lord God Almighty" (Revelation 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 19:15). By His power the heavens, the earth, and all that is therein were created (Jeremiah 10:12; 51:15). What does this particular attribute of God mean to our study? Simply this, God possesses the power to create anything possible *as He so chooses*.

God is all-knowing and all-wise (Job 9:4; 12:13; Psalm 104:24; 147:5). Where there is wisdom and knowledge, there is purpose and intent of mind (Ephesians 3:10-11). Thus, *God knew what He was doing* when He created the world the way He did. God had the power to create anything possible and any world according to His will; and God had the wisdom and knowledge to create exactly what was most needed to accomplish His purpose.

Understanding the various ideas conveyed in the word *ra*, and the many justifiable translations which could be given other than "evil," helps us to understand the meaning of such passages as Isaiah 45:7. Herein the Lord says, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things" (KJV, ASV).<sup>7</sup> From our word study, we can see that *ra* does not have to be translated *evil*, but could also be translated *calamity* (NKJV, ESV, NASB).

In the New Testament and Septuagint, *poneros*, *poneria*, and *kakia* are words which refer to that which is morally evil. *Kakia* (and its derivative *kakoetheia*) refers more to a morally evil mindset (see Romans 1:29), and *poneria* refers to the active result of that evil habit of mind (see Ephesians 4:31).<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, the Old Testament's application of the word translated "evil" is far more expansive than what is found in the New Testament. Biblically speaking, *evil* may be categorized as being either moral (pertaining to sinful thoughts, words, and actions) or physical (pertaining to natural calamities and physical suffering).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> All Scripture references will be taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>8</sup> R.C. Trench, *Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 53-54.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Calderwood, *Vocabulary of Philosophy* (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1894), 140.

Next, we must establish the motivations behind God's purpose of creation. God has also revealed these motivations to us. God's chief motivation for creating the world was love. God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). The all-loving God of the Bible created this world so that He might share His love and fellowship with His creation. One could rightly say that this world was created from the outpouring of God's desire to love and have fellowship with His creation. Speaking of Christ, all things were created by Him and *for* Him (Colossians 1:16). Our world was created for the purpose of fellowship with God, His Spirit, and His Son (1 Corinthians 1:9; Ephesians 3:9; 1 John 1:3).

Believing this to be God's reason for creating the world only intensifies our need to understand personal holiness, as well as God's attributes of jealousy and wrath. God is purely holy, and we must be holy (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16). God created us for the purpose of having fellowship with Him; but God refuses to fellowship anyone who is unholy and unrighteous. For this reason, "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

God hates evil. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity..." (Habakkuk 1:13). We must also hate evil (Romans 12:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 Peter 3:9-12). God's judgments are against evil.

Ultimately, God and evil will not co-exist (Matthew 25:41).

Yet, His creation often worships and serves the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). Thus, God is provoked to jealousy and anger. God's anger is righteous because the cause is righteous. His judgment is just because the transgression demands it (Acts 17:30-31; John 12:48).

Whatever our understanding of God, our explanation for the problem of evil must be consistent with the attributes He possesses. If our conclusion is in any way contrary to the attributes God tells us He possesses, it must be discarded, and our study must be refined.

## THE NATURE OF MAN

God remains mindful and caring of His creation (Psalm 8:4); yet, man suffers from the effects of evil in the world. For one to understand why such suffering occurs, one must understand the nature of man.

The nature of man is two-fold. Each man possesses an "outer man" and an "inner man." The outer man is the physical body, and serves as a temporary housing for the inner man (2 Peter 1:14). Our body is the mortal or physical part of our make-up which is limited to this world. Our physical substance is made from the world (Genesis 2:7) and at death it will return to the world (Genesis 3:19). Our earthly tabernacles in which we presently dwell are not made to last forever.

er. They are of the earth. They are suitable for this earth.

Natural life is only temporary. God has promised to create two spiritual realms for man to live in eternity – heaven (John 14:1-3) and hell (Matthew 25:41). Just as the earth was created for a purpose, so too do heaven and hell have a purpose. Knowing mortal life is merely temporary, and everlasting life is to come, should motivate each of us to prepare for the life to come.

The inward man is the spirit of man. The spiritual aspect of man is that which is made in the likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). The inner man is immortal. Just as our present mortal body will return to the dust from whence it came, the spirit will depart from the body and return to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7; James 2:26). Flesh and blood cannot live in a spiritual realm; therefore, the natural must be changed to supernatural (1 Corinthians 15:50). Even though we cannot see it with natural eyes, man has been created to live spiritually forever.

Man has also been created with a nature which enables him to choose to do righteousness (Romans 2:14) or wickedness (James 1:13-15). Such a nature of free-will has been evident in man from the beginning. Of man's own choosing, he yielded to temptation in the Garden. Of man's own choosing, he yields to temptation today. Likewise, out of free-will, man chooses to obey God; and this too has

always been the case. People are evil only when they choose not to believe and obey God (Genesis 2:16-17).

At this point we should resume our study of the nature of evil. Moral evil (sin) is the type of evil resulting from free-will creatures being tempted to choose that which is contrary to the will of God (1 John 3:4; 1 John 5:17). We can choose to do evil things which will result in evil consequences. We can also refuse to do good things, and this too will result in evil consequences (James 4:17). Such a nature had to exist within man in order for man to choose to serve God (Romans 6:16) and reciprocate His love and fellowship, thus satisfying God's purpose for creating us.

The fall in the Garden teaches us that evil behavior produces evil conditions in the world (Genesis 3:17-24). Evil is not merely the privation of good, no more than good is the privation of evil. Just as he that does righteousness is righteous (1 John 3:7-10); he that does wickedness is wicked (Ezekiel 18:19-24). Evil is the result of something that has happened, not merely the lack of something good, whole, or perfect.

Likewise, sin occurs because of a choice someone has made. Just as an action can lead to a consequential wound transgressing the health of the arm, a sin transgressing the law of God (1 John 3:4) will lead to the punishment of the soul (Romans 6:23).

Sin exists, not in the absence of good, but in the existence of evil.

A few philosophers have debated why God created man in such a way. Some have concluded that God had no other choice, due to a lack of power.<sup>10</sup> According to such reasoning God is not omnipotent. It is believed that if God truly was omnipotent, He could have created man to live in a world without evil.

However, the theory does not take into account God's purpose for creating man. Realizing that God created man for the purpose of fellowship, one can readily accept the necessity of free-will. Without free-will, we would not be as we are. Our nature would be changed so dramatically that we would not be the creatures we are.

Without free-will, man's devotion to God would not be by choice but by decree. Man would not be returning love for love, but service due to forced action.

One can properly illustrate these circumstances by considering the often used story of a powerful prince who loved a servant's daughter. He could have undoubtedly forced the woman to marry him, but her heart would not have belonged to him. Thus, he chose to meet the woman, show his affection, and prove his care for her. As she grew to know the

prince, she grew to love him. She decided to marry him by choice, and not by force. Thus, the prince had his bride and her heart too. So it is with God and man.

At this point, we would like to introduce the idea of *epistemic distance*.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly,

"...the reality and presence of God must not be borne in upon man in the coercive way in which their natural environment forces itself upon their attention. The world must be to man, to some extent at least, *etsi deus non daretur* 'as if there were no God.'"

It is argued that a direct encounter with deity would impair man's free-will. Man is thus removed from the direct and overwhelming presence of God.<sup>12</sup> Yet, God is knowable,

"...but only by a mode of knowledge that involves a free personal response...Such a need for human faith-response will secure for man the only kind of freedom that is possible for him in relation to God, namely cognitive freedom..."<sup>13</sup>

To this point we have established the following: (1) the God of the Bible created the world and man consistent with His holy nature; (2) He created man out of the abundance of His love and desire to share His love and fel-

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<sup>10</sup> J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *God and Evil*, Nelson Pike, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, CA: Prentice Hall, 1964), 46.

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<sup>11</sup> John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Great Britain: Macmillan and Company, 1966), 317.

<sup>12</sup> Kerry Duke, *God at a Distance* (Huntsville, AL: Publishing Designs Incorporated, 1995), 34.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

lowship with His creation; (3) He desires the creature to reciprocate this love by choice and not force; (4) He created the creature with a nature possessive of free-will so that man might choose to reciprocate God's love and fellowship; (5) Uninhibited free-will inevitably results in evil decisions which will bring about evil consequences; (6) He created man with a soul (an inner man) that will live somewhere forever; (7) the body which now houses the soul must die a physical death as it is of the physical world; and (8) the inner man which will be housed in a new spiritual body will be judged in righteousness according to the physical life that was lived.

### THE NATURE OF GOD'S CREATED WORLD

Philosophers who believe an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God could not create a world wherein evil exists fail to realize God's purpose for the natural world. Thomas B. Warren observed, "...that the basic ground of the atheist's objection to traditional theism is that God both could and should have made a better world than the one in which we live."<sup>14</sup>

Warren then raises the question, "Better for what purpose?"<sup>15</sup> As we have stated, God created this world perfectly suitable for His intended

purpose of having true love and fellowship with His creation. Warren also brings to our attention that God has provided man with "the ideal environment for soul-making."<sup>16</sup> In this regard, Warren expresses "this world is as good as any possible world."<sup>17</sup> He continues:

"Since God is infinite in power, knowledge, and goodness (and thus will never make a choice for the 'second best' of anything), we assume that no better world (for the purpose God had in creating it) could have been created. And, there is nothing in the nature of things which compels us to believe otherwise."<sup>18</sup>

We shall now discuss the idea of "soul-making."<sup>19</sup> Briefly stated, soul-making explains that our suffering in this present world is being permitted by God in order for man to overcome evil, become stronger, and ultimately molded into the likeness of Christ. With this view in mind, we realize that God did not create the world to be the most pleasant and convenient possible, but to provide us with an environment in which we may be fashioned and challenged through our own

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 308

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 309

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 314

<sup>19</sup> The term "soul-making" was used by the English philosopher and theologian John Hick (1922-2012) in his book *Evil and the God of Love*. However, the concept's origin is attributed to Irenaeus. It is our conviction that the concept is biblical and therefore originates with God.

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas B. Warren, *Sin, Suffering, and God* (Glasgow, KY: National Christian Press, 2010), 315.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

free insights and responses into children of God.<sup>20</sup>

Warren adds, "God did not intend the world to be a hedonistic paradise but to be the environment for the development of human personality toward the perfect pattern which is Jesus Christ."<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, it is our contention that God created the world perfectly suitable for His purposes *from the beginning*. In other words, we reject the notion that it was ever God's purpose for man to live in a world free from temptation, without the attribute of free-will, and therefore beyond the possibility of evil, pain, and suffering. We accept that the world groans (Romans 8:22) because of the curse of sin (Genesis 3:19), but we also accept that the world is just as God wants it to be for His purpose to be accomplished.

God desires for His creation to live in love and fellowship with Him. In order for this to be accomplished, man must grow through sufferings into the stature of the fullness of Christ. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

## THE WORK OF SATAN IN THE WORLD

God has given us free-will so that we might choose the good and refuse

the evil (Isaiah 7:15). However, in order to refuse evil, evil *must* exist. In order for evil to exist, the world in which we live must be created in such a way as to accommodate it.

Our attention now turns to the origin of evil. We realize "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Moreover, it is clear that temptation and evil does not originate with God (James 1:13-15). The existence of such evil is necessary in God's creation to accomplish His purpose of soul-making. Understandably, the origin of evil must now take center-stage. The Bible clearly teaches that evil was introduced into the world through the work of Satan (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8).

"...although we may not be able to determine the extent to which Satan acts in the natural world to bring various calamities and evils upon man, we can know that in the past he has so acted; and even now he may act with divinely prescribed limitations."<sup>22</sup>

We realize that the extent to which Satan is involved in the natural calamities of life is probably beyond our total comprehension.<sup>23</sup> Satan can afflict the world with both physical and moral evil.

Concerning moral evil, Satan is the author of sin (John 8:44); tempts men to sin (Matthew 4:1); lays snares for

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<sup>20</sup> Hick, 294.

<sup>21</sup> Warren, 113

<sup>22</sup> Homer Hailey, *Prayer and Providence* (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 2006), 128.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 127

men (2 Timothy 2:26); takes God's word from the hearts of men (Matthew 13:9); puts wicked purposes into hearts of men (Ephesians 4:27); blinds men to the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4); harasses righteous men (2 Cor. 12:7); accuses men before God (Revelation 12:10); sows tares among God's people (Matthew 13:38-39); resists God's servants (Daniel 10:13; Zechariah 3:1); hinders God's servants (1 Thess. 2:18); sifts God's servants (Luke 22:31); enters into men (Luke 13:3); gives power to the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12); holds the world under his evil influence (1 John 5:19); corrupts sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:15); corrupts godly wisdom (James 3:15); corrupts Christian fellowship (1 Cor. 10:20); and sponsors false religions (2 Corinthians 11:15; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 2:9).

Concerning physical evil, Satan can cause dumbness (Matthew 9:32); can cause blindness (Matthew 12:22); can cause personal injury (Mark 9:18; Job 2:7); can cause defects and deformities (Luke 13:11-17); can cause a loss of livestock (Job 1:13-17); can use forces of nature to afflict men (Job 1:19); and can cause physical death (Job 1:9 ff.).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The passages cited were gleaned from Hailey, *Prayer and Providence*, 127-128; Rex A. Turner, Sr., *Systematic Theology* (Montgomery, AL: Alabama Christian School of Religion, 1989), 90; and Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids,

Concerning the creation of Satan and angels in general, we do not know when they were created. However, we do know that they existed before the creation of the world, for at the creation "the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:4-7). Because of Satan's rebellion against God, his and his angels' torment upon the earth, Jesus speaks of hell being a place prepared for "the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). In the spirit of calling those things which are not yet as though they already were (Romans 4:17), Peter speaks of God who "spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

On at least two different occasions in Scripture, Satan is alluded to by the actions and dominion of an evil ruler. He is thus personified by (1) the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:12 ff.); (2) the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:11 ff.); and (3) possibly a ruler of Rome (Revelation 9:1 ff.). Without much agreement among sources as to the allusion in Revelation 9:1 ff., we shall limit ourselves to a discussion of the passage in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

Beginning with Isaiah 14:12-15, we learn that the king of Babylon acted as did Lucifer (lit. *morning star* or *light-bearer*), when he (1) fell from heaven; and (2) said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt

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MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 141.

my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." Both the king and Lucifer will suffer the same fate in that they shall "be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

Lucifer's sin was pride. Indeed this is the "condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). The same ambition is being pursued by "the man of sin" who is the personification of false religion in the world today (2 Thessalonians 2:1 ff.).

