

# Gospel Gleaner

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



## Things We Must Know

*Remaining Established in the Present Truth*

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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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## Gospel Gleaner

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## The Existence of God

Robert Waggoner

You'll probably agree with the proposition that what people believe about God is a determining factor in how people behave. You'll probably also agree that such is true not only for individuals but also for societies. This means that whenever people believe in God, they have a consistent, single standard that motivates their behavior because God is one (Romans 3:30; Galatians 3:20; James 2:19) and he is unchanging (Psalm 15:4; Malachi 3:16; Hebrews 6:18; James 1:17). Therefore, collectively speaking, a society of believers will have a united society that strives to conform to the will of God.

However, whenever individuals do not believe in God, they have inconsistent and pluralistic standards motivating their behaviors because they are many and often change their minds. Therefore, collectively speaking, a society of non-believers will have a divided and permissive society that fluctuates according to the whims of its people.

A society with large segments of both believers and non-believers will find itself fraught with constant competition within its governing agencies. That is where we are in our country today. Belief in whether or not God exists therefore has practical im-

portance, not only for individuals, but also for societies as a whole.

How believers and disbelievers behave differently can be demonstrated in various ways. Believers in God affirm that God created the world (Genesis 1:1; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 42:5; Revelation 10:6), that he interacts with humanity that he is the supreme law-giver, and that he will judge everyone. He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Disbelievers in God deny these propositions. Notice how people behave differently in accordance with their beliefs about each of these propositions.

If you believe that God is your maker and that you were made in his image (Genesis 1:27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7), then you will believe that since God is spirit (John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17) you also have a spiritual nature (Isaiah 42:5; 1 Corinthians 2:11) that needs to be nourished by the word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4). On the other hand, if you deny that God is your maker, then you will consider yourself only physical in nature, and will not look to God for guidance.

If you believe that God is the supreme lawgiver, i.e., that God provides the ethical, social, political, cultural and legal standards for life (Genesis 1:28; 5:13-21; 8:16-17; 12:1-3; Exodus 3:5ff; 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 4:2; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 22:36-40), then you are likely to believe that there are absolute universal

standards applicable to everyone and you will yield yourself to obeying his commandments (Luke 18:20; 1 John 2:3-4). Moreover, you will want everyone else in your community to abide by his commandments because it will provide uniformity within your society.

On the other hand, if you do not believe in the existence of God, then you are likely to think that there are no absolute universal standards and you will not obey his commandments. Without God, law and ethics are considered relative, situational and autonomous. Your personal ethical standards may easily shift to the fluctuating political, social, and cultural values of your permissive society.

If you believe that God interacts with humanity as he did through Noah, Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and the apostles to bless humanity, then you may think that God may act through you to accomplish his purposes (Romans 8:28). You will probably seek to influence your community to be righteous (Proverbs 11:11; 14:34).

On the other hand, if you believe that there is no God then you will not be motivated toward godly living because you will probably believe that everyone's lifestyle is equally valid. You may not seek to influence your community toward godliness because you may consider that the wisdom of humanity is sufficient for its own

guidance. You may even think that believers in God are unrealistic.

If you believe that God will resurrect you from the dead (John 5:28-29) and that God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:32), then you will probably seek to obey God's commandments, acknowledge that you sin, repent, and live righteously in order that you may have eternal life with God (John 3:15-16; Romans 2:7; Galatians 6:8). You will probably also strive to persuade others to live righteously in order that they too may have everlasting life.

On the other hand, if you believe that you will not be resurrected nor be judged by God, then you may be inclined to selfishly seek the pleasures and fortunes of this life. Moreover, you may have little incentive to care about the misfortunes of others (Luke 16:19-31).

These examples of contrasting beliefs are only a few of many that might be given, but they are enough to illustrate that belief in God is important and relevant not only for individuals but also for societies as a whole. How then can you prove to others that God exists?

Through the centuries, people have pondered about how to answer that question. Of course, the Bible declares that God exists but biblical declarations are considered not valid by disbelievers. Therefore, arguments that are meaningful to them must come from human reasoning.

Five major arguments from reason for believing in the existence of God may be stated briefly. *First*, religion exists in all cultures. While cultures may differ in their religious beliefs, no culture has ever been known not to be religious. That fact indicates that religion is ingrained within the human psyche. People look with awe at the immensity and grandeur of the universe and attribute its greatness to super human intelligence and power. Hence, there must be a God. This is called the intuitive argument for God.

*Second*, since it is impossible for people to think about that which does not exist and since people can think about God, then God must exist. God is considered to be "that than which nothing greater can be conceived." This is known as the ontological argument.

*Third*, within every individual there is a sense of "ought," i.e., some behaviors are right and other behaviors are wrong. There may be differences in what is considered by different cultures as being right and wrong, but everyone has an inherent sense of what ought to be. This is designated as the moral or anthropological argument.

*Fourth*, everything affected must have an adequate cause because nothing can come from nothing. Since the universe exists, it must have been affected by a cause greater than itself. Since motion exists, things that move must have been set in motion by

something or someone. Natural things are contingent upon something greater than themselves. Something greater than what is natural requires a Super-natural, i.e. God. This is the cosmological argument.

*Fifth*, since the universe exhibits design, purpose, unity, complexity, and order, there must have been a designer to give it purpose, unity, complexity, and order. This is the teleological argument. These arguments from reason as well as biblical arguments need to be proclaimed throughout the nations.

Knowing about God is important because individuals and societies live better when they abide by his ordinances. Ideally, individuals and societies who believe in God are unselfish, loving people that feel safe and care about their neighbors.

A society in which a large segment of its citizens does not believe in God becomes a selfish, uncaring society wherein people feel the need to protect themselves from criminals and scammers. Which kind society would you prefer to live in?

Ancient Israel became wicked as it departed from the knowledge of God (Hosea 4:1-6). To turn individuals and societies from wickedness to righteousness requires that they acquire a greater knowledge of God. People are blessed whenever they mediate upon the word of God (Psalm 1:1-3).