From Ezekiel 28:11-19, we learn that the king of Tyre acted as did Satan who was "in Eden the garden of God." Even though every precious stone was his covering, he wanted more; just as did Satan – "the anointed cherub (*angel*) that covereth." Satan was so appointed by God (v.14), he was upon the holy mountain of God (i.e. in heaven); and he walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire (i.e. in hell, meaning his "covering" was vast – from heaven to hell).

Like Satan, the king was "perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (v.15). Attention then turns to Satan's punishment, as he was filled with violence, sinned, and would be cast as a profane one out of the mountain of God, and destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezekiel 28:14-15 is an especially significant passage as it teaches us that Satan was in fact an angel and that he was indeed created "perfect."

Let us not overlook the fact that Satan is a created being, and created by God (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17; Nehemiah 9:6). The question may now be raised as to how it was possible for him to sin, being in heaven.

Truly, "this is one of the deep mysteries of theology."<sup>25</sup> Let us observe God's choices in creating the angels: (1) He could have created angels as He did animals, as mere brutes without individual autonomy; or (2) God could have created them *posse peccare et posse non peccare*, that is, *to sin or not to sin*.<sup>26</sup> According to His infinite wisdom, God chose to create the angels as spiritual creatures who are possessive of free-will.

According to his free-will Satan authored sin. Ezekiel describes Satan with a "heart (that) was lifted up because of thy beauty" (i.e. pride); and "corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness" (lit self-corrupted). The same fate described in Isaiah 14 is described here, note: "I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee..." (vv.17-19).

From Isaiah and Ezekiel we learn that Satan was corrupted by undue ambition, a desire to surpass God,

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<sup>25</sup> Thiessen, 136

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



selfishness, discontentment, and the craving to get what rightfully belonged to someone else.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Satan was not content to rebel alone, but convinced other angels to keep not their first estate, but leave their own habitation (Jude 6). The dramatic scene is unfolded before our eyes in Revelation 12:3-10. And, even though this passage is highly figurative, as is appropriate for apocalyptic literature, it seems clear that evil originated in the spiritual realm and not on earth. Naturally, a question comes to mind as to whether or not this could happen again in the spiritual realm of heaven.

Seeing that the devil will be removed, obviously he and his angels will not be able to tempt those in heaven. Moreover, if it is possible for a person to become so hardened by sin as to reach a point where it is impossible for them to repent (Hebrews 3:12; 6:4 ff.), would it not also follow that one could become so resolved to live righteously through the process of living faithfully as for it to become impossible to fall away?

Heaven will consist of those who are determined to love and fellowship God and one another forever, and they will be free from the devil and all things that can defile (Revelation 21:27).

God has told us that in heaven all things will be made new. "And God

shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4). However God chooses to accomplish this feat will be perfectly satisfying to the residents of heaven.

Satan desires to convince men to rebel against God and refrain from reciprocating God's love and fellowship with man. We are thus engaged in spiritual warfare "against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

#### LIVING IN A WORLD WITH EVIL, PAIN, AND SUFFERING

The New Testament provides essential insight for our study of the problem of evil. A very constant theme throughout Christ's covenant is that of suffering as a Christian while keeping the faith, and even growing through sufferings.

One example of such an exhortation follows: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Peter teaches, "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

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<sup>27</sup> Thiessen, 137

that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:8-10).

Paul encourages, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:16-18).

John was shown that we should, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Our Savior has said, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved (Matthew 10:22) .... And "he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (vv.38-39).

Such passages teach us to suffer as Christians and glorify God on this behalf (1 Peter 4:16). Only when we

face and overcome sufferings in this manner will we be following in the steps of Christ (1 Peter 2:21). Herein is one of the great challenges of the Christian religion. Not only are we told we are going to suffer (2 Timothy 3:12), but we are told that it is unacceptable to relinquish our faith because of suffering (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).

Through these struggles God desires that we come to accept life's meaning, rather than seeking fulfillment in the things of the here and now. Clearly life's meaning is not to be found in riches or the accumulation of material possessions (Luke 12:15). Our treasure must be heavenly (Matthew 6:19-21) and the kingdom of God should be our first priority (Matthew 6:33). The meaning of life has been stated by Solomon: "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Only when we have the true meaning of life firmly fixed in our hearts will we be able to overcome trials and sufferings. Only then will our sorrow be turned to joy, and our weeping to laughter.

## CONCLUSION

We have now reached the end of our study on the problem of evil. We believe it is not contrary to the nature of God for evil to exist. We understand that evil may be categorized as

being either moral or physical. We have concluded that God is infinite in all His attributes, including love, power, and wisdom. Concerning God's creation, we believe it is because of the abundance of His love that God created man, for He desires to love and fellowship His creatures. It is through His infinite power that He created the world and all things therein. It is by His infinite wisdom that God created the world with the purpose He had in mind.

Concerning evil, we do not believe that evil originated with God, but Satan. We believe Satan is also a free-moral being, who through the hardening of his heart by pride is given wholly to evil. He has the power (Hebrews 2:14) and the desire to afflict man, but only according to God's approval (James 4:13-15).

God allows such afflictions to occur so that we might be strengthened, chastised, and even corrected (Hebrews 12:5 ff.). God has told us that by overcoming such suffering our faith will be made perfect, and our entrance to heaven granted (Acts 14:22).

Man must respond to evil by seeking victory in Christ. After becoming a Christian, a soul must remain focused on the prize, and seek to grow closer to God and more dependent upon Him in such times. As Christians, we must accept that through "...the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that per-

isheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

We realize that if not for sufferings, there would be no victory. We cannot know the sweetness of victory until we have tasted the bitterness of defeat. Evil and sufferings are part of this world because God saw a need for such trials to exist. Given the fact that we are free to choose, such evil was also inevitable.

Through such trials, often brought about by our own decisions, we can become faithful or faithless. Through sufferings our souls can be strengthened or lost. In either case it is clear that the soul of man will live somewhere forever. Truly the sufferings of the present world are not to be compared to the glory which is to be revealed in us. Only through Christ do we gain this victory, and only through Christ will evil be defeated.

#### APPLICATION FOR TODAY

The problem of evil, pain, and suffering has no easy answers. One might very well group this subject into that category of unknowable certainties, such as the providence of God. While we cannot perfectly explain every instance and event of providence to our satisfaction, we trust in it and know it is real. So it is with evil, pain, and suffering.

Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do good things happen

to bad people? One of the most difficult questions a person can be called upon to answer comes from a person who is facing a trial and asks, "Why is this happening to me?" When given prosperity, that same person could justifiably ask, "Why is this happening to me?" In the later instance, we would be quick to answer, "Because God loves you." But, would this not also be true for the former question as well? According to the writer of Hebrews, such is exactly the case. He writes, "For whom the Lord loves, He chastens..." (Hebrews 12:6). James instructs us to "count it all joy" when facing life's trials, "knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience." (James 1:2-3)

It seems that when the question of suffering is asked, that person is seeking a "one size fits all" answer. Much to their dismay, such an answer does not exist. However, that does not mean that the answer may not lie within the realm of several possibilities.

For instance, one may be suffering as a trial of faith (1 Peter 1:7). Another may be suffering as a means of chastisement from God (Hebrews 12:4-10).

A person may be suffering pain as a result of the working of Satan. Such was the case with Job, Christ, and His apostles. Jesus teaches that the Adversary has come "to steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). The writer of

Hebrews also stated that Satan has the power of death (Hebrews 2:14).

Moreover, someone's suffering may be due simply to the nature of life. Paul taught us that such trials were "common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Solomon wrote of "a time to weep" and "a time to mourn" (Ecclesiastes 3:4).

Sometimes we suffer in consequence to the selfish and sinful actions of another (or even of self). Such has been the case since the time of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel.

The most important question in this discussion remains, "What do we do with suffering?" Sufferings will occur. Our faith will be tested by such occurrences. We will suffer loss in this life. But, how shall we react in such instances?

### **Will We Disbelieve?**

Some souls lose faith when they are tried by evil, pain, and suffering. Such a person will express a loss of faith by claiming that if God truly existed, He would not allow their suffering to happen.

The fallacy in such an approach is that God is blamed, rather than considering the other causes we have mentioned. Such a person has inferred that God or the non-existence of God is to blame, but this is not a necessary inference. It does not follow that all suffering is from the hand of God. Neither does it follow that God allows for suffering to occur

simply because He is non-existent in our lives. Such was not the case with Job, nor was it the case with Christ, or the apostles.

In such cases of disbelief God is blamed, rather than considering His cause. Evil does not originate with God, and He does not tempt us with evil (James 1:13). Yet, God does allow our faith to be tried and to become stronger by such trials as a means of perfecting us and making us more useful for His service.

Such was the case with Jeremiah. In the beginning of his ministry, he faced sufferings which were mild in comparison to the suffering he would later endure. Concerning these sufferings, God asked His prophet, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" (Jeremiah 12:5)

We live in a world that is marred by sin. Sufferings can go from bad to worse. God may indeed be looking down through the corridor of time and know of some greater challenge we will be called to face. He may be allowing something to test us in order to prepare us for that which is greater.

By helping us through the consequences of life in such a world, God is bringing us closer to Him. In this process, however, Satan can hurt us. The decisions of others can hurt us. Yet, we are promised a new world free from the influence of Satan and the harm he can inflict. We must not

draw back unto perdition, but believe unto the saving of the soul (Hebrews 10:39).

### **Will We Lose Heart?**

Souls often fall away when tested (cf. Luke 8:13). Such a soul can usually be heard saying, "If God loved me, He would not have let this happen to me." Again, God is blamed rather than considering the other causes. Again, God is blamed rather than considering His cause. Trials are used by God as a means of revealing our weaknesses to us.

Concerning his personal trials and sufferings, Paul explains that these sufferings occurred, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:10-15).

The great apostle is encouraging us to handle our sufferings as did Christ, as did he. Paul would go on to say, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

We have not yet apprehended all that God has for us. We may not yet understand why certain things happen in our lives. But we can rest in the assurance that "God shall reveal even this unto you."

### **Will We Trust and Obey?**

Peter writes of the trying of our faith (1 Peter 1:7) and encourages us to follow in Christ's steps when facing such trials (2:21). The exhortation is clear, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (1 Peter 3:17).

Peter explains, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief,

or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 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? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (4:12-19).

Even though we may not know why we are called upon to suffer, we must remain vigilant (1 Peter 5:8) and steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:9). We must have an attitude which is expressed thusly, "I must keep the faith. I must endure" (cf. 2 Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 2:10).

We may not know why, and we may not understand all of His reasons, but we can know God will keep us, and save us in the end. Such is the disposition of a person who has heaven in mind.

We must all pass through trials of some kind (Acts 14:22). Yet, "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" (James 1:12).

# Expository Preaching

Corey Sawyers

“Now abide topical, textual, and expository, but the greatest of these is expository.” Those words title a lesson presented by Mike Vestal at 2017’s Polishing the Pulpit. What a true statement! Students of homiletics will note topical and textual as the two major types of sermons. Some may add expository as a third category. The truth is that all lessons should be expository.

This kind of sermon does precisely what the name would imply. When one sees “expository,” probably the first term that comes to mind is “expose.” An expository sermon seeks to expose the text. So, in a general sense, all sermons should be expository in that they should only endeavor to expose what the Bible says. However, in a more specific way, expository sermons are a distinct way of sharing God’s word. Though often neglected in favor of topical sermons, expository preaching should be a focus of ministry. The balance of this article will expose four reasons why expository sermons are so needed today.

First, expository sermons are needed today because of what they are. False notions and ideas about expository sermons keep those that hold them from appreciating this kind of lesson. For example, expository is not a running commentary. Expository is not a series of disconnected thoughts

strung together with a cursory or artificial meaning behind those thoughts.

Expository is not just a chopped-up text. Expository is not the reading a verse, explaining it, and repeating verse-by-verse, as is common in adult Bible classes. Expository is not just the reading and linking together of a passage with the speaker’s comments.

What *expository* helps us to see its importance, even though defining it is not without difficulty. “There is still no generally accepted definition of expository preaching. Many definitions have been constructed, but confusion still reigns” (Bryson 12). Almost every book or article on the subject defines it differently. Perhaps MacArthur said it most succinctly by writing, “expository preaching focuses predominantly on the text(s) under consideration with its (their) context(s)” (7-8).

What distinguishes an expository from a textual or exegetical sermon? In a textual lesson, a text provides the main points of a discourse. In an exegetical sermon, the passage determines the sermon’s entire structure. In an expository sermon, a section of scripture is studied to identify the primary theme (or the secondary theme in some cases). That theme is then presented from that text. A true expository sermon is one that centers

on a Bible passage (usually several verses in length) with its theme, thesis, major and minor divisions coming solely from that passage. It exposes the meaning of the text being covered in context.

Second, expository sermons are needed today because of what they do. The positive results of expository sermons are many. Just a few are given below for consideration. However, please note how they build on one another.

- 1.) Expository preaching allows us to honor God and His word. Instead of using scripture to prove one's argument (even if said argument is sound), the expository sermon uses scripture to explain what the Lord intended that passage to teach. It honors God's word as the law and Him as the authority by sticking to the message of the text. Hearers are less likely to leave a service thinking, "That preacher is awesome." Alternatively, they are more likely to leave a service thinking, "That passage is awesome!"
- 2.) Expository preaching follows the trajectory of a book. Expository style is concerned not only with the message of the text but also how it fits in the entire book.
- 3.) Expository preaching achieves balance in preaching. Rather than relying on pet verses focusing only on specific issues, exposition requires one to expose the bal-

anced and varied messages in God's word.

- 4.) Expository preaching creates a broader knowledge base, particularly when many series of expository lessons are preached. Rummage writes of the benefits of expository series (79-85). By exposing the text of several books over the course of a year, a large number of issues and themes, positives and negatives, encouragements and edifications are covered.
- 5.) Expository preaching makes the preacher dig. That may not seem like a positive at first reading. However, it is beneficial for preachers to study. One can easily string together several verses with a common word or phrase. Expository sermons require a man of God to spend time with and in the text.

Third, expository sermons are needed today because of what they involve. The approach of developing an expository lesson is one that requires proper exegetical study, correct homiletics, and a clear understanding of the needs of the listener. Here is what that involves.

- One must choose a text, either a book for a series of lessons or a single text for one sermon.
- One must pray. Prayer is the step most overlooked. One should



never stand before men without first kneeling before the Lord.

- One must read and reread the text several times. One must review it while taking notes. The patterns, breaks, subject matters with which it deals, and how it fits into the bigger picture of the book should be observed.
- One must meditate upon it to contemplate the central message of the passage under consideration.
- One must study. Keywords must be defined. The section should be outlined. The truth to be taught and application for the listener must be determined.
- One must write a thesis statement that reflects the main point of the passage.
- One must use the text to prove and support the thesis.
- One must incorporate illustrations and application to help the modern listener grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Fourth, expository sermons are needed today because of what they reflect. Preaching is necessary because it informs the lost on how to be saved (Romans 10:14-16). Within the word of God is the only place that powerful, saving message is found (Romans 1:16). Preachers must be diligent to declare the whole counsel

of God (Acts 20:26-27). Expository preaching ensures this is done.

Notice two examples. Example one is found in Nehemiah 8 when the people gather to hear Ezra read the law. As he does, he was also “translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8, NASB). The word rendered “translating,” means to make distinct or declare. It carries the idea of separating, distinguishing, and explaining (Brown 831). The idea is that the message was presented from the text and then explained so that the lesson of the text could be understood. That is expository preaching.

Example two is found in Luke 24 and the events on the road to Emmaus. When Jesus begins to teach, the Bible says, “Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:27). When Jesus “explained” the text, he “clarified” as the Greek word means, “to make it understandable” (Bauer 244). Jesus presented the scriptures and then explained it so the lesson of the text could be understood. That is expository preaching.

One needs only to consider what expository sermons are, what they do, what they involve, and what they reflect to see why expository preaching is so needed today.

This kind of sermon exposes the text. It produces positive results for

the speaker and the hearer. It involves rich, intense, and detailed study.

Finally, it follows the style used by both men of God and God the Son. The goal of preaching is to change lives. Nothing any man could say would do so more thoroughly than exposing those lives to God's word. As the world slips closer and closer to eternity, now more than ever, expository preaching is needed to expose humanity to the message of God's word!

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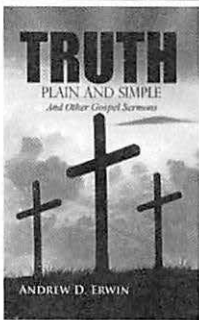
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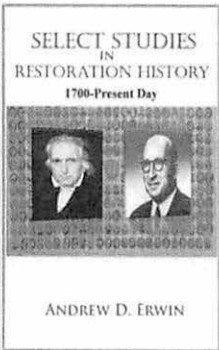
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# Jesus Christ Had Friends

John T. Polk II

Roman Catholic Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano` has charged the former Archbishop of Washington, Theodore McCarrick, with predatory homosexual practices. McCarrick, who has resigned from the College of Cardinals, was brought to the attention of Jorge Mario Bergoglio (aka "Pope Francis") who became "Supreme Pontiff" (aka "Pope") on March 13, 2013. Once Vigano's letter was printed in media, Bergoglio has refused to address the issue of Roman Catholicism's cover-up and ignoring of predatory homosexual practices over the years.

This is spiritually important to Roman Catholics, because:

"The Church's teaching about the authority and ministry of the Pope within the Church places, also by the express will of Christ, that authority and ministry at the very center of her hierarchical structure. The universal authority of the Roman Pontiff, witnessed to throughout the history of Christianity and proposed as a dogma of faith by the Council of Florence in 1439,[19] was given a detailed dogmatic explanation by Vatican Council I in 1870 in its dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ (Pastor aeternus). This document, in turn, was taken up and confirmed by Vatican Council II in 1964....

Christ is the Shepherd; Christ is the Bishop. This is Peter's message because when Jesus promised him the primacy Peter heard him speak of my Church, not your Church. All bishops, with Peter at their head, are vicars, that is, they take the place of Christ on earth. To enable them to fulfill their mission of service he conferred on them the necessary power.

"The Papacy and the Primacy of Peter" by Pedro Rodriguez from:  
[www.catholicworldreport.com](http://www.catholicworldreport.com)

***The Roman Catholic Church (R.C.C.) claims their "bishops" "are vicars, that is, they take the place of Christ on earth."***

**ANSWER:** Of Jesus Christ the New Testament teaches: "He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:17-18).

(1) Only Jesus Christ, not "the Pope," was Creator of "all things;"

(2) Only Jesus Christ, not "the Pope," is the "head of the body, the church;"

(3) Only Jesus Christ, not any dead "Pope," has been raised from the dead, so that only Jesus Christ, not a

“Pope,” should “have the preeminence.”

No one takes “the place of Christ on earth!” Jesus Christ, not Peter, was singled out in the New Testament as the Head of the church. No one on earth has ever, or should ever, be called “His Eminence” for Jesus Christ has all the “Eminence” in the church.

*The R.C. C. calls its human head “Pope,” which is Latin for “Papa or Father.”*

**ANSWER:** Concerning Pharisaic use of spiritual titles, Jesus said, “But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ” (Matthew 23:5-10).

The terms “Rabbi,” “father,” “teacher,” all may have physical application, but none of these should ever be given to someone who claims to be our source of spiritual guidance! All who have used as such have erred greatly. Jesus Christ, His Church, and through the New Testament written by

His Apostles, are all whom God has ordained to guide souls to Heaven.

*The R.C.C. “Pope” refuses to explain to his church the predatory sexual practices of his hierarchy.*

**ANSWER:** Jesus said to His disciples, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:14-15).

(1) The R.C.C. “Pope” must consider his people “servants,” because he doesn’t let them know “what his master is doing,” and doesn’t consider them “friends,” because he withholds from them information they need to know about their leaders, Therefore he doesn’t represent Jesus Christ.

(2) The R.C.C. “Pope” has to explain practices among his peers, things that Jesus never had to explain. Thus, the “Pope” doesn’t represent Christ on earth. The honesty of Scripture tells us that though Peter denied Jesus and Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, never was there ever even one incident among the Apostles of degenerate behavior.

(3) Jesus Christ makes known “all things that I heard from My Father,” but the “Pope” either is ignorant of what The Father has said on that subject, or refuses to make it known to his people. In either case, the “Pope”

doesn't take the place of Christ on earth.

**4. The R.C.C. "Pope" has no power from God to substantiate his claims.**

**ANSWER:** When did Jesus confer powers on a "Pope?"

(1) *Peter was not the first "Pope!"* When Jesus said, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The name "Peter" is the Greek word "*petros*" (pebble) but this "rock" is the Greek word "*petra*" (ledge). Jesus had said to "Simon Peter" (John 1:40), "You shall be called Cephass (which is translated, A Stone [Greek *petros*])" (John 1:42). Why did Jesus not give Peter the name "Petra" (feminine form) in this passage, to relieve any confusion later? Jesus, and never Peter, is referred to as *petra* in the New Testament: Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 4:8. After this declaration of Jesus in Matthew 16:18, the Apostles were still asking Jesus, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1).

(2) *When, and upon whom, did Peter ever confer power on his successor?* If it is not in Scripture (and it isn't!), then the Holy Spirit already has said: "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

There is no miraculous working of the Holy Spirit conferring power on anyone since the New Testament was completed.

(3) *Paul condemned as "divisions" (Greek schism) any who followed Peter, not Jesus, as the Authoritative Head of the church:* "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). All who use Peter (or any self-proclaimed successor) as their authority have separated themselves from Jesus Christ.

This decades-old, on-going scandal of corruption within the Roman Catholic Church has been laid at the feet of Jorge Mario Bergoglio (aka "Pope Francis"), and he has failed to act like, or identify with, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). Obey Jesus Christ, not men.

# What Do You Know about Despair?

Ronald Bryant

Despair is a word used to reference a very weighty and difficult human experience. Yet, it is not a word that is commonly used. Instead, it is common to hear people speak of someone being upset, or depressed, or very sad. It is worthy to note that such terms, but especially the word “despair” serve to describe a condition that can actually be understood only by those that experience it.

A talkative young physician, chattering away at the bedside of old gentleman, was glibly speaking to him of the circumstances of his case, and the difficulties yet to be borne. Too readily, he spoke of the old gentleman’s despair. In a moment, he was silenced when the old gentleman, almost in a whisper, yet with conviction, said to him, “Young man, you know nothing of my despair.”

No moment of life, through which one passes, can compare to that moment when one despairs of life. It is a personal moment of woeful, even terrifying isolation. It is a moment of personal anguish that is deserving of the designation of “anguish of soul.” It is a moment in which one cries out from the depths of his being, asking again and again – why? In that moment, no voice gives reply, no vision appears, and no clear understanding is supplied. There is no reply and none

standing by and merely observing is able to explain, let alone remove the deep, pervasive, and overpowering weight of this thing called “despair.”

What can a loving person do for one who is facing this thing called “despair?” What would you desire from those who love you and who would comfort you? Admittedly, it is wise to think through such things before they occur, and to prepare one’s heart to serve. The communication of genuine love and concern is worthy of our most prayerful consideration.

I am no expert on the subject, yet I believe the following is worthy of consideration: The wisest possible course of action may well be silence, respectful silence. Possibly, a caring and tender touch or gentle embrace may be the only gift one can give. As one caretaker once said, “To pretend to understand the anguish of the despairing is inappropriate to the point of being obscene.” To offer advice or counsel, when none is requested is patently offensive. Yet, to avoid the person who is in despair, or to walk away, borders on being criminal.

What can a loving person do for one who is despairing? The following is only suggestive: Respectfully watch with them and quietly pray for them. Additionally, if they weep – respectfully weep with them.

Two events in the life of the Savior suggest the appropriateness of these responses. When Lazarus died, his sorrowing sisters, burdened with grief, expressed their thoughts in words that evidenced their despair. Jesus readily and as fully as possible entered into their grief. The English text states simply, *"He wept"* (the original language indicates that *"he wailed"* – (John 11:35).

The next event occurred the night of His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, in that dark and difficult moment, Jesus sorrowed and prayed. The burden of his anguish was so great that He *"sweat as it were great drops of blood."* The mystery of His anguish, and its depth, is even increased as He requested of certain of the disciples that they watch with Him while He prayed. He requested not their prayers, but that they watch with Him while He prayed. He knew they could not remove the despair that He knew, yet He did ask for them to do what they could, to care for Him in a specific way. Someone has said, that this is the only selfish request that Jesus ever made. Be that as it may, it is observed that He asked those dear to Him to watch with Him.

We would do well to remember that it is not our task, nor our lot, to remove the despair, or grief, or sorrow that others may know. Nor are we obligated to have "the right words," or "the solution." It is not our responsibility to get them to talk, or weep, or to pray. It is our privilege to be with them, if they so desire or permit; to enter into their grief; to weep with them if they weep. It is our privilege to walk with them, or to talk with them as they lead the way, and to pray with them if they so desire. We can quietly pray for them without their notice. Finally, it is ours to remember and to respect the fact that we do not know the depths of their despair, and we never will.



"I knew that new couple would perceive me as judgmental and critical, simply by the odd way they were dressed."

# A Critical Review of *Recreating the Cosmos* by Jeremy Barrier

Roy Davison

[First published by brotherhoodnews.com on August 21, 2018]

Jeremy W. Barrier is Director of the Graduate Program and Associate Professor of Biblical Literature at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama.

This book resulted from his work during ten months as a Humboldt Scholar at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Regensburg in Germany.

The book consists of 110 pages and is published by Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon. Copyright 2017. It has an attractive cover and although the type is rather small it is quite readable. Electronic versions are available.

This book is not a commentary on Galatians, and does not claim to be. It is a “reading” (personal interpretation) of Galatians by Jeremy Barrier. He also describes it as a “series of meditations” (p. 108). This gives the author much leeway to write whatever comes to his mind.

He is a good story-teller and his many accounts of personal experiences are interesting, although it is not always clear how they relate to Galatians.

It is not a scholarly work. Key terms with various possible meanings are not defined and sources are not documented, except that a bibliography is provided at the back.

The author states his aim: “The purpose of this book is to present a meditation on Paul’s text to the Galatians with the intent purpose of reclaiming Paul for those of faith, like myself, who have grown tired of thinking that Christians are the people who draw lines, make distinctions, and police borders. This book is an attempt to shift our vision of Paul away from one that sees him as one whose major role was the policing of religious borders” (p. 6).

The fundamental question then is: Are Christians supposed to draw lines, make distinctions and police borders? And, what does Paul teach about this in Galatians?

Although Barrier does not state this specifically, except that on page 4 he mentions that a wrong idea has prevailed for 500 years, he is opposing the common understanding of Galatians, chapter 1, by Protestant reformers. After discussing the curse Paul pronounces on any who change the gospel, Martin Luther states in his



commentary on Galatians 1:9, "In spite of this emphatic denunciation so many accept the pope as the supreme judge of the Scriptures." John Calvin, discussing Galatians 1:9, states: "To what poor subterfuges do the Papists resort, in order to escape from the Apostle's declaration!"

The Protestant reformers believed that Paul's strong statement in chapter 1 entitled them to classify Roman Catholicism as being accursed by God because of its departures from the original gospel. Were they wrong? I think not.

To accomplish his purpose of discrediting people "who draw lines, make distinctions, and police borders" Barrier must deal with Galatians 1:8, 9. Thus he has an entire chapter "On Maledictions (Or On Cursing)." In this chapter he misrepresents and maligns Paul in an attempt to escape the obvious meaning of what Paul says.