## ***Great Doctrines of the Bible***

by Robert Waggoner

### **Reviewed by Ronald Bryant**

This volume is multifaceted. It sets forth biblical truth in exacting and scholarly fashion; yet, it is extremely readable and practical. The narrative is both challenging and encouraging. The seasoned preacher or teacher will find it an excellent resource. The novice will find it to be an excellent guide to understanding biblical truth and growth. In heart-warming fashion it exalts Scripture, and insists upon the application of truth.

The initial part of each section sets forth essential materials and in-depth arguments. Each is followed, on each page, with biblical passages which establish and re-enforce the focus. The author's personal convictions are strong and encouraging.

Each chapter serves to educate; to ground and to strengthen biblical insight and personal conviction. The book itself would be excellent for the equipping of leaders, teachers, and personal workers. Such could be done in the regular classes on the Lord's Day and mid-week classes.

There are forty chapters, and each is filled with clear enunciation of the major doctrines of the Bible. The major attraction of the book is the authors appeal to knowing the biblical text, and the application of the same. The questions are also excellent teaching tools.

Available from Gospel Light Publishing Company; [gospellightbooks.com](http://gospellightbooks.com)

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# The Deity of Christ

Owen Olbricht

One of the important questions concerning Jesus is, "Is He God or man? An examination of Scriptures will bring a careful student to the conclusion that Jesus is God.

## John 1:1

John 1:1 is one of the crucial verses in determining whether or not Jesus is God. By John writing that the Word was God, He did not mean that the Word was *the* God, but that the Word was God, which expresses the nature of the Word who was with the God.

It is incorrect to say that Jesus was "a god" and not God (Jn. 1:1). It is correct to say Jesus was God, doing so without the article "a" (The article "a" does not appear in the Greek). In the sentence, "The Word was God," Word is the nominative (subject) and God is predicate without an article.

Zerwick in his grammar comments on the use of the predicate without an article: "The omission of the article shows that the speaker regards the person or thing not so much as this or that person or things, but rather as *such* a person or thing, i.e. regards not the individual but rather its nature or quality."<sup>1</sup>

Other grammars could be quoted, all of which confirm the accuracy of the Zerwick quotation.

The weight of the evidence from the text and from grammar supports the conclusion that Jesus, the "Word," is God; He has the God nature. By becoming flesh (Jn. 1:14), He was God with us (Mt. 1:23), God in a human body.

The Jews, in the following passages, correctly understood Jesus' statements and realized that He was saying that He was God. To them this was blasphemy, which was why they sought to kill Him.

## John 5:17, 18

After Jesus healed a handicapped man, He was answering the Jews' accusation that He had not respected the Sabbath (John 5:16). He responded that He was working as My Father works. The Jews picked up on the word "My" instead of "the," which implied Jesus had the same nature as God, and could have the same privileges as God.

"But He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working. For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal to God'" (Jn. 5:17, 18).

The Jews realized Jesus meant God was His Father instead of the Father

of all people, making himself equal to God.

In the rest of chapter John 5, Jesus shows that He is with the Father,

- Jesus can do what the Father does (19).
- Jesus can give life to raise the dead as the Father can (21, 25).
- Jesus has the right of judgment and will judge instead of the Father (22, 27, 30).
- Jesus being honored gives honor to the Father (23).

#### **John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19**

By using the term, "I Am," (Jn. 8:24, 28) was Jesus associating Himself with the "I Am," the YHWH, "Yahweh," of the OT who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2, 14)?

The weight of scholarship accepts "I am," as used in John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19, to mean that Jesus was identifying Himself with the "I AM" (Yahweh) of the Old Testament.

Newman and Nida comment concerning "I Am," "In later Judaism the expression 'I am' is definitely used as a name for God. Thus, in those passages in John's gospel where Jesus uses 'I am' in the absolute sense, he is identifying himself with God."<sup>2</sup>

The mention of the Angel of the Lord (Ex. 3:2) in the burning bush calling Himself the "I AM," gives good reason to associate Jesus with

the "I AM." Also the Jews picking up stones to kill Jesus (Jn. 8:59) might imply that they understood Jesus' statement, "I am," to mean that He had the God nature, thus is God.

John identifies Jesus with the "I am" of the Old Testament by stating that Isaiah prophesied about Jesus, "These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory and spoke of Him" (Jn. 12:41). The statement John quotes (Jn. 12:40) is taken from Isaiah (Isa. 6:9, 10) when Isaiah saw the Lord on the throne (Isa. 6:1-7).

In this setting the One on the throne is called YHWH, "Yahweh," in verses 3 and 5, also translated "Jehovah." If the One on the throne is "Yahweh" that Isaiah saw, and Jesus is the One Isaiah saw, then Jesus can be identified as God, "Yahweh." Seeing one is seeing the other for they are one (Jn. 14:9).

#### **John 10:30-33, 36**

The Jews told Jesus, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." The Jews correctly conclude Jesus taught He was God. Jesus answered, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'" (cf. Ps. 82:6)?

If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken) do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the

Son of God" (Jn. 10:30-36)? Jesus was indicating that if prophets, who were merely men could be called gods, then surely He, being God, could be called God,

Newman and Nida wrote, "If those persons who received God's Law...could be spoken of as 'gods,' how much more can the one whom the Father has chosen and sent into the world claim to be 'the Son of God.' ...Jesus is not claiming to be a divine being among many others; he is claiming a unique prerogative, and the Jews recognize this."<sup>3</sup>

#### **John 10:38; 14:10, 11**

In explaining the oneness He had with the Father (Jn. 10:30), Jesus stated, "the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (John 10:38). They are one in nature and essence, and as such they can be co-joined, and act in unity in the work they do (see also 14:10, 11).

The Jews understood that Jesus was implying that His being in God and God in Him meant that He is God, the Son, who was with God, the Father. For this reason they sought again to seize Jesus (Jn. 10:39).

#### **John 20:28**

Did Thomas call Jesus God by saying, "My Lord, and My God"? (Jn. 20:28).

Thomas was addressing Jesus after seeing proof of His resurrection and realizing that Jesus' resurrection, as He had promised, showed that He had

life in Himself, as the Father has life in Himself (Jn. 5:26). Jesus was, "I AM, that I AM," existing because He exists, having life dependent on Himself and not on another. Thus Thomas did not classify Jesus along with created beings which depend on God for their existence, but with God who is self-dependent.