He begins the chapter thus: "Okay, I admit that a title such as 'On Maledictions' is not very obvious. Well, the only alternative title I could think of was 'Damn You All to Hell'" (p. 14).

Does that fairly represent Paul's statement? Or is it an attempt to prejudice the reader against Paul?

What does Paul say: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so

now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8, 9).

When facing departures from the original gospel we must draw lines, make distinctions and police borders!

Barrier leads up to *his* quotation of this passage in a flippant way with the following false description of Paul's statement: "Paul follows his greeting with an intense curse; calling upon the gods sitting in the clouds to rise up from their lofty beds and thrones, to take spears, gauntlets, arrows, and swords in hand, and descend upon the mountainous regions of Galatia bringing utter ruin and destruction upon these inhabitants. Well, not every inhabitant – just a fell swoop lopping the heads off of just those who receive Paul's letter" (p. 15).

There is much wrong with this description. (1) He is trying to associate Paul's statement with heathen curses rather than relating it to Old Testament teaching. A curse of God is the opposite of a blessing of God (see Genesis 12:3; Deuteronomy 11:26, 29; 28:16-20; 29:14-20; 30:19). (2) He first says that Paul is calling on heathen gods to rain destruction on all the inhabitants of Galatia. He "corrects" this to "Well, not every inhabitant – just a fell swoop lopping the heads off of just those who receive Paul's letter." Since he admits that the first part of the statement was wrong, why did he leave it in the book? But

his “correction” is also wrong! The curse did not apply to those who received Paul’s letter, but only to false teachers, including Paul himself if he should depart from the original gospel! (3) This description is not only false, but extremely distasteful, disrespectful to Paul and the Holy Spirit, and maybe even blasphemous.

Barrier demonstrates a lack of respect for Paul: “If an angel descended in my presence and explained to me good news in a new way, I would be inclined to listen; quite frankly, I don’t think I would care what Paul thought. Clearly, Paul is coming across as quite an arrogant ole fellow, and maybe he needs to calm down a bit” (p. 18).

To “substantiate” his accusation of arrogance, he states: “This is a man who believed that he had actually been called up to heaven by God (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)” (p. 19). Barrier says that Paul considered himself to be “the chief of staff, the majority-whip, the hit man for the mob boss...” (p. 20). Where does Barrier get this? This is not a meditation. This is a wild imagination and again, one that borders on blasphemy.

We are not surprised then when Barrier asks: “Does this mean that I approve of all of Paul’s words, methods, tactics, and approaches? No!” (p. 21). Paul wrote: “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things

which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Barrier does not view Paul’s accounts of visions as being reliable: “Further, in Galatians 1 and also 2 Corinthians 12, the texts (amongst others) seem to imply that Paul was prone to having apocalyptic auditory and visionary experiences, where he claimed to have been interacting with ‘the Lord,’ while the revelations of god are unfolded before him” (p. 103).

It is strange that in the beginning of the book “God” is capitalized, but in the latter part, it is written with a small letter, “god”.

In this review I have focused on the stated purpose, “to present a meditation on Paul’s text to the Galatians with the intent purpose of reclaiming Paul for those of faith, like myself, who have grown tired of thinking that Christians are the people who draw lines, make distinctions, and police borders” (p. 6).

In Galatians, Paul’s lines are drawn so forcefully and closely, however, that Barriers “meditations” just demonstrate his own lack of respect for Paul and his writings.

His book contains many more untruths and private interpretations that could be exposed but this will suffice to reveal the approach and nature of the book.

# Cause to Blush

Owen Olbricht

As the morality and spirituality of the nation of Israel declined after the reign of David, it sometimes became so corrupt the people lived sinful lives with no sense of shame. They were not embarrassed by their immoral acts, and had lost their ability to blush.

Has the United States become like Israel that had become morally decayed? God ask Jeremiah and answered concerning Israel,

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush?” (Jer. 6:15; 8:12).

## Reflection of Our Culture

Seemingly our nation has followed sin to the point we have seared our consciences (1 Tim. 4:2) and are unable to blush.

A recent incident that took place May 5 at the Cornell University in Ithaca, New York may be representative of many in our present culture.

As reported in New York Daily News, May 9, Letitia Chai stripped down to her bra and underwear as she presented her senior thesis May 5 at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY.

The following is taken from the report of this incident by Chincbet Elizalde.

## The Report

Chai appeared before professor Rebekkah Waggoner dressed in a blue button down shirt and short cutoff jeans. Chai asked her if the way she was dressed was all right for the presentation of her thesis. Cornell has no dress code but stated speakers were to “dress appropriately for the person [they] are to present.” Chai affirmed this was what she would wear, and was accepted.

Chai addressed the forty-four students present:

“I am more than Asian. I am more than a woman. I am more than Letitia Chai. I am a human being, and I ask you to take a leap of faith, to take this step – or rather, this next strip – in our movement and join me in revealing to each other and seeing each other for who we really are: members of the human race. We are so triumphant, but really we are equals.”

As a result of this encouragement Chai and twenty-eight of the forty-four who were present stripped down to their underwear.

Eleven students wrote in defending the professor Waggoner and Chai

“We support Letitia’s commitment to the cause of women’s rights...regardless of race, gender,

color, creed, sexuality, or appearance...[we have] frustration with systematic oppression that is a part of the fabric of this country.”

None of the 1,995 faculty at Cornell have voiced criticism of Chai.

The reporter who made the report commented, “Sending your child to college is like playing Russian roulette with their values.”

### **Our Present Culture**

Many things in our present culture are now accepted that were frowned on and rejected one hundred year ago. Same-sex marriage was unheard of and was rejected. Homosexual was a word that was not used in polite society. Divorce and abortion were seldom considered an option. The body was clothed in modest taste. Brutal killings of innocent bystanders were unusual. Vulgar language and jokes in the presence of women was out of place. Even “with child” was a more acceptable expression than pregnant. These now are viewed by many as old fashion.

During the 50 years of campaigning I found a change in attitudes in the populous of the United States. From 1964 to 2014, I led teams of university students to knock doors in all the twenty six states east of the Mississippi River, Washington D. C. included, and seven states west of the Mississippi. Over eight hundred students during those years were involved,

resulting in over three thousand baptisms.

### **Change in Attitudes**

In the sixties when we went to the doors we took polls. Ninety-four percent of those who responded said that they believed in God with about the same percentage who believed in the Bible.

Those who were living together and unmarried usually said in an elusive manner that they had a partner living with them. More recently, we were told, as a matter-of-fact by the live-in couples, that they had a boyfriend or girlfriend. Sometimes a young woman said she was struggling with an abortion.

Over the years interest in and concern for religion and the Bible has diminished greatly. Instead of women discussing cooking and sowing, and men fishing and baseball as well as the Bible, smart phones have taken over our younger generations.

### **Conclusion**

In the not too long ago, those with immoral lifestyles lived under the cover of darkness (John 3:19, 20). They now have come out of the closet, so to speak, and openly and unashamedly practice and uphold their sinful ways of living.

Noah unsuccessfully preached to the ungodly world in which he lived (2 Pet. 2:5).

Righteous Lot "...was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)" (2 Pet. 2:7, 8). Noah and Lot did what they could in the culture in which they lived

If we have any natural sense of right and wrong, we will be ashamed of the evil living of those around us. Our attitude toward them should be the same as that of Noah and Lot, which should motivate us to follow them as we live within a society much like the one in which they lived.

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---

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Speaker – Mike Hixson

Breakout Session 7:00 – “What’s the Most Important Thing I Can Do?”

Men’s Class with Mike Hixson; Ladies’ Class with Nancy Hixson

---

Monday Evening Lesson 6:00 – “How Can I Get My Children and Grandchildren Interested in Spiritual Things?”

Speaker – Mike Hixson

Breakout Session 7:00 – Purity, Self-Control, and Respect

Men’s Class with Mike Hixson; Ladies’ Class with Nancy Hixson

---

Tuesday Evening Lesson 6:00 – What is Appropriate Discipline?

Speaker – Gary Massey

Breakout Session 7:00 – The Well-Balanced Life

Men’s Class with Gary Massey; Ladies’ Class with Michelle Massey

---

Wednesday Evening Lesson 6:00 – “Good Understanding Gains Favor; But the Way of Transgressors Is Hard”

Speaker Gary Massey

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# Gospel Gleaner

*For the Lord, His Word, and His Church*



## Contemporary Issues in Christian Ethics

*Let Us Not Be Found Wrestling against God*

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## **“The Churches of Christ Greet You” (Romans 16:16)**

The West Fayetteville Church of Christ is pleased to bring you the *Gospel Gleaner*. Are you familiar with the churches of Christ? Have you ever attended our services before?

Faithful churches of Christ desire to return to the New Testament and to be the church of the Bible. In the Bible, we find that the church is the assembly of all those who have been called out of the darkness of sin by obeying the gospel. These souls are added by God to the spiritual body of Christ, which is His church (Acts 2:42, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23).

The church belongs to Christ. It is His church. We, therefore, seek to honor Christ as our Lord in our worship, teaching, and daily walk.

One can be added to this sacred assembly and spiritual kingdom by hearing the gospel preached (Romans 10:17); believing the facts concerning Christ as revealed in the gospel (John 8:24); repenting of sin (Luke 13:3, 5); confessing faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10); and by being baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:11-13; Galatians 3:26-27) to wash sins away by the blood of Christ (Acts 22:16; Ephesians 1:7).

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Andy Erwin, Editor

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com). The West Fayetteville Church of Christ reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, notes, and articles to publish.

## **Gospel Gleaner**

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WRITERS FOR THIS ISSUE

**Ronald Bryant**  
*Huntsville, Alabama*

**Gerald Cowan**  
*Marion, Illinois*

**Raymond Elliott**  
*Prattville, Alabama*

**Andy Erwin**  
*Fayetteville, Tennessee*

**Jackson Erwin**  
*Elizabethon, Tennessee*

**Mel Futrell**  
*Birmingham, Alabama*

**Mike Kiser**  
*Sylcauga, Alabama*

**Denny Petrillo**  
*Denver, Colorado*

**Andy Robison**  
*Moundsville, West Virginia*

**Ron Thomas**  
*Chillicothe, Ohio*

**Robert Waggoner**  
*Montgomery, Alabama*

## **The Christian and the LGBT Movement**

*A Question of Honor, Approval,  
Acceptance, and Inclusion*

Gerald Cowan

What would David Lipscomb say about LGBTQ attitudes and activities on campus at the university which still (for how long?) bears his name? What would George Pepperdine say about similar affairs at his namesake university? Some will say the question is irrelevant – a dead person cannot offer opinions on this or any other current affair, cannot respond approvingly or disapprovingly to anything done in his or her name. But it is not irrelevant since the inclusion of one's name in any enterprise or organization implies the approval of the one named. That would apply to schools, hospitals, businesses, churches, and religions, especially those which have Christ or Christian in their name or title.

For example, to say we are a church of Christ implies that Christ accepts, approves, and authorizes the group and its doctrines, attitudes, and activities. To say I am a Christian implies the same and more: it implies that I accept, agree to, and abide by the principles and stipulations of Jesus Christ, that I am a proper reflection and representative of Christ. If it is

not true, the honorable thing to do is remove his name from any reference to myself and, perhaps, to any and all my associates.

Now we are ready to answer and discuss the Christian's response to the LGBTQ movement. We are not discussing current cultural, social, political, national, or historical concerns, but only properly defined Christian concerns. Please note, we are not interested in the attitudes of religions, cults, churches and/or denominations.

We are not discussing atheism's or agnosticism's response or even pseudo or counterfeit Christendom's response, but only a true Christian's response. It is individual, not collective. It is personal and private but must sometimes be public. And there's the rub: LGBTQ generally refuses to allow even private and personal demurral but demands openly public welcoming assimilation.

God must be remade in the current image and stipulations of LGBTQ or be rejected and replaced by a "friendlier" god more compliant and accommodating to current concepts and desires.

The LGBTQ god is on a takeover mission – casualties are expected and collateral damage to society is irrelevant. "Resistance is futile; you will be assimilated," to cite a mantra from a once wildly-popular science fiction television and movie program (the "Borg" is believed in as "science" to which all must yield and bow).

## JUST AS I AM

By many accounts Charlotte Elliot's song with that title is the favorite hymn of "invitation" and acceptance used in Christian churches today. The song's premise is easily misunderstood and misapplied, like Robert Frost's "Home is where, when you have to go there they have to take you in."

No implication that any change is necessary – whatever you've done and whatever you've become are irrelevant and home has to accept you back in. So people understand that whatever you've done and whatever you've become when you go to the Lord He must and will accept you. Liar, thief, murderer, adulterer, idolater?

It's OK, everything is acceptable. Just come as you are (because you can't change what you are and you can't be anything except what you are) and God will welcome you. Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer or questioning persons and groups have co-opted the premise. All (including God) must accept you for who and what you are; you are what you are and shouldn't try to change what can't be or needn't be changed. You should be allowed to come just as you are and be welcomed, honored, and assimilated – no matter what your inclusion will do to the whole.

What nonsense! If poison requests entry and assimilation *as-is* into your water supply would you accept it?

The result would be that the whole of your water supply is poisoned. Is that really acceptable? You may oppose and reject the example because it would appear to suggest that LGBTQ is a poison that should not be assimilated into Christianity. That would be a fair interpretation. Is it valid? It depends upon your definition of Christianity.

### IS REJECTION OF LGBTQ A “HATE CRIME”

You have no doubt seen placards and banners in “Gay Pride” and LGBTQ advocacy events that say **GAY IS GOOD. GOD APPROVES WHAT IS GOOD.** I’ve noticed a frequently flashed sign, a long “rainbow” banner that says **BOYCOTT HOMOPHOBIA.** Homophobe is a manufactured word that means “one who is afraid of homosexuality” and is applied by homophiliacs (those who love homosexuality) to all who oppose them and their lifestyle.