#### **Other Passages**

Jesus is either equated with the Father as having the same nature as God or is called God in the passages below. They show Jesus is the image of God and of His nature; therefore, He is God, not the Father, but the Son.

- "And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6b).
- "They shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, 'God with us'" (Mt. 1:23).
- "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (Jn. 1:18; NASB).
- "The church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).
- "From whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Rom. 9:5).

- “For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom. 14:10b). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10a). Jesus is God before whom we all will appear (Jn. 5:22).
- “The god of this world had blinded the minds...so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4).
- “Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God” (Phil. 2:6).
- “He is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).
- “Resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ, Himself” (Col. 2:2).
- “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col. 2:9). *Theoteos*, appearing only here in the New Testament, is used outside the New Testament, as defined by Danker, “the state of being god, divine character/nature, deity, divinity.”<sup>4</sup>
- Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13).
- “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Heb. 1:3).
- “But of the Son He says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’” (Heb. 1:8).
- “Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above your companions” (Heb. 1:9).
- “Who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1).
- “We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:20).

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<sup>1</sup>Maximillian Zerwick, English edition adapted from the fourth Latin edition by Joseph Smith (Rome, 1963), 55.

<sup>2</sup>Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (New York, NY: American Bible Society), 1980, 124.

<sup>3</sup>Newman and Nida, 344.

<sup>4</sup>Fredrick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, third edition, based on Walter Bauer's sixth edition (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 452.

# The Inspiration of the Bible

John T. Polk, II

## God identified all that is Scripture.

"All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

"Scripture" refers to "God-breathed" writings. "All" that is "Scripture" is the only acceptable basis for living the life of a Christian. "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Christians should never give "heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth" (Titus 1:14). There are no other religious writings that are God's Scripture.

## God controlled the thoughts in Scripture.

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11-12).

"The Gospel" of Jesus Christ did not originate in the imaginations of humans, nor was this doctrine taught

to Paul by humans, but it was given directly from God to the individual writers by "revelation" (Greek, *apocalypse*). This means that the writers' thoughts stimulated by, and were formed around, the truth from God they were given.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

He then listed six specific occasions the bodily-resurrected Lord was witnessed alive. The very ideas were planted in the writers' minds. What was "received" from God was that which was written.

## God controlled the writing of Scripture.

Peter declared: "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Since Scripture is not the product of men's minds, men cannot freely interpret its meaning. No church, nor group of men (individually or collectively!) has been authorized by God to

determine Scripture meaning, since the First Century Apostles. Scripture must interpret Scripture! Also, note that once the "revelation" was given, God guided the writers to include its meaning.

This definitely applies to the writings of the Prophets in the Old Testament, both before and after a specific prophecy, and to the details of its prophetic fulfillment in the New Testament. If this were not the case, then Paul could not have said: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (**Romans 15:4**). Confidence in God comes through confidence in His Word.

### **God chose the words expressing the thoughts in Scripture.**

"But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (**1 Corinthians 2:10-13**).

Only the inner spirit of a person can reveal one's inner thoughts, so likewise is it with God. His Holy Spirit, knowing all, chooses what to reveal to Scripture writers, and from each individual man, selects from his vocabulary words that best and accurately expresses God's Will.

Men do not teach God what words to use, but God chooses what Words He wants. This is why there are no contradictions, there is no chaos, and there can be no contractions in the doctrine.

For example, the unique term "inspired of God" (**2 Timothy 3:16**) only occurs here in Scripture. God has woven human words together to make a tapestry of faith that says the same thing to everyone. Jesus said, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (**Luke 24:46-47**).

The facts of the Gospel give faith universally, and the response to that Gospel produces conversion universally. God-breathed Scriptures are the only source of instruction for faith and obedience to God. Nothing else will suffice.

Jesus said, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teach-

ing as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:6-7). Unity of believers comes only by accepting God’s Scriptures which teach the same doctrine to all.

### **God’s Scripture explains everything that must be understood.**

“For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles-- if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:1-5).

There is no “mystery” in God’s Plan that has not already been revealed in Scripture. Words convey ideas, and when read, understood, and accepted, God-chosen words have sown His ideas. To “have briefly written” these awesome ideas is a proof of Divine Inspiration, for no humans could have spoken so tersely but clearly.

### **God’s Scriptures are never to be lowered to the level of human writings.**

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as

the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The living God has written a word which gives life, hence “the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

God’s Scriptures are living, not because they are growing and changing, but because they bring a sinner’s dead soul back to life!

I conclude with Gausson:

“Such, then, is God’s book. Its first line, its last line, all its teachings, understood or not understood, are by the same author; and that ought to suffice for us. Whoever may have been the writers—whatever their circumstances, their impressions, their comprehension of the book, and the measure of their individuality in this powerful and mysterious operation—they have all written faithfully and under superintendence in the same roll, under the guidance of one and the same Master, for whom a thousand years are as one day; and the result has been the Bible. Therefore I will not lose time in idle questions; I will study the book.” (*The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, L. Gausson, D.D., Edinburg, Scotland, 1841, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, reprint 1979).

# The Distinctive Nature of the Lord's Church

Tom McLemore

Few, if any, outside the Lord's church understand its distinctive nature. Sadly, an increasing number of members of the Lord's church are unaware of the distinctive nature of it. Though they are members of the Lord's church, their lack of understanding of the church's distinctive nature allows them to be led to join denominations, to view involvement in the worship, corporate life, and work of the church as unimportant or nonessential, and to accept erroneous doctrines and practices that corrupt the Lord's church. Consider with me some of the distinctive characteristics of the Lord's church.

## Membership and Salvation

The Lord's church is *the only church of which one becomes a member in the process of being saved by Christ*. "Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit...And he testified with many other words and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation.' So

those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls....And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:37, 38, 40, 47).

The process of being saved does not make one a member of *any other church*. There is no denomination of which I am aware that considers one to have become a member of that denomination in the process of being saved. Every denomination of which I have knowledge will admit that they believe that one can have been saved and yet not be a member of that denomination.

## Built and Saved by Christ

The Lord's church is *the only church that the Lord is building and of whom the Lord is savior*. The Lord is building his church by saving people, and everyone whom he has saved is in the Lord's church. Jesus declared, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the

church, his body, and is himself its Savior" (Ephesians 5:23).

"Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:4, 5).

All other churches are being built by human beings. They may *claim* to be a church that is being built by Christ, but that claim is false because the membership of their church is constituted on some other basis than the result of people having been saved by Christ.

#### **God as Father and Christ as Brother**

The Lord's church is *the only fraternity of which God is Father and Christ is brother*. One comes to be a member of the Lord's church only by being *born* into it.

"But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

"For 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" (Galatians 3:26, 27).

"Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:35).

Of no other church is one a member by this spiritual birth. One may be born anew and still not be considered by a denomination to be a member of that denomination. That shows that such denominations are no part of the family of which God is Father and Christ is brother.

#### **Obedience to the New Testament**

The Lord's church is *the only church that is not the result of teaching that was developed by some human being, that is not the result of emphasizing a particular practice or characteristic of Christianity, and that is not the result of an interpretation of Scripture*.

Every denomination exists as the result of one or more of these things. In contrast, the Lord's church is the result of hearing the gospel as presented in the New Testament, believing it, and obeying it.

The Lord's church emphasizes, and its members strive to practice, ALL things the Lord commanded his apostles. The Lord's church EXHIBITS all of the characteristics of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament.

Rather than teaching interpretations of Scripture, and drawing lines

of fellowship on the basis of such interpretations, members of the Lord's church teach, and draw lines of fellowship on the basis of, what the Scripture itself SAYS.

The Lord's church is the result of fulfilling 1 Peter 4:11. "Whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God" – the oracles of God are the Scriptures.

### **Without Addition, Subtraction, Substitution, or Interpretation**

The Lord's church *exists* on the basis of what the Scripture SAYS without addition, subtraction, substitution, or interpretation. It is *characterized by and practices* what the Scripture SAYS without addition, subtraction, substitution, or interpretation. The Lord's church *in every respect* is the result of the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age'" (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Lord's church exists because people are baptized in the name of the Sacred Three, and the life of the Lord's church is simply a putting into practice of all that Jesus commanded

without addition, subtraction, substitution, or interpretation.

### **It is "The Church"**

The Lord's church is *the only church that needs no name*. While there are many descriptions of the Lord's church in the New Testament, one will search in vain to find a name for the church. It is simply "the church" (Acts 8:3; 9:31; 20:28; 12:28; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 25, 27, 29, 32; Philippians 3:6; Colossians 1:18, 24).

The New Testament refers only to the Lord's church, and there is not another church within its pages from which it must be distinguished. The essence of the term "denomination" is the practice of assuming a name for the purpose of distinguishing. Every denomination has a name and must have a name, because none of them is the church of the New Testament.

They are distinct from the church of the New Testament, and they must distinguish themselves from the church in the New Testament by assuming a name. In contrast, the Lord's church is the church of the New Testament distinct from all denominations, and therefore needs no denominational name.

### **No Other Choice**

The Lord's church is *the only church made up of people who had no choice to make with respect to the church of which they would be members*.

In contrast to the cry, "Be saved, and join the church of your choice," those who have chosen to obey the gospel of Christ had no choice to make between churches.

In the process of saving them through their obedience to the gospel, those who were being saved were being added by the Lord himself to the Lord's church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Distinct from the notion, "I want to be saved, but I am not interested in being a member of any church," those who have chosen to obey the gospel had no choice to make. In the process of saving them through their obedience to the gospel, the Lord added them to his church.

In the New Testament, there is no such thing as a saved person who was not a member of the Lord's church. On the other hand, all denominations distinguish being saved from being members of their particular denomination. To them, one church is as good as another. Not so, to the Lord!

### **Conclusion**

The Lord's church is distinct in nature. It is unique. It is the only true church. It alone is exclusively divine in origin, existence, direction, and destiny. If you will obey the gospel, you will be added to it as the Lord saves you, and as a faithful member of it, you will be precisely where the Lord would have you to be for the rest of your life on earth!



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# GOD DESIRES WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Andy Robison

Nobody reads minds. I have no idea what you are thinking unless you tell me. You have no idea what I am thinking unless I tell you.

That is the thrust of the illustration Paul used in 1 Corinthians 2:11 regarding God's revelation to mankind through the apostles: "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."

We do not know what God is thinking unless He tells us. In verse 12, Paul affirms the necessary revelation was given to the apostles: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God." Verse 13 tells us Paul and the other inspired men passed on those revelations. We have them compiled in the completed Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Our relationship to God is based solely on that which He has revealed. His word is the basis for faith (Rom. 10:17). Our feelings or imaginations about what God might or might not accept have no place in our quest to please Him. When we in essence say, "I don't think God would mind if we..." we arrogantly claim to read God's mind on unrevealed matters.

We must, to please God, stick to what is written (Deut. 4:2; 29:29; Prov. 30:5-6; 1 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:11; Gal. 1:6-8; Rev. 22:18-19). Therefore, the sincere worshiper is the truth-seeking worshiper. He is not one who allows his practices to be guided by wishes. Rather, he is guided by authority. He finds that authority in the Scriptures, using common-sense principles of interpretation.

In common speech, most people understand statements of authority and the subtle nuances of them. A parent orders a child to play in the yard. There is no instruction on what games the child must play, so there is freedom to choose. There is, though, limitation on where to play because of the specification, "In the yard". The child may not go to the neighbor's yard, or in somebody's house, even though the parent did not say, "Do not go" to those places. The silence in the first case (a generic command) frees. The silence in the second case (a specific command) limits.

So, the sincere seeker approaches the Scriptures, wondering what to do to show love and appreciation to Almighty God. He finds Jesus' demand that worship must be "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). He starts by seeking instructions from God's word, which is "truth" (John 17:17).

He will see that early disciples "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) and that early worship services included a time for preaching (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-16:2, especially chapter 15). So he will conclude that when the believers "come together as a church" (1 Cor. 11:18), preaching was included. Not wanting to add to or take away from the word of God, he will—with the local brethren, and under the authority of the local eldership if one is present—include in the planned worship a time for preaching.