May I suggest that homophobia is not the opposite of homophilia. As the opposite of straight is crooked or not straight, and the opposite of natural is unnatural, and the opposite of good is bad or not good, so the opposite of love (*philia* – affection, acceptance, approval) is not fear (*phobia*) but hate (*misō*, *miseuō* – distrust, to disapprove, disavow, reject). It is not an emotional word – it is not hostility or animosity, the desire or intent to harm, damage, or destroy. When God said *Jacob I loved but Esau I hated*

(Malachi 1:1-3, Romans 9:13) it meant only “I accepted Jacob and rejected Esau” (for a place in the lineage of Messiah). Christians do not fear homosexuals any more than God fears them. But if God disavows and rejects (hates) homosexuals, the Christian must do the same. The LGBTQ community is allowed to say “boycott homophobia” but if God lovers and Christ lovers say “boycott homosexuality” it is branded as a punishable hate crime.

Strange isn’t it? Any opposition to an aberration of nature such as homosexuality is *hate* but opposition to what is natural and normal is not hate. A request to boycott homophobia is equivalent to a request to honor homosexuality. Will the LGBTQ example prompt a movement to give honor and support to *pedophilia* (attraction to and sexual involvement with children), but boycott *pedophobia* (disapproval and rejection of sex with children)? Both *homophilia* and *pedophilia* are unnatural, aberrant crimes against nature.

If homophilia is honorable, why not pedophilia? In fact that concept is in the works now too. Homophobia is thought by some to be an unacceptable and unjustifiable prejudice against a naturally occurring minority in the population. So the placard reads **YOU CAN’T HONOR PEOPLE BY PREJUDICE.** But the proper response to that is: **You can’t honor any person, people, or principle by being, doing, accepting, approving**

**or even tolerating something wrong or dishonorable that they are or that they do.** I will illustrate the point with several examples.

You can't honor the nation by violation of proper law or by acceptance and submission to improper law and criminal behavior. *Proper* means *in keeping with the law and principles of God* (see more about honoring God below). Disobeying national laws dishonors the nation (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-16). Failure to honor an honorable nation dishonors God and is a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor parents by laziness, disobedience, immorality, or by departing from the ways of God when properly taught by your parents (Ephesians 6:1-4). Children who are brought up in the way they ought to go – God's way – have no right to depart from it, no matter what their age or condition, no matter what social attitudes prevail in their generation (Proverbs 22:7). Failure to honor honorable parents dishonors God and is a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor the church by violating God's gospel, or with character, attitudes, or activities that are contrary to the foundational principles of the church. Changing the church to suit social desires contrary to God's instruction desecrates and dishonors it (1 Corinthians 3:11-17). Dishonor to the Lord's church is a dishonor to God and to self.

You can't honor Jesus Christ by departing from his teaching and example. Christianity is not just doing something in the name of Christ (Matthew 7:21-23). Christians are to accept and approve what Christ does, but disapprove and reject what he does not accept and approve. Misquoting or misapplying the words of Christ dishonors him and alienates one from him (Matthew 12:30). Any sin against God's Son is a dishonor to God who sent him to be savior and Lord (John 13:20, Luke 10:16). Any dishonor to Christ is a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor the Bible as God's word by ignoring it or refusing to abide in what it says, whether to please yourself or please other people. Misquoting, mistranslating, or misapplying it makes one anathema to God by perverting the scripture rather than honoring it (Galatians 1:6-10). Dishonoring God's word is a dishonor to God who gave it (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor God by departing from His design (natural law and principles inherent in His design), especially as rational humans, accepting what He rejects, praising what He condemns, or honoring what He calls an *abomination*. Homosexual activity, either male or female (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:28-29), transvestism (Deut. 22:5), pretending to be of the gender opposite to your biological reality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), etc. are all abominations to God. You dishon-

or God by calling natural or normal what He calls contrary to nature (Romans 1:24-27) and dishonor yourself as well (24).

You can't honor yourself by dishonoring your nation, your family, the church, Christ, the scripture, God, or yourself. You cannot honor your own body by homosexuality. Homosexual activity dishonors the bodies of all who participate in it (Romans 1:24-28, compare 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

It doesn't matter whether it is persons in brief hookups or two persons committed and faithful to each other. It is a travesty of marriage to use the term *monogamous* of such a same-sex relationship. Monogamous means literally one *mate*, one *spouse* and not "one sexual partner." It dishonors the very concept of marriage (Genesis 1:27, 2:18-25, 5:1-2; Matthew 19:4-6) to call a homosexual (same gender) partner a mate, a match, a man's husband or a woman's wife.

Now we are back to the point, the question of "honor" for LGBTQ persons. There is no honor for them from God. His attitude is consistent, not merely Old Testament but New Testament as well. It is not an outdated Biblical thing, since God's word in the Bible is a forever thing that cannot be changed except by God himself, which He steadfastly avers He will not do (1 Peter 1:24b, 25 *The word of God lives and abides and endures forever*). His word is consistent. Those who dishonor and reject (hate)

God deserve no honor from God or from those who honor God. The only honor they can claim is from among themselves. But what honor is there in being honored by other dishonored and dishonorable persons?

### **DO NOT WORRY IF LGBTQ CALLS CHRISTIANS UNLOVING FOR SAYING THESE THINGS**

We have not addressed the question of trans-gender in this brief essay. It deserves extensive treatment as a separate category – it is not necessarily homosexual. Gender and sex are different matters. Suffice it to say here that transgenderism is scientifically impossible since gender is not a matter of organ placement or function but a matter essential physical identity embedded in one's DNA and in every cell of one's body, though perhaps not in one's mind and psyche, mind.

Changing how one feels about himself or herself and what one wants to "identify" as, either temporarily or permanently, does not change what one *is*. Biology and physiology are not a state of mind. Gender dissatisfaction and dysphoria are mental problems, no matter what pseudo-scientists (who disgrace their white smock and whatever schools granted them scientific certification) say. *Science which is false so-called* (1 Timothy 6:20 KJV) is a false god. Science is supposed to mean *truth*. But calling it science or truth does not make it so.

If you call Christians unloving you must also call Jesus Christ unloving, call God unloving. You must then call the Bible the unloving words of an unloving God, an unloving Christ, and unloving apostles of Christ. If you call me unloving because I will not accept and approve the sins of people (any and all sins, not only this one sin of homosexuality), I will tell you I must stand with God, with Christ, and with the Bible even if the world stands against me.

You too must choose your company, choose where and with whom you stand. Just remember that **when you choose your position you also choose the consequences of the choice.** Do not suppose that the LGBTQ crowd and their hatred of you will be able to overthrow God and prevent the consequences of their position, the consequences God threatens against all evildoers. God will win. All who are not with Him will lose.

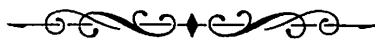
Think about Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29). If fire and brimstone and utter destruction of the sodomites and those affected by their culture seems harsh and frightening, think how much more terrible the endless fire of hell will be. There is no hope of heaven for practicing sodomites, or for male, female homosexuals, or “transgendered” individuals. And there is only one alternative to eternal heaven – eternal hell.

Here is a final positive thought: If we cannot honor the LGBTQ people what should we do? We can love them as God does. We cannot invite them to come just as they are, without repentance and change, but rather to come and be willing to change and be changed into what God can accept and approve, and thereby what we can accept and approve too.

We cannot affirm them as normal or natural, or with proper human nature. But we must teach them why we take that position. We can regret the broken-ness of humanity but ignoring it will not heal it.

To accept it would require redefinition of humanity. We are not to see humanity as evolving into alternate or variant forms; we are to call all humans to return to verifiable human nature.

Let us repeat something here: love does not mean accepting people as they are. It means helping them become what they ought to be while showing ourselves to be what all humans should be.





# The Christian and Politics

*Reconsidering Some Issues Raised 150 Years Ago*

Mel Futrell

In the years 1866-1867, David Lipscomb (1831-1917) printed in his paper, the *Gospel Advocate*, his views on civil government and the Christian's relation to it. This material would later be published in book form and have a tremendous influence on the thinking and views of Christians for generations to come. In the Preface of that volume Lipscomb made this insightful statement that is worth our reflecting on now 150 years later:

"Man's duty is to learn the will of God, and trustingly do that will, leaving results and events with God. It became a fixed principle with him that in religion man must in faith do what God has ordained he should do, what he has declared would be well-pleasing to him; and then leave all in the hands of him who overrules the universe...While I failed to see then as I now see, that religion embraced every duty and every relation of man and molds every thought, purpose and action of his being, the feeling would creep into my mind that even in political affairs man should do only what God commanded him." <sup>1</sup>

David Lipscomb's short volume (158 pages), was published just following a time of war – when Americans had been "engaged in a great civil war" as Lincoln called it in his

Gettysburg Address. His book was published in a city where the war, and the effects of that war, was without doubt impacting the lives of people in general and God's people in particular. Among many other things, the Lord's people of Lipscomb's day had been greatly divided over participation in the war itself. So brother Lipscomb sought in his writing to determine what man's relation was to human government and therefore what his duties to this institution were.

For those who have not and perhaps never will read the book, it should be noted that brother Lipscomb's views on Christians and politics would be viewed by most today as somewhat extreme. By extreme, I mean brother Lipscomb advocated a strict pacifism and practically no involvement by the Christian in matters of human politics and government – even voting. This would not be my thinking on the matter and even in his day it was not the thinking of many, if not most, of his brethren. Though let me quickly add that there is more to the book than just these issues and Lipscomb does make many valid points in the small volume with which I wholly agree.

Today my impression is that most New Testament Christians are politi-

cally concerned, as they may choose to be. But the larger and more important question is, "Do you agree that God's word should govern every action and affair we undertake — even be it political?" In other words, are brethren allowing their vote to be influenced by the word of God or by what is politically advantageous and popular? Why should "politics" be exempt from the biblical and absolute truth that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29 Surely faithful Christians can answer this correctly!

Now certainly in this age of ours where moral/social issues increasingly pervade the scope of elections even in the eyes of some liberal minded journalists, citizens, and politicians; we as Christians would do well to give great significance to the moral practice and positions of a candidate before casting our vote. Civic mindedness, honesty, and truthfulness demand no less.

I'm not naïve! I don't entertain any illusion that every Christian is politically concerned, concerned to the same degree, or even concerned enough to vote. Numbers of Christians choose not to vote. But when we do vote, morality ought to matter. Admittedly, there are those who are more interested in political matters than others. This may be a feature of human nature. There are also those who are always more eager to discuss politics than they are Bible. That, of course, is unfortunate. But we must

still and always love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17).

I do not believe that the church is as divided today over whether or not to vote, participate in government, and go to war, etc., as were the brethren of David Lipscomb's day. Yet, we still get bogged down in numerous purely political issues on occasion and allow them to distract us from what should be much more pressing concerns (Matthew 6:33).

I do wholeheartedly agree with brother Lipscomb that religion, Christianity, should mold every thought, purpose, and action of our being (2 Corinthians 10:5). But shouldn't part of that molding process cover even the "political affairs" of life?

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## ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Lipscomb, David, *Civil Government*, Gospel Advocate Publishing, 1957, p.3.



# Does the Bible Support Abortion?

Jackson Erwin

This October, a conservative movie entered some theaters titled: *Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer*. Dr. Kermit Gosnell was an abortion doctor responsible for the deaths of thousands of unborn babies in his clinic (which was called Women's Medical Society clinic in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). He was held on trial in March of 2013 specifically for involuntarily killing a woman who asked for an abortion as well as having killed several babies who were already born and as late as 32 weeks (3 of which he was convicted).

Gosnell was also guilty of 21 late-term abortions and 211 counts of violating the 24-hour consent law. The case was at first ignored by the leftist media until a journalist posted on social media the empty court seats where the press was supposed to be. Because of the leftist agenda in Hollywood, they refused to support any movie about abortion and thus the producers had to raise the money.

This movie is not for the faint of heart, nor is it for young audiences due to some language in the beginning of the film as well as the extremely accurate scenery of the clinic. However, I would recommend every Christian adult to watch this film in order to understand the horrors of abortion and the audacity of pro-choice people to say that the child in

the womb is nothing but a "bundle of cells."

However, with this movie being produced and put in some theaters (I personally had to drive an hour to see it), the controversy for or against abortion has been lately and often discussed. Some pro-choice supporters claim to believe in the Bible and even argue that the Bible supports abortion.

The purpose of this article, therefore, will not focus on the scientific evidence that unborn babies are human. Rather, we shall study the two most often cited passages used to defend abortion by pro-choice advocates. We hope to show that the Bible does not support abortion and is instead vehemently opposed to it.

## Exodus 21:22-25

The first passage used by those who hold the view that the Bible proves abortion is acceptable is found in Exodus 21:22-25. In this text, the Lord commanded the children of Israel saying,

"If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye,

tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

This phrase, “she gives birth prematurely” is rendered by some translations “she has a miscarriage” (the NIV footnotes the “possibility” of this rendering) and thus leaves the idea that God places smaller importance on the life of the unborn (paying a fine for the child’s death) than on the already born mother (the death penalty).

However, the Hebrew literally means “her child comes out” and is not speaking of a miscarriage and thus the loss of a child, but rather of a premature birth in which the baby leaves the womb earlier than planned, but is unharmed. Hence, God says, “but no harm follows.”

Therefore, this passage does not support abortion, but absolutely denies it. If either the unborn child or the mother was killed, then the penalty was “life for life,” thus showing that God holds an equal value on the life of the unborn and that of the mother.

### **Numbers 5:11-31**

A second passage that is generally used by those who are pro-choice is found in Numbers 5:11-31. Many advocates for abortion have used the test of the bitter water that caused the guilty woman’s thigh rot and belly swell as a detailed form of abortion, but nothing is farther from the truth. Again, a misinterpretation of this passage is found in the NIV, as we read in verse 21, “here the priest is to put

the woman under the curse – ‘may the LORD cause you to become a curse among your people when he makes your womb miscarry and your abdomen swell.’”

Once again, a mistranslation is used to promote a false agenda that the Bible is clearly against. First, this “womb” is actually a “thigh” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NASB, ESV) and the literal meaning for “miscarry” is “to fall off/away.”