He will see that the worship period of the church included a great emphasis on the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23ff.), and note that such service took place on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). He will place appropriate emphasis on that example and the one in Acts 20:7 where the "disciples came together to break bread"—"on the first day of the week". Since such specification is exemplified, he will observe the limitation of silence, and only observe such on the first day. He would not want to add to God's word. And, he will observe it every first day, for he does not want to take away from God's word, either.

He will make the same conclusion concerning the collection for the saints (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

This seeker will note that throughout the Scriptures, prayer is offered. Examples of prayers come from individual hearts (Phil. 1:3-11) and group

occasions (Acts 4:23-30). Since he sees that no limitations on days of the week occur here, he will conclude that such prayers may be offered anytime, but certainly must be included in the Lord's Day service (cf. Rev. 1:10). He knows that in the worship described in Corinth praying took place (1 Cor. 14:15).

He will also note that singing then took place (1 Cor. 14:15), but also that singing may be done anytime (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; James 5:13).

(Note: The worship in Corinth had the acts of worship we ascertain from the rest of the Scriptures, but also had elements of the miraculous which were limited to the first century. Instructions about regulating the miraculous no longer directly apply since we don't have those, but the principles of decency and order [1 Cor. 14:40] do.)

Curious to this person desirous of living by New Testament Christianity is that the mention of "singing" puts a limitation on worship which most of the world of Christendom does not observe. This seeker correctly reasons that the commands to sing, and to make melody in the heart, and to speak to and teach one another in song, inherently limit what the worshiper may do musically in praise of God. The mention of singing limits the sincere seeker. He does not want to add instruments, because God—by the common sense law of silence—left that out when He specified sing-

ing. He does not want to perform a solo because that would rob his brethren of speaking back to him in song. In sincerity, this Christian opts for congregational singing in the public worship, without any non-vocal, unintelligible elements. Incidentally, then, he likely finds the emotive result to be quite fulfilling.

Having then, established five acts of worship from his New Testament study (preaching, praying, and singing, with—on the first day of the week—the Lord's Supper and giving), he turns his attention to worshipping God in spirit (John 4:24). He has the truth of what should be done. Part of that truth means making sure that his spirit is right before God when He approaches boldly the heavenly throne in praise.

Whose spirit is correct? It needs to be a spirit controlled by love of brethren (cf. John 13:34-35) and by right living. The seeker sees long passages in the New Testament about how the new man in Christ is supposed to live (Eph. 4:17-5:21; Col. 3:1-17).

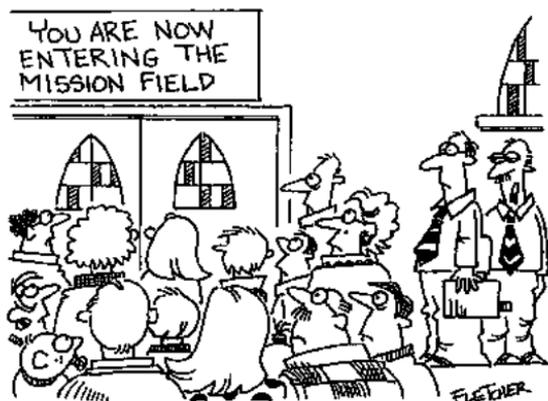
Seeing examples in the Old Testament (from which he may still learn [Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11]) of God rejecting even His authorized worship because of the people's sinful lifestyles (Isaiah 1:10-17; Amos

5:21-24), he realizes this approach of God cannot be just a ritualistic set of motions from a hypocritical heart.

He needs to draw near to God with his heart and not just his mouth, thus avoiding the Lord's rebuke (Matt. 15:7-9). He needs to examine himself (1 Cor. 11:28; cf. 2 Cor. 13:5) to make sure he is not disqualified from communion with God.

Then, if the potential worshiper has so searched the word of God, he can be sure his worship is pleasing to the Father. God has revealed in His word what He wanted done in worship by the commands, examples, and the reasonable implications from them. This man followed what God said, and did not wonder if God might accept something else. He did not follow his hunches, and did not propose any extra-biblical, special revelation to him.

This is the meaning of worshipping in spirit and truth.



**"What do we do if they NEVER leave the building?"**

# Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Matthew 19:3-9

*Mike Kiser*

1. The idea of a second marriage no longer lifts a brow in the Lord's church.
  2. Some are alright. We should not question them. Knowledge of some is not obtainable. Those that are adulterous ought not to be condoned.
  3. Jesus taught us sufficiently and clearly on this subject.
- 
- I. The Basic and Total Doctrine Set Forth.
    - A. Other passages to be considered with this passage: Matthew 5:31, 32; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2, 3; I Corinthians 7:10-17.
    - B. Here is what we learn:
      1. God created the sexes, male and female.
      2. Because of the difference, man would seek out the woman for his wife.
      3. The union is so intimate, the two are spoken of as one flesh.
      4. The joining together is said to be God's doing.
      5. From the beginning it has never God's will they separate.
      6. Men do not have a right to separate what God joins together.
      7. One putting away a mate and marrying another commits adultery.
      8. One who marries one put away becomes an adulterer.
      9. Only immorality is a ground for putting away a mate.
      10. One who puts away a mate because of immorality may marry another.
    - C. Moses allowed divorce.
      1. It was a social concession for the benefit of the woman.
      2. He "suffered" the putting away of the wife.
      3. Jesus did away with the concession and went back to the beginning.