Therefore, this is not a miscarriage of the child but a miraculous test to tell if the woman was lying about her adulterous intercourse which would cause her actual thigh to rot and thus fall off her body. If one wishes to be more consistent with the Hebrew, then emphasis should be placed on her belly swelling; but, once again, the Bible does not support abortion in this either.

The woman is never said to be pregnant in this passage nor is any vague reference even provided about such. The actual punishment in this text, however, is not the loss of the child, but rather that the woman would never be able to conceive any children in the future (v. 28), which was a terrible consequence.

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, two of the most often cited passages in the Old Testament by pro-choice “Christians,” do not support abortion; nor do they provide the detailed abortion processes, as the political and moral left will often say.

From these passages we can learn that God puts equal value on the life of the unborn and the already born. Christians simply cannot be true to the teachings of the Bible while condoning or supporting the wicked and disgusting practices of men like Kermit Gosnell. Christians should unite to fight against this great evil through logic, reason, science, and the Holy Scriptures.

## WHEN THE WORLD GOES TO CHURCH

Ronald Bryant

Worldliness is, and has ever been, a problem in religion. The world does not disappear from the lives of men when they come to believe in God, it only changes its approach. It constantly works to distort man's view of God and his relationship with God.

It may come as a shock, but the world is ready and willing to accommodate man's desire for religious expression, even as it works to supplant God as sovereign.

Secular concepts, all dressed up in "Sunday-go-to-meeting" attire provide any number of objects of adoration and religious devotion, while scrupulously marginalizing those things that admit of the Lord God and of His sovereign will.

They that belong to the world have no real concern for biblical requirements. They may, when appropriate,

carry a Bible, but their interest in it is benign, and they have no qualms about trivializing it.

Worldliness removes man from God, and works to convince man that he (man) is the final arbiter of truth. It urges man to place his views above the decrees of God; even as it presents itself as an alternative to God.

Worldliness has its program and its methodology. It offers its will and wisdom as normal and as normative. It knows how to please and how to be popular! It knows how to attract and how to please the masses. It argues in favor of what works, not for what is right. Its values are accommodative and vacillating. It values customer satisfaction and contribution, yet has little to no regard for truth or godliness. It corrupts while denying the reality or danger of corruption. It has power but not righteousness! It fears failure but has no fear of God!

Undeniably, worldliness is a powerful system of assumptions which works to destroy faith in and reverence for God. They that embrace the world only pretend to accept God; but, God is tolerated not loved, revered, or obeyed. When convenient, or when they feel that it is producing the result they desire, the worldly may even reference God; but they do not obey Him. The worldly are sure that God is willing to compromise; after all, they are!

In worldly religions, men are taught to see themselves as primarily

physical beings; and to identify themselves with time and timely things. They are taught that they have no real spiritual identity or obligation, with the exception of such religious interests and activities they may choose to manufacture.

Worldly religions view sin as non-existent, and therefore of little consequence. They view sinful activity as normal and normative! Having dismissed God, they view any biblical prohibition or mandate as intrusive and abnormal. With the worldly – in or out of religion -- there are no absolutes – and they are absolutely sure of that!

With the worldly, truth is subjective – it is like beauty existing only in the eye of the beholder; and it is individually respected and regulated. With God and truth set aside, worldliness works to oppose every aspect of the Christian faith, and to prevail against the conviction and confidence regarding the being and character of God, and the actions and the truth of God with its attendant requirements.

When and where worldliness prevails in a culture, it ever works to influence, and finally to dominate, the religious groups in that culture. No one, and no part of that culture, is immune!

Regrettably, worldliness is so much a part of the present age, it is no exaggeration to say, that the world readily slides right into the pew on Sunday morning with us. It is not hes-

itant to intrude into our devotions, and, while we are seeking to worship God, the world hums its tune louder and louder, in order to distract us and turn us away from genuine devotion to the Lord God Almighty.

## Sin and Secularism

Robert Waggoner

Many Christians have observed that at least since the beginning of the last half of the twentieth century and onward, the Christian religion has been increasingly assaulted and church attendance has diminished as younger people are more notably absent.

The percentage of our population which identifies itself as not affiliated with any religion seems to be growing rapidly. During this same period of time, moral decay has also manifested itself in various ways.

Abortion, pornography, divorce, drug abuse, battered wives, unwed couples, sexual permissiveness, widespread acceptance of homosexuality, venereal diseases, transgenderism, single parent families in poverty, child abuse, gambling, suicide, legalization of same sex unions, illicit sex slavery, and many other issues have penetrated our culture in ways not previously evident. With these conditions, two questions naturally arise: why is this

happening? And, what can be done about it?

Why these sinful and immoral conditions are now happening, can be answered, at least in part, by noting that "there is no longer a Christian mind." That was declared by the Englishman, Harry Blamires, in his book *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* 1963.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, he said,

"It is a commonplace that the mind of modern man has been secularized. For instance, it has been deprived of any orientation towards the supernatural. Tragic as this fact is, it would not be so desperately tragic had the Christian mind held out against the secular drift. But unfortunately, the Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history. It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morale in the twentieth-century Church. One cannot characterize it without having recourse to language which will sound hysterical and melodramatic."

After repeating his statement that "there is no longer a Christian mind" he said,

"There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality. As a moral being, the modern Christian subscribes to a code other than that of the non-

Christian. As a member of the Church, he undertakes obligations and observations ignored by the non-Christian. As a spiritual being, in prayer and meditation, he strives to cultivate a dimension of life unexplored by the non-Christian. But as a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. He accepts religion – its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal view which relates all human problems – social, political, cultural – to the doctrinal foundations of the Christian Faith, the view which sees all things here below in terms of God's supremacy and earth's transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell"

For some, an explanation of what Harry Blamires means by succumbing to secularization may be helpful. The word secular comes from the Latin *saeculum* which means time, or age. That which is secular is whatever pertains to this world, temporal, confined to, or connected with worldly things.

The terms "secular" and "secularism" must not be confused. Secularism is a belief system which insists that everything is related only to this world, that there is nothing beyond or outside the physical universe. One who believes in secularism may be designated as a secularist.

A secularist is one who "is completely time-bound, totally a child of

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1963, 3-4.

his age, a creature of history with no vision of eternity. Unable to see anything in the perspective of eternity, he cannot believe God exists or acts in human affairs.

Moral standards, for example, tend to be merely those commonly accepted by the society in which he lives, and he believes that everything changes, so that there are no enduring or permanent values.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, to say that society has succumbed to secularization means that people of a culture no longer think about the eternal values in their lives.

The basis of secularism is the autonomy (that is, the self-rule) of man. “Autonomy asserts the essential non-religiousness of all structures of life. The age of the world is to be understood completely on its own basis. Nothing unconditional is encountered through culture or through human reason.

If religion emerges, it is only the glorification of one of the facets of life – of reason, of the vitalities, of aesthetics, or of the state. Thus, secularism centers on the world and seeks to make life meaningful completely apart from God, from the source of life, or from anything unconditional.”<sup>3</sup>

That this has happened in the western world may be indicated by the fact that we almost never hear comments about sin, except occasionally within church settings.

In secularism, human reasoning becomes the supreme standard for self-guidance. Having faith in reason, secularists believe that progress is inevitable. They think science will enable them to guide themselves toward all truth. Secularists also think humanity is self-sufficient, independent, and at the center of all things because they think humankind is the final species in the evolutionary process.<sup>4</sup>

What is now happening is similar to what happened when the Israelites entered the promised land of Canaan. Moses had warned them not to intermarry with the inhabitants of the land because that would lead them to turn away from the true God to worship their idols (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). When the Israelites entered the promised land they were faithful to God throughout the days of Joshua and all the leading elders who had known Joshua, but after that they became unfaithful, intermarried with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land, and

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<sup>2</sup> James Hitchcock, *What Is Secular Humanism? Why Humanism Became Secular and How it is Changing Our World*, Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982, 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> Jerald C. Brauer, “Secularism,” *A Handbook of Christian Theology: Definition Essays on Concepts and Movements of*

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*Thought in Contemporary Protestantism*, ed. by Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen, Cleveland: The World Publishing Company. 1958, 340.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of these ideas, cf. John W. Whitehead, *The End of Man*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986, 39-47.



turned away for God (Judges 2:7, 10-13).

So also now, secularism has arisen and become the philosophical mindset of our times. Christians within our culture have turned away from thinking about eternal things and have become focused on secular things. The result is that Christian ideas and values are becoming less and less influential in contemporary society. This means that, for many people, ideas about eternal salvation from the consequences of sin are unappreciated.

The answer to the second question about how to change what is now happening seems evident – we must turn away from secular thinking and being eternally minded. But how can people be prompted to turn away from secular thinking and learn to think in a Christian way? Is not the answer to that question easily acquired? We must become extensively knowledgeable about God and his purposes for our lives. To do that we must read and study the Bible.



### *A Note from West Fayetteville*

Our prayer is that you are enjoying and benefiting from the articles published in the *Gospel Gleaner*. We were recently told by the paper's founding editor, Bill Dillon, that he believes the *Gleaner* is better than ever. We hope to make it even better! We are mailing the paper into many states, congregations, schools of preaching, and libraries.

Would you or your home congregation like to receive the *Gospel Gleaner*? Do you know of a preacher, elder, or preaching student who might benefit from this paper? Subscriptions are free.

We also wish to thank everyone and each congregation who has supported the *Gleaner* in 2018. By contributing to this work you are enabling us to increase our printing and mailing efforts. We continue to receive new subscriptions and have never had to turn away anyone for lack of materials. You have helped us to do this work and are to be commended. We are grateful to you. We ask that you will continue or consider supporting the *Gleaner* in 2019. We believe in the potential of this good work and hope that you do as well.

In Christian Love,

-The Elders

West Fayetteville Church of Christ  
Fayetteville, Tennessee

# The Exegetical Sermon

Denny Petrillo

“You have to earn the right to preach topically!” While this declaration is certainly not unique to me, in 40+ years of preacher training I have often used it. Sadly, most preachers jump right in to topical preaching. Many (most?) of them preach only topically the rest of their preaching lives. To me, this is sad. Topical preaching has its place, no doubt. Yet thousands of people are being robbed of the value of good exegetical preaching.

The word “exegesis” comes straight from the Greek word *exegeomai*. The word is found in John 1:18 and means “to explain, describe in great detail.” Jesus came to “exegete” the Father. That is, He explained the Father, making known to mankind His nature and character (cf. Mt. 11:27).

The word is literally a compound word, with *ek* meaning “out” and *egesthas* meaning “to guide or lead.” Therefore, when applied to exegetical preaching, it describes how one is guiding or leading others in a study that originates in the word and comes out of it. The danger every preacher faces is putting an interpretation or application into a biblical text. This is easy to do (and sadly, is often done).

This practice has a name as well: eisegesis. This has led to many false doctrines and misinterpretations. This

is also why many must choose the position of preacher carefully (Jas. 3:1). God’s word must be kept pure (1 Pet. 2:2). Paul’s admonition to Timothy rings true today: “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Exegetical preaching is preaching the word. It is wholly dependent upon the biblical text and leaves little room for human interpretation. I tell my students, “if you are determined to get it right, preach exegetically!”

## What Exegetical Preaching is Not

A logical place to start in discussing exegetical sermons is to clarify what it is not. There are so many false statements about exegesis. Many think they understand it, but it is clear that they do not.

First, exegesis is not like a commentary. Many times I have heard someone attempt to define exegesis as “a glorified commentary.” However, this is incorrect. Most commentators are preachers and are anxious to get to the application or homiletic value of a passage. Frequently their work with a text is superficial. As a result, their explanation of a text exposes their lack of exegetical work. So, an exegetical sermon is not like a commentary.

Second, exegesis is not a succession of word studies. Not long ago I had a preacher send me four of his

“best exegetical sermons.” In every one all he did was move through the text saying, “the next Greek word is.... It means....” He told me that his congregation does not like exegetical preaching. No wonder! Who would want to hear a sermon like that? While studying words is a valuable tool in doing exegetical work, it is not just a bunch of word studies.

Third, exegesis is not a synonym to hermeneutics. One writer quickly dismissed exegesis as “just another term for biblical interpretation or hermeneutics.” Again, this is a woe-ful misunderstanding of what exegesis is. Exegesis is discovering what a passage says. Hermeneutics identifies what a passage means. Thorough exegetical work places the preacher in the position to then identify the meaning of a text. It is the foundation for what he does next: explaining the meaning and application for his audience. Without solid exegesis you are left with flawed hermeneutics.

### **What Exegetical Preaching Is**

First, exegetical preaching is coming to a biblical text with a blank page. Some might argue “that is not possible,” and to a certain extent I would agree. It is very difficult to discard a lifetime of teachers who have influenced how one views a text. Yet this is one of the benefits of exegesis. It forces one to do nothing but just study the text before him. It will now allow him to make conclusion that cannot be supported by that text.

Frequently I will hear one of my students say “I used to use this text as a support for my main topic. Now I see that it is not even talking about that!”

Second, exegetical preaching is a thorough examination of a particular text. Frequently this is referred to as a pericope (section or paragraph). Exegetical preaching does not bite off too large of section to preach. Instead, it focuses on a smaller part. This does not mean he ignores the larger context. This is the exegetical work he has done prior to settling in on the section he wants to preach. He understands the “forest,” now he wants to talk about a particular “tree.”

Third, exegetical preaching is looking for the inspired structure or breakdown of the pericope. Perhaps this is the most misunderstood aspect of exegesis. Frequently there is structure – in the text itself! We fail to see it because we are not looking for it. Many are of the opinion that the Bible has few lists. Such is not the case. The Bible is full of lists. They are just not numbered like we do today (and like I am doing this list, with a “first, second, third....”). Biblical lists are done with the repetition of a particular word, verb form, noun form, etc. If the preacher can discover the list, he has discovered his sermon outline! I will illustrate this below.

Fourth, exegetical preaching is based completely on what the text says. Often, expository and topical sermons go to several different pas-

sages to prove a point. Exegetical preaching is able to stay with one pericope. It is where the preacher says, “today we will completely focus on the inspired section found in Proverbs 3:5-10.”