## II. Some Seek to Misinterpret Jesus' Teaching.

- A. "Jesus was explaining Moses' law." He did not make a reference to Moses' law. He carefully distinguished His from Moses. "I say unto you."
- B. "God does not join alien sinners in marriage. Only His children." Jesus was speaking to Jews, does this apply to Jews only? Marriage is honorable for all. Hebrews 13: 4; 1 Corinthians 7:2, 10-16, 27, 39. Christ has authority over all men. Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 2:9-11
- C. "Baptism washes away a sinful state." Repentance comes before baptism. Baptism does not make that which is unholy holy. John the Baptist did not try to get Herod baptized but to give up his sinful relationship. Matthew 14:1-5

## III. The Problem of Divorce and Remarriage in the Church.

- A. Fellowship with the immoral will nullify the great good of the church; stain her purity; diminish her glory; and destroy her power in the community.
- B. Some adulterous cases may not be known. There should not be reason to suspect every married couple that comes among us. We should know from "whence" they come and "who" they are.
- C. When adulterers are known, the elders must be concerned.
  - 1. They can talk to the couple about their marriage. Sometimes one or both may acknowledge they did not have a right to divorce and re-marry.
  - 2. If they claim they have a right, and there is no reliable testimony to the contrary, then do not accept hearsay and gossip.
  - 3. If their marriage is un-scriptural then endeavor to teach them the truth; rebuke; and admonish them. If they will not repent, then withdraw fellowship from them. I Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6

### Conclusion

- 1. The church needs to give emphasis to this doctrine that it may be pure; that sinners may be saved; and that the younger generation may not make the mistake that so many have made.
- 2. Christ word is sufficient on this matter.

# The Transgender Question

Jackson Erwin

One serious question that Christians have been battling over the last few years and especially in today's society is the idea posed by those on the political and moral left that there is a distinction between gender and sex. This question is one that is now in the workforce and even in some state legislatures and school boards (such as that of the West Point School Board of Virginia).

In December 2018, a teacher at the West Point High School, Peter Vlaming, was fired for not calling a transgender student (a female who thought she was a male) by the pronoun of her choice.<sup>1</sup> That is, he refused to call the student "he," while also choosing not to call her "she" either.

Though he did not "mis-gender" the student by calling her by her correct and biological pronoun, he was still fired for what is often called an act of "discrimination" and "hate."

Cases such as this are more prevalent today than at any point in America's history, and such situations are simply caused due to a lack of

knowledge, respect, and love for God's Word and the natural order of things.

Christian's can no longer sit quietly on the sidelines of this issue. (We never should have in the first place!) As Peter said, every child of God must, "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

Our society now makes gender malleable, and thus creates an environment in which the reproductive organs of a newborn do not validate the sex of the child.

We believe that the question of transgenderism is a matter of right and wrong and should not be answered based upon emotions or feelings, but wholly upon facts.

It is through this view that science, the Bible, and statistics should be evaluated, and thus determine whether there is any factual basis in the transgender movement and its beliefs.

Let us examine whether (1) Sex and gender are the same things; and (2) if culture and the mindset of a given society should determine whether an individual is male or female.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.faithwire.com/2018/12/10/christian-teacher-fired-after-refusing-to-use-trans-students-preferred-pronoun/>

## Is Sex and Gender the Same?

One website gives the overall sum of the view for differentiating the two, writing, "The terms 'sex' and 'gender' are used interchangeably in the daily routine, yet they do not have the same or nearly same meaning. Actually, the term 'sex' refers to the biological and physical difference between men and women while the term 'gender' refers to characteristics, behaviors, roles, expectations etc. between the both."<sup>2</sup>

The same article also includes a graph at the beginning which puts "gender" underneath "culture" and "sex" underneath "biology."

However, a vital flaw can be seen both in their definition and in the graph. If society decides what is male and what is female, and has thus made the difference between sex and gender, why are the two terms used "interchangeably in the daily routine"?

### Should Society Be Allowed to Define Gender?

Has society decided that they are different or not? In addition to this point, it should also be noted that it hasn't even been until the 21<sup>st</sup> century that any major push was made to distinguish the two terms, and most people today do not agree with the transgender ideology. Yet, it seems as if the majority of society believes that the gender is malleable simply be-

cause the vast majority of news outlets, social media, and "scientific" websites are overwhelmingly controlled by the political left.

Also, if society determines whether gender is malleable or not, what if the vast majority of people reject transgenderism twenty years from now? Is it then no longer malleable? Obviously, the view that society determines what is male and female has some serious contradictions.

An examination of scientific facts is also needed, since this is a scientific question. Does scientific reasoning and logic provide substantial evidence that one can be biologically male and mentally female? Can one be born with male or female appendages, but have the mind and feelings of the opposite gender?

### The Left Argues Against Scientific Facts and Logic

The *New Atlantis* writes, "The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex — that a person might be "a man trapped in a woman's body" or "a woman trapped in a man's body" — is not supported by scientific evidence."<sup>3</sup>

Even some transgender advocates acknowledge the lack of scientific proof in support of transgenderism. The *Washington Post* made this ob-

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.differencebtw.com/difference-between-sex-and-gender/>

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/number-50-fall-2016>

servation in an article entitled *Biology is Not Destiny: Seeking a Scientific Explanation for Trans Identity Could do More Harm than Good*. In this article, Alex Barasch wrote:

“Both good science and good advocacy dictate that we’re better off acknowledging what we don’t know about ourselves than overstating what we do. It doesn’t help the LGBTQ community to pin our validity on what we might learn, if only we could scan the right brains or pinpoint the right genes — and if we trust the volume of the frontal cortex over what a person tells us about themselves, we deny them their autonomy and their humanity. Rather than waiting for firmer biological footing, those who really want to advance the cause should start by believing trans people when they speak up about who they are.”

Transgenderism is thus defended by its advocates by asserting all one must do is just *believe* he/she is a male in woman’s body or a woman in a male’s body!

It should also be noted that it wasn’t until June of this year that the World Health Organization declared that Gender Dysphoria (which was previously called Gender Identity Disorder) was not a mental disorder, but purely a “sexual health condition.”

Before this decade, it was widely recognized as being a mental disorder in which the individual is confused about who he/she is. Because of this

personal and mental struggle, the transgender suicide rates were incredibly high. About 50% of teenage boys who suffer from this say that they attempted suicide at some point in their lives, along with about 30% of teenage girls, and about 42% of non-binary teens.<sup>4</sup>

With this suicide crisis, the idea has now been pressed that sex change operations will help lower the suicide rate and fix the identity crisis of transgenders. However, there has been *no statistical change*. In fact, those who go through the surgery are 20x more likely to commit suicide than the general population.<sup>5</sup>

Since the problem of suicidality has not been fixed either with sex changes or the acceptance of media, the question then should be asked, “How do we fix it?”

### A Solution

We can fix the problem in three ways:

- 1.) We must accept the fact that those who are biologically male are male, nothing else (the same goes for women).
- 2.) We must accept the principles of the Bible as being true and sufficient for life and godliness.
- 3.) We must train our children by the basic principles of biology

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<sup>4</sup> Statistics are taken from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/02/14305/>

and let them know and understand their gender based upon their sex, showing them that they are one and the same.

- 4.) We must teach our children to love and respect the word of God.

In the Bible, we find no evidence to support the transgender movement and its concept that gender/sex is malleable. From the example of Deuteronomy 22:5, in which the LORD says, "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God" to that of Paul's instructions to the church at Corinth, that the men would not have the hair of a woman (1 Cor. 11), the Bible shows that there is a clear and distinct line for men and women.

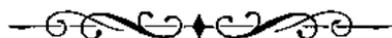
Since every individual is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14) and since men and woman are created with their own body-types and appendages for the work in which God assigned them (Gen. 2:24), we must honor every person in the biological aspect which God created them.

### Conclusion

Transgenderism is not in harmony with science or the Bible; and we cannot contradict and/or deny this basic rule of biology that has been held since the world began in order to appease the radical left and attempt to

appease the 0.6% of society that is transgender.

We must love every person in this world, a just as God did (Jn. 3:16), but love does not mean that we must tolerate error, even abominations. We must "reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 2:4).



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# Knowing about God or Knowing God

Ronald D. Bryant

The Bible is from God. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Paul declared, "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).

He also wrote, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Three specific conclusions arise from careful examination of the Bible, and it can be affirmed:

1. The Bible claims to be the word of God.
2. Upon studying it, the Bible seems to be the word of God.
3. Upon the most thorough examination, the Bible proves to be the word of God.

Additionally, a study of the Bible establishes that it is not only a revela-

tion from God, it also reveals God. It is the only source of information and instruction from God. Apart from it there is no such information or instruction.

God spoke in creation, and the created realm came into existence. In that act, He is revealed as the creator of all things, and the source of life. In the life of the first man and woman, God is revealed providing them all that was necessary to life, and to fellowship with Him.

He is revealed as Sovereign, and as compassionate provider. He is revealed in His dealing with Noah, with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob, then with the descendants of Jacob. He is revealed in delivering the nation of Israel out of Egypt, and in the giving of the Law through Moses. He is revealed in the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. In and through the Law and the prophets He predicted the coming of the Savior, His kingdom, and the new covenant.

In the New Testament, God is revealed in the life and work of His Son. Jesus' life, mission, and ministry; His suffering and death had been predicted by the prophets in the Old Testament – in the Law, the psalms, and the prophets (Luke 24:44-49).

Three specific conclusions arise from a careful study of the record of the life of Christ:

1. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God.
2. In reading the record of His life, He appears to be the Son of God.
3. In the most careful study of the record of His life, He proves to be the Son of God.

All the Scriptures were intended of God to inform, and to draw us to Him in faith and obedience—in and through Jesus Christ and the gospel. Of greater importance, they were given to enable us to not only know about God, but of greater moment, to know Him (cf. Hebrews 8:6-12; John 17:3).

What can we do, what must we do, to move from knowledge about God, to knowing Him? It is to be insisted that there is a way! We can come to know Him, and He desires that we do so! We can come to know what is true about Him, and we can come to embrace each truth revealed. We can and must come to not only accept but to meditate prayerfully upon each revealed truth, to the point of allowing each truth to lead us to commune with Him and yield to Him.

Only when our mental and spiritual thoughts come to be ruled by adoration, reverence, and humility before Him, will we be enabled to know Him. Until we allow the truth about Him to teach us what He is like and

how we are to think about Him, we will not come to know Him.

There is also this to consider: How can anyone express or manifest that which he does not possess?

How can one who does not possess faith manifest faith? How can one who does not possess humility before God express humility? How can one who does not fear or reverence God express fear or reverence for Him? How can one devoid of adoration for God express adoration for Him? Finally, how can people commune with God, if they do not actually know Him?

There is this disturbing fact, in our daily lives, very few of us give ourselves to deep thought about God!

Even in the worship assembly, we seldom give great attention to His presence or purpose! Even a casual glance at the customary order and activities of our assemblies produces more questions than answers.

Arguably, many congregations have cultivated to themselves some very bad habits, which serve the moment but do not produce deep awareness of God, nor of the honor of being in His presence.

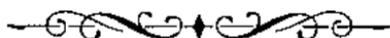
Questions: Why do we seldom have a call to worship, yet, insist upon prolonged announcements that are already in hand in the bulletins? How many of the songs that we sing exalt or actually praise God?

How many sermons are ruled by the speaker's person and personality, rather than the beauty of coming to know and honor God? How often is the assembly about us, and not about God? Honestly, how much of our personal and corporate concern and effort is about communing with God? Is there not cause for concern? Are we vitally concerned with knowing about God, and with knowing Him in our fellowship?

The following passages suggest that God is concerned for us; that He wants us to know Him:

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

"For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones'" (Isaiah 57:15).



## THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH (2)

*Relevant Passages to Consider*

Andy Erwin

With this article I intend to follow-up on the thoughts we introduced in our last issue concerning the Bible's teaching of the new heavens and new earth (Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1-2).

I would like for us to study a few of the most often cited proof texts used by those who advocate the doctrine of a renovated earth.

As stated in the previous article, for the doctrine of the renovated earth to receive such overwhelming support among Evangelicals, surely we will find a clearly stated passage in Scripture which teaches that Jesus died to redeem the cosmos just as He died to redeem mankind.

In addition to this, I would then like to state my convictions for what I believe to be the biblical doctrine of the new heavens and new earth. It is not sufficient merely to expose error in this regard, but we must also determine to elaborate truth.

### Acts 3:21

It is argued by restored creationists that Christ's regeneration is of cosmic proportions and that this is also the meaning of Acts 3:21.

In his commentary on Acts, David Lipscomb, an avowed restored creationist, affirmed, "'The restitution of all things' refers to the restoration of God's order and rule on the earth, which had been disturbed by the re-

bellion of man and the transfer of the earth to the evil one" which would occur at Christ's return.<sup>1</sup>

However, a full examination of the text will show that the restoration being advocated by Peter pertains to "turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (v.26), through the ministry of the Prophet/Christ (vv.22-23), and the subsequent blessing for all the families of the earth (v.25) – all of which was to occur in "these days" (v.24).