Fifth, exegetical preaching is the best way to honor God’s word. I know. That is a bold claim. Yet adequately understood, there is no other style that removes the preacher and replaces him with the text itself. Exegetical preaching is all about what the word says. It simply does not give the preacher much “wiggle room” to wander hither and yon. It keeps him from making applications that are not clearly identified in the text.

### **Examples of Exegetical Sermons**

Proverbs 3:5-10. I mentioned this text earlier, so let’s take a look at it. Here the preacher might use verses 1-4 as his introduction. Most of the time the text itself will provide both the introduction and the conclusion, and of course, the body. You might say that God is doing all of the work for you! How true. So, what is the main thought of verses 1-4? Solomon is encouraging his son to be a good listener, and to apply the truths he is giving. If he will do that, then he will find favor in the eyes of God and man. I might offer the same admonition. Are we good listeners? Are we teachable? Then the exegete notes that Solomon has three “\_\_\_\_\_ the Lord” statements. This is your exegetical outline: Point One: Trust in the

Lord (3:6-7a). Point Two: Fear the Lord (3:7b-8). Point Three: Honor the Lord (3:9-10). This text also provides the sub-points. With each of these three points Solomon provides a “how” and then a “why.” How should we trust in the Lord? First, “with all of your heart.” Is it genuine trust if it is only half-hearted?

Second, “lean not on your own understanding.” This is the problem with genuine trust. We frequently want to throw in some of our own ideas and viewpoints.

Third, “in all your ways acknowledge Him.” This is genuine trust. We acknowledge God in every action, every relationship, every endeavor. Solomon then provides two reasons why we should do this.

First, “He shall direct your paths.” If we completely trust in the Lord, He will reward that trust by helping us on the journey of life. He will use His word to provide divine direction. Second, (and this one is tricky because of how it is translated and given a new verse number), we should trust because if we don’t we will end up being “wise in our own eyes.”

You get the idea. I won’t go through points two and three. You should now be able to see clearly the breakdown. I will then use verses 11-12 as my conclusion. Are we inclined to “trust, fear and honor the Lord”? If not, He may be compelled to teach us through discipline.

Colossians 2:6-7. In verse 6 Paul provides the foundation (topic) for the sermon. We all must walk in the Lord. Yet with all of us, we would not automatically know how to do that. Here we are commanded to do it (an imperative), but we don't know how to do it. Paul does not leave us guessing. Instead, he gives four directives. How do we come up with four?

This is where our exegetical work has paid off. We noticed that there are four words ending in '-ing.' These are called participles (although you did not need to know that). Sometimes we may have to look at different translations to find the entire list. In this case the NAS is more helpful than the NKJV. Now we have the body of our sermon, using only Paul's points.

First, the one who walks in the Lord is "rooted in Him" ("being firmly rooted in the NAS). Now we can talk about what being "rooted in Him" means. We may mention the meaning of the word ("fixed") and illustrate it from the blessed man in Psalm 1, or talk about how one not rooted in Him will be rooted in something. Paul will say that loving money roots one in all kinds of sinful practices.

Second, the one who walks in the Lord is "built up in Him." This has reference to the foundation upon which one has built his life. Is it truly built on Christ? Again, we might illustrate this by the wise builder verses

the foolish builder in Matthew 7:24-26.

Third, the one who walks in the Lord is "being established in the faith." As our lexicons will tell us, this word actually has the idea of something being beyond doubt or without dispute. It is confirmed. If we are walking in Christ, we know what we believe. Our faith is in Him and His word. As a result, we are not in danger, as Paul mentioned in Ephesians 4:14 of being: "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." Paul provides a sub-point here: "just as you were instructed." Paul taught them and expected them to learn and apply.

Fourth, the one who walks in Christ is "overflowing with gratitude." If one isn't grateful, he just doesn't get it. He has failed to learn some of the most important and foundational Christian truths (like forgiveness, grace and salvation). If he is not overflowing with gratitude, he is not walking in Christ.

## Conclusion

Could you preach those texts? Of course you could! If you did, you have joined the ranks of those who are preaching exegetical sermons. There are, literally, thousands of such texts in the pages of Scripture. God gave us these lists for a reason. Now it is our job to find them and deliver them to His people.

# The Kingdom and the Church in Colossians

Raymond Elliott

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse...” (1:1, 2). The apostle Paul, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote this epistle. The “saints” and “faithful brethren” refer to the same persons who were “in Christ” who lived in the city of Colosse. The term ‘saint’ does not mean perfection because Paul instructed them in chapter three to continue putting off certain sins as they matured in Christ. ‘Saint’ denotes a life of holiness, one of sanctification.

In chapter one, verses 13, 14, we read: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” There is a kingdom of darkness from which the brethren had been delivered. This is in contrast to the kingdom of light. All who are not in the “kingdom of the Son of His love” remain in the “power of darkness”. To be “conveyed” is to be ‘translated’, that is to move from one place or condition to another. Thus the brethren in Colosse were in the kingdom of the Lord. They had been redeemed by His

blood and had been forgiven of their sins! It is worthy to note that the kingdom of Jesus Christ was in existence in the first century!

You may ask, when were their sins forgiven by the blood of Christ? In chapter 2: 12 we read: “buried with Him in baptism in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” It was in baptism that these brethren who formerly were in the “power of darkness” now had been “buried with Him in baptism” and “were raised with Him through faith in the working of God.”

We have learned that the “saints” in Colosse were in the kingdom, having been “delivered from the power of darkness and that occurred when they were “buried with Him in baptism”. The brethren were also in the body of Christ according to chapter 3:15: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” Please observe that whatever the “body” is, there is but “one” (1:24).

In chapter 1:18 we read: “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He

may have the preeminence." Jesus Christ is the supreme and only head of his one body which is His church!

Once again you may ask, how did the brethren get into the "one body"? Please allow me to use a verse by the author, Paul, to answer that question from his epistle as found in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

In summary, we have learned that the brethren had been translated into the kingdom/church when they were baptized; that they had been baptized into one body which is the church of our Lord. And having been buried with their Lord in baptism they were redeemed from their sins by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Now they had "the hope" which was "laid up" for them "in heaven" (1:5). Thank God for His infinite love and grace!



"It's from our church... we've been called up for active duty."

## *"Peace, Be Still"*

Andy Robison

On the day Jesus taught parables from a boat to crowds on a Galilean shore, He, at evening, got into a boat with His disciples to cross to the other side. They were accompanied by other little boats (Mark 4:35-36).

As they crossed, one of those notoriously sudden and violent storms arose on the Galilean Sea. It is called a "windstorm" in Mark 4:37 and Luke 8:23, but a "tempest" in Matt. 8:24 (NKJV). The word for tempest there is related to the word from which we get seismology. Seismologists measure earthquakes—monumental events. This would have been a monumental storm.

The disciples become afraid. Many of these had been professional fishermen (Mark 1:16-20), but the storm still scares them. The accounts give no more mention of the other ships or what happened to them. But, for two millennium followers of Christ have known what happened in this disciples' boat.

The fearful disciples go to wake up Jesus. That's right, they go to wake up Jesus. Many people cannot sleep through a storm on land—even when in a brick house with a solid foundation. Jesus is being tossed about by the sea, and He is sound asleep (Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38). He had apparently fallen asleep during the journey, prob-

ably before the windstorm struck (Luke 8:23).

It is incomprehensible how He could have slept. Waves were beating into the boat (Mark 4:37). "They were filling with water, and were in jeopardy" (Luke 8:23). Yet, "He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow" (Mark 4:38). Remember, this Son of Man had no usual place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). He just had to rest wherever He happened to be.

It is still difficult to imagine His sleep. Some have suggested the stern would have been higher than the sides of the ship in the middle where the waves would have first beaten into the vessel. Perhaps the Lord thus stayed dry. Perhaps, though, just perhaps, His restfulness can be attributed to two factors—two factors in which He was the only being to have them intertwined.

Jesus was fully human on earth, taking upon Himself the form of a man (Phil. 2:5-8). The demands upon Him as the Master Teacher must have been overwhelming. He taught the multitudes on a mount (Matt. 5-7). He healed—sometimes on individual occasions and sometimes, even after a day's activity—many in the crowds who relentlessly came (Matt. 8:16-17; Mark 1:32-34). He dealt with lepers and demons, the lame, the blind, and the deaf. Sometimes He tried to escape for prayer, but the crowds caught up with Him (Mark 1:35-39).

In His humanity, He must have

been well beyond the point of total physical exhaustion.

However, He was also Divine. He had created these laws of nature (Col. 1:16-17; John 1:1-3). He knew how they worked. He also knew when, exactly, it would be time for Him to leave this earth. He knew when His hour had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:6-7). He knew when His hour had come (John 12:27; 17:1). He would have known that He would not perish in this storm.

Yet, the disciples were afraid. They urgently entreated Him, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" (Matt. 8:25).

He would rebuke them for their little faith (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25). Did they not realize they were with the Master who could speak to the winds and have them stop, and to the sea and have it—inexplicably, miraculously, superseding the laws of nature—be immediately calm?

"Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:39).

We serve the Son of Man who knows humanity's frailty and embedded temptations (Heb. 2:17-18). We serve the Son of God who has the power to calm every heart in every storm. He may not take away the storm, but He provides sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety" (Psalm 4:8).



# Belonging to the Church

## Acts 12:1-5

### Introduction

1. The events of our text took place about 44 AD, or about 14 years after Pentecost.
2. James indeed was an apostle. (*Matt. 17:1; 26:36, 37*).
3. It is at this point that the history of the church and the world intersects. This is the second notable persecution of the church at Jerusalem.
4. The expression “of the church” – the NRSV says, “some who belonged to the church.” Cf. *Romans 16:16*.

### Discussion

#### I. It Is A Voluntary Experience.

- A. The call of James to be a disciple. *Matt. 4:21, 22*
  1. Not all welcomed the Lord. *John 1:11, 12*
  2. Some walked with him for a while. *John 6:66*
  3. Some wanted no part at all. *Matt. 23:37*
- B. We choose to be a member of the church.
  1. The gospel is the power to save us. *Rom. 1:16*
  2. Obeying brings us remission of sins. *Acts 2:38*
  3. The Lord then adds us. *Acts 2:41, 47*.
- C. Refusal to belong is a tragedy. *1 Pet. 4:17, 18*
  1. Anticipated in the great commission. *Mk. 16:16*
  2. Some procrastinate with their decision. *Acts 24:25*
  3. The end is awful. *II Thes. 1:7-9*

#### II. It Is A Meaningful Experience.

- A. The word church means the “called out” *Col. 1:13*
  1. It is an “either/or” – saved or lost
  2. “In” or “out” of Christ!
- B. Different names by which the church is designated:
  1. Disciples. *Acts 11:26*.
  2. The body of Christ. *Eph. 1:22, 23; John 1:14*. His spiritual body: His to do his work now.
  3. The household of faith. *Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19*.
  4. The house of God. *1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:20-22*.
  5. The brotherhood. *1 Pet. 2:17* ; Love is the very badge of our discipleship. *John 13:35*.
- C. The church is a divine institution with a divine purpose for being in the world. *Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:10, 21*

#### III. It Is A Demanding Experience.

- A. Belonging implies “self giving”. *Matt. 16:24*
  1. “of the church”- it has a claim on me.

2. If your membership does not cost you anything, then what is it worth? (Time, talent, treasure).
- B. Belonging implies fitting in.
  1. A contrary spirit is embarrassing and oppressive.
  2. Everybody in the upper room loved Jesus but one! "His own place!" *Acts 1:25*
- C. Belonging implies acting in its best interest.
  1. Only those who don't fit try to tear it down.
  2. Did you ever breathe a sigh of relief when a family member did not show up for a reunion?

#### IV. It Is A Costly Experience.

- A. James and John's earlier expectation. *Matt. 20:20-23*
- B. The fulfillment did come some years later!
  1. He went to be with Christ. *Phil. 1:21-23*
  2. *Revelation 20:4* John in that number for sure!
  3. Obituary for James compared to Stephen's. *Acts 7:54- 8:2*
  4. Why him and not John? Who can know?
- C. Lessons to keep in mind:
  1. Time and manner of your death is not important.
  2. Your length of service is not what counts.
  3. Belonging to the church! That is what matters! *Psa. 116:15; Rev. 7:14; Prov. 14:32; Rom. 14:8.*

#### Conclusion

1. Belonging to the church is not to be taken lightly.
2. Do you belong to the church?
3. What happened to Herod? *Acts 12; Lk. 16:19-31*

-Mike Kiser

# A Confused Christian Community on Campus

Ron Thomas

[The following article first appeared in [brotherhoodnew.com](http://brotherhoodnew.com). We have included a reader's response for your consideration as well.]

David Lipscomb University (DLU), in their student on-line "paper" "Lumination Network" had an article "in recognition of National Coming Out Day," a day of recognition of and for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Reflect on this for just a moment, a *Christian* university that supposedly stands for the moral foundations of the Lord allows students to come out in support of "National Coming Out Day", an affront of this sexually deviant community to the Lord's way of holiness.

Is this acceptance of the behavior? It appears to be exactly that. It is reported this is "about freedom to be who you are" on this Nashville campus. Student Aria Bartley said, "There's a difference between acceptance and supporting, and although not everyone is going to be supportive, this is about learning to accept everyone for who they are."

Apparently, she does not realize what she is saying. The behavior of the transgender and homosexual community – does the Lord support and accept them. Consider:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27, ASV).

One can't read the above passage and conclude the Lord accepts and supports the behavioral lifestyle. One can't accept it unless the thinking is clouded with the ways of the world.

Perhaps those who came out to support the LGBT day simply wanted to educate others, "The students had conversations with the student body and sought to educate outsiders on what it means to be a part of the LGBT community to anybody who stopped by the community gathering around the Bison."

I am curious about what would be said. Would the education be regarding what the Lord teaches, or would it be the desires of a secular, progressive and atheistic world? I suspect the latter. If this was the educational approach, not much is to be said for the education!

Moreover, concerning the education given, is it known what “diploma” is received? In a context about false teaching and leading, Jesus said the following to His disciples,

“Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (Matt. 5:13-14, ASV).

The “diploma” received is a diploma toward a dead-end. His standard of holiness will not be compromised by any without there being accountability on the ultimate “coming out” day, otherwise known as Judgment Day.

What a sad day when the Lipscomb handbook speaks about standing up for “biblical standards of sexual morality” but then has a staff member (Dr. Paul Prill) as an unofficial advocate for the community as they “come out.” Perhaps the staff member was not known to the administration of DLU, but after knowing about it, was there any education on the University’s part to their staff member, perhaps in biblical matters?

### **A Reader’s Reply**

It was not long after I wrote words very similar to the above, when a reply was made.

“What a terrible, short sighted article. Fake news permeates everywhere I suppose. So there is this wonderful thing called ‘freedom of the press’ in

the United States Constitution. The article you referenced was written by one student. You have taken this and warped it into the University being in total support of the LGBTQ community. This kind of stuff has to stop.

You can’t seriously consider yourself well versed enough on a topic when you’re living in Brazil, and your only knowledge of the situation comes from one article written by a student. WWJD? Well, I can guarantee you Jesus wouldn’t be writing snap judgement based articles based on a situation he hardly knows anything about.”

*Author Unknown*

### **My Reply**

I replied to this criticism, in part, like this: “You criticize because you didn’t read what was written. Let’s consider what you have said in criticism of me. You say the article is short sighted; that means it missed the mark.”

If the words above missed the mark it would have been good to have that pointed out in specificity. It was not, however. I suppose “freedom of the press” is a bullseye mark that I missed, but as I replied, “I have said nothing regarding freedom of the press, for or against.”

Then it was asserted that I accused the University as being in full support. “But there is nothing in what I wrote to say that.” I did say, though, there

was a university professor in an unofficial role of the school that came out in support of the event. I also said something about the publication being connected with the University. Yes, it's true that universities do not support all things students do, but if there is a connection to the University via a publication like this one ("Lipscomb University's Student News Service"), then perhaps there is more of an association and acceptance than is realized.

What would Jesus do or say in this environment in which our morally confused world lives? Jesus expressed Himself clearly on the topic; Jesus stands expressly against the action and the support given by the LGBTQ community, this includes those who support them.

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman,

burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due" (Romans 1:22-27).

Moreover, is the on-line publication associated with DLU? If it is, should DLU have prevented the publication because it goes against the standards of the University? For that matter, should DLU have prevented the actions on campus to take place because it goes contrary to the biblical standards of morality? Perhaps you think it is okay because it's only the action of one student, perhaps the actions of many students. What if the action of one student was an action of pedophilia, should the University have stepped in in order to prevent association/connection to the University? I look forward to hearing you answer on this.

### Conclusion

Those who struggle with immoral behavior, no matter what it is, need support and education to change their way of thinking from the ways of this world to the ways of the Lord. There are a great many people in this world that would willingly support and help those who bend their knees before the Lord and ask to be forgiven.

Jesus said to all, "Come unto me...take my yoke...my burden is light..." The Lord's burden is much lighter to carry than one's own.

# The New Heavens and New Earth:

## *Does the Renewed Earth Theory Merit the Support It Receives?*

Andy Erwin

The overwhelming number of evangelical scholars – past and present – has advocated the theory of heaven being on a renewed earth. It is generally accepted among these scholars that Christ died not only to redeem fallen man, but also to redeem a fallen cosmos.

Anthony Hoekema explains the premise for the renewed earth stating, “The work of Christ, therefore, is not just to save certain individuals, not even to save an innumerable throng of blood-bought people. The total work of Christ is nothing less than to redeem this entire creation from the effects of sin.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, this “regeneration or new creation encompasses much more than individual Christians or even the people of God collectively...It is a vision of cosmic redemption and salvation...a renovated and renewed creation.”<sup>2</sup>

Similar statements were expressed by nineteenth century preachers in the Lord’s church, such as Campbell, Lard, Lipscomb, and Harding. And while the doctrine has not been advocated greatly among us for the last century, a resurgence of it is occurring

in many of our colleges and universities. I hope this research will be helpful, especially to any students who may face this theory as they pursue an education in biblical studies. I cannot place before you everything I have studied and written on this subject in such a small space. I will, however, provide you with some information I have acquired through word studies.

Scholars who believe in a renewed cosmos have the task of harmonizing the “Scripture’s teachings regarding the future redemption of creation with teachings that appear to be intentionally predicting its destruction.”<sup>3</sup>

### **“New” in 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:2**

It is very often asserted that the Hebrew and Greek adjectives translated “new” in Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:10-13; and Rev 21:2 are best rendered “renewed,” “restored,” or “refreshed.” Hoekema provides a brief discussion for the Greek adjective *καινος* (*kainos*).<sup>4</sup> He reasons, if a completely “new” earth had been the intent of 2 Pet 3:10-13 and Rev 21:2, the adjective would have been *νεος* (*neos*).

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 275.

<sup>2</sup> Paul R. Williamson, *Death and the After-life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 180.

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<sup>3</sup> Gale Z. Heide, “What is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” *JETS* 40, no.1 (March 1997): 37-56.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 280.

“*Kainos*,” according to W.E. Vine, “denotes new, of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old.”<sup>5</sup> “*Neos*,” on the other hand, “signifies new in respect of time, that which is recent; it is used of the young...”<sup>6</sup> Oftentimes, we find *neos* referring to a person who is young or younger. However, according to Vine, “what is *neos* may be a reproduction of the old in quality or character.”<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, Peter very well could have used the adjective *neos* had he wanted to speak of a reproduction of the old earth.

Moreover, *kainos* could easily connote a “completely new earth,” as Kittel notes, “καίνος is what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value and attraction...In the NT means ‘not yet used’...and able and ordained as such to replace and excel the old.”<sup>8</sup>

Obviously word studies of this nature can be complicated, especially when two words are often used interchangeably, as is the case with *neos* and *kainos*. Both words are used to

refer to the *new* man (*kainos* in Eph 2:15; *neos* in Col 3:10); *new* covenant (*kainos* in Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15; and *neos* in Heb 12:24); and *new* wine (*kainos* in Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; and *neos* in Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Lk 5:37-39).<sup>9</sup>

When we study these words in the NT, we can possibly find some distinction between the terms and their intended significance, but it is far from being universal. We agree with Silva and contend, “It would be more accurate to say that *καίνος* and *νέος* have considerable semantic overlap, so that in many or even most contexts they are genuinely interchangeable, but that in many other contexts one is more likely to be used than the other.”<sup>10</sup>

One such example is found in Matt 9:17, where we find absolutely no distinction between the terms.<sup>11</sup> Both *neos* and *kainos* are translated “new” with the same meaning clearly intended.

### “New” in Isa 65:17; 66:22

As we study the meaning of these Greek adjectives, we should also consider the Isaiah passages (65:17 and

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Moises Silva, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 2:585-586.

<sup>11</sup> The same is true in the accounts of Mark (2:22) and Luke (5:37-39). See also Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 when, as Silva states, “it stretches credulity to think that different nuances are intended in these two passages. Moises Silva, 585-586.

<sup>5</sup> W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 430.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 431.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 3: 447-448.

66:22) and the Hebrew word translated “new.”

The word is חדש (*hadash*). It is believed that Isaiah’s meaning for *hadash* is “a miraculous transformation... to be miraculously renewed.”<sup>12</sup> However, that *hadash* should be translated “new” in these passages is affirmed by an overwhelming array of witnesses. The adjective translated “new” is thus considered “new” both in the sense of *recent* or *fresh* (as the opposite of old) and in the sense of something *not* previously existing.<sup>13</sup> Lexicons agree that *hadash* is new; fresh, unheard of;<sup>14</sup> new;<sup>15</sup> new, new thing, fresh;<sup>16</sup> new, fresh;<sup>17</sup> new, recent, fresh.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* in The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 408. Westermann’s ideas are also cited in the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2004); *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (1997); and the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1980).

<sup>13</sup> Vine, 160.

<sup>14</sup> William Wilson, *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 287.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, and Wilhelm Gensenius, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gensenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978), 294.

<sup>16</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 266.

<sup>17</sup> William L. Holliday, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 96.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 249.

The word occurs 53 times in the Old Testament. Of these 53 occurrences, only one suggests the possibility of a thing being “renewed,” but it would probably be better translated “fresh” (Lamentations 3:22-23).<sup>19</sup>

The remaining 52 occurrences are undoubtedly best translated as *new*, *fresh*, *recent*, or *unheard of*. In fact, that *hadash* is translated “new” in these 52 verses is the consensus among all major English translations. Moreover, “It is also noteworthy that חדש is rendered by νεος only 4x, but by καινος in almost every other instance”<sup>20</sup> which again speaks to the fact that *kainos* can mean “new” as well as “renewed.”<sup>21</sup>

It is also interesting to note that Isaiah used the words *bara* (“I create;” 65:17) and *asah* (“I will make;” 66:22). *Bara* is frequently found in parallel to *asah* (Is 41:20; 43:7; 45:7, 12; Amos 4:13).<sup>22</sup> Isaiah even places these words together on one occasion in 45:18: “God, Who formed (*bara*) the earth and made (*asah*) it...”<sup>23</sup>

When Isaiah desired to use a verb conveying the idea of *renewing*, he

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<sup>19</sup> Lamentations 3:23 is the only variant among the 53 occurrences among some of the dynamic equivalent translations (e.g. NLT).

<sup>20</sup> Moises Silva, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 3:379.

<sup>21</sup> For a full listing of these words, see George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance* (Wilmington, DE: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1975), 403.

<sup>22</sup> Vine, 51.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



did so. On two occasions (40:31 and 41:1), Isaiah used the verb *halaph*, which means to *renew* (NKJV; ESV). Isaiah also could have used the verb form of *hadash* (see 1 Sam 11:14; Ps 51:10; Lam 5:21).

Instead, Isaiah used verbs which convey the idea of creation *ex nihilo* (see Gen 1:1; 2:3; Isa 40:26; 42:5). In 40:26 and 42:5, Isaiah obviously refers to creation from nothing. For 65:17 to mean *renew*, it would be contrary not only to the normal usage of the *hadash* in the OT, but also to the normal usage of the verbs *bara* and *asah* in the OT in general and in Isaiah in particular. The Lord, through Isaiah, is clearly using the language of creation to announce a new heavens and new earth.<sup>24</sup>

### An Inconsistency?

Peter Davids has stated that he believes the heavens will be entirely new while the earth will be renewed or renovated.<sup>25</sup> You will note that this interpretation would allow *kainos* to mean “*entirely new*” when referring to the heavens, but “*renewed*” when referring to the earth. This seems to be placing a subjective definition arbitrarily upon these words.

In Rev 21:1-2, we find the first heaven and the first earth passing away, just as Peter described in great-

er detail.<sup>26</sup> We find that the new earth differs from the old earth as there is no longer any sea. The new heavens are also different from the old heavens as they are without the sun and the moon (cf. 21:23). The sun and the moon, along with all the host of the heavens, passed away with a great noise (roar, NASB), and the elements were destroyed with intense heat. As Jesus said, Peter and John affirm, “...heaven and earth will pass away” (Matt 24:35). Clearly, “It is not a picture of renovation of this earth, but of the disappearance of this earth and sky.”<sup>27</sup>

Among some preachers in the Restoration Movement we find an inconsistency on this point. T.W. Brents believed “everything created by God will exist, in some form, as long as he will exist – eternally.”<sup>28</sup> We should ask, what about the sun, moon, and sea? The wording of Rev 21:23 is based on Isa 60:19.<sup>29</sup> Note, “The sun shall no longer be your light by day, Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory.”

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<sup>26</sup> We must be careful not to argue from silence on this point as Helyer has rightly noted. See Larry R. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 267.

<sup>27</sup> A.T. Robertson, *The General Epistles and the Apocalypse in Word Pictures in the New Testament*: vol. 6, (Nashville, TN: SSBSC, 1933), 466.

<sup>28</sup> T.W. Brents, *Gospel Sermons* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1918), 349.

<sup>29</sup> G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 1153.

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<sup>24</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 135.

<sup>25</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude in The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 284-286.

Are we to believe that Christ's regeneration is of "cosmic proportions,"<sup>30</sup> and that "...the whole creation will share this deliverance and be freed from the corruption and mortality to which it has been subjected by the sin of man"?<sup>31</sup> If so, why does this not apply to the sun, moon, and sea? Why does a 'new earth' require *renewing* of the old; yet, 'new heavens' can include the *annihilation* of the old and creation of something that is altogether *new*?

Mounce sees this inconsistency in the theory and attempts to correct it by suggesting that "John is not supplying his readers with information about future astrological changes but setting forth by means of accepted apocalyptic imagery the splendor that will radiate from the presence of God and the Lamb."<sup>32</sup>

However, we ask, what function would they serve if not to give light? The sun and moon have been placed to mark time, and time will cease to function in eternity – a point which is repeated by John (Rev 22:5).<sup>33 34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Williamson, 180.

<sup>31</sup> David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Romans* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1943), 153.

<sup>32</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* in *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 395-396.

<sup>33</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001 ), 573.

<sup>34</sup> To this point Harrington agrees that John is here describing the heavenly Jerusalem. Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation in Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 218.

Does the evidence merit the overwhelming acceptance the theory of the renovated earth receives? To this point in our study of words, we would have to answer "no." Much more also needs to be said regarding the assertion that Christ died to redeem the earth. We know that Christ died to redeem man from sin. In order to establish the point that Christ died to redeem the earth/cosmos, we are going to have to have some clear statements from Scripture to prove it. I would like to address this question in a future article, Lord willing. I would also like to be able to state what I believe to be the new heavens and new earth, and not simply argue from a negative standpoint.

In concluding this article, I would like to make a personal observation. We must be careful not to make every disagreement between us a "salvation issue" or accuse someone of teaching "another gospel" simply because he believes something akin to this renewed earth theory. I certainly would not characterize Brents, Lipscomb, Lard, Harding, or Campbell in this way.

Additionally, we must be careful not to form our conclusions in favor of any doctrine on the basis of one or two books, or because good men have believed the doctrine in the past. We should endeavor to study every matter diligently, and our teaching should reflect such study.

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