The "restoration of all things" certainly appears to refer to a spiritual restoration of mankind and not a physical restoration of the cosmos. But, if we are wrong on this point, the restoration of God's order still does not imply the need for a renewed earth over a completely new earth. His order can be restored regardless of the newness of the earth involved.

### **Romans 8:21**

On Rom 8:21, again David Lipscomb believed, "...then 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. It shared the corruption and mortality of man's sin, and will share his deliverance from it."<sup>2</sup>

Paul's statement in this passage is truly the centerpiece to the renewed earth doctrine. Observe:

According to Romans 18:19-23, the creation, including our bodies, was subjected to the futility and bondage of a fallen world. God subjected the world to frustration in the hope of liberating the creation from its bondage. This world, full of its sin, violence and disease, is not the world God created. God's good creation has been marred, but his redemptive intent is to renew it...In the end, God will reverse the curse and renew the earth, living among his people just as he did in the Garden.<sup>3</sup>

We ask, is this really what Paul is teaching? What is meant by "creation"? If the creation is referring to the earth, Peter (2 Pet 3:10-13) could very well be describing its deliverance. If Paul is speaking of the earth, this would obviously be anthropomorphic language, wherein the earth is given human qualities through a figure of speech known as personification.

However, if the redemption of the cosmos is under consideration, Paul's statement does not necessarily imply a renovated earth. If it does so imply, why does this not apply to the sun and moon (Rev 21:23; 22:5)?

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<sup>1</sup> David Lipscomb, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1896), 54.

<sup>2</sup> David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Romans* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1943), 153.

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<sup>3</sup> John Mark Hicks and Bobby Valentine, *Kingdom Come: Embracing the Legacy of David Lipscomb and James Harding* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2006), 186.

Why does a “new earth” require *renewing* of the old; yet, “new heavens” require the *annihilation* of the old and creation of something that is altogether *new*? (See our previous article for a discussion of the word “new” in the OT and NT.)

Mounce sees this inconsistency and argues, “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>4</sup>

However, we ask, what function would these heavenly bodies 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>5 6</sup>

Herein is perhaps the greatest inconsistency of the renewed earth theory. Renewal is argued for the earth under the premise that God will not destroy anything he has created. Yet, God also created the sun, moon, and stars and renewed creationists permit their destruction.

Paul could also be writing about something else, perhaps even about

our resurrection and the changing of this present physical body into a glorious spiritual body likened unto Christ (see 1 Cor 15:35 ff.; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2). It is not unusual for Paul to speak of Christians as a “creation” (Col 1:15), specifically a *new creation* (2 Cor 5:17).

The suffering and even persecution which Christians face in this life cannot be compared to the pleasures, joy, and glory to be revealed “in us” (v.18). His creation (the church) certainly earnestly expects and awaits the resurrection when our new bodies shall be revealed. As Christians, we groan within ourselves and eagerly await the resurrection – i.e. the redemption of the body (v.23). Thus, the redemption of the body, not the cosmos, could very well be the topic of discussion.

#### **Ephesians 1:9-10 and Colossians 1:19-20**

In Eph 1:9-10, Paul mentions “the fullness of the times” when God will gather together “all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.” In Col 1:19-20, Paul writes about the reconciliation of things in on earth and in heaven. These passages are also used as proof texts for renewed creationists.<sup>7</sup> In these passages Middleton believes, “Paul does not myopically limit the

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<sup>4</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>5</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001 ), 573.

<sup>6</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.

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<sup>7</sup>For examples see: J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 157-159.; N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 104.

efficacy of Christ's atonement to humanity. Rather, the reconciliation with God effected by Christ's shed blood is applied as comprehensively as possible to *all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*"<sup>8</sup>

F.F. Bruce also connects these three passages (Rom 8:21; Eph 1:9-10; and Col 1:20), stating: "all creation is to share in the fruits of Christ's redemptive work...So here, the universe has its place in God's secret purpose, now revealed."<sup>9</sup>

Again we ask, is this really Paul's message? Or, is this interpretation the consequence of reading into the text the renewed creation theory? Could it not be true that Paul is herein utilizing a figure of speech known as a *metonymy*?

In a metonymy of the subject, the subject is put for the adjunct, and in this case, the place or the thing containing it, is put for the thing which is being contained.<sup>10</sup>

Examples of metonymy of the subject, wherein the world is put for its inhabitants is a figure often employed by John (see John 1:10; 3:16, 17; 6:33; 7:7; 14:17, 31; 17:21; 1 John 2:2; 3:1; 5:19). But, the figure of

speech is also used by Paul (see Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 4:9; 11:32; 2 Cor 5:19) and we believe this is the case in these passages.

In the epistle to Ephesus, Paul speaks of the "mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him" (1:9-10).

Allowing Paul to be his own commentator, we turn to Eph 3:3 ff., and we find that the "mystery" under consideration, which was being revealed to Paul at that time – in the fullness of times – was "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (3:6).

This is the "fellowship of the mystery" between Jews and Gentiles – all creation – in the church, according to His eternal purpose (3:8-13).

Moreover, the "redemption of the purchased possession," has been sealed with the Holy Spirit, and thus has a guarantee of an inheritance (1:13-15).

The redeemed possession has been purchased by the blood of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit; neither of which can be said about the cosmos, but both can be said about the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 3:16-17).

In Paul's epistle to the Colossians, those things in heaven and earth being

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<sup>8</sup> J. Richard Middleton, "A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Case for a Holistic Reading of the Biblical Story of Redemption," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 11 (2006): 87-88.

<sup>9</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 261.

<sup>10</sup> E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2003), 567.

reconciled to God and receiving peace with God are thus reconciled "through the blood of His cross" (1:20). For whom did Jesus shed His blood? Paul tells us in Acts 20:28 and in Eph 5:25 that Christ's blood bought the church.

We – the church – have redemption through His blood (Eph 1:7). Jesus experienced death for every man (Heb 2:9) and will save those who obey Him (Heb 5:8-9). Individuals are reconciled to God by His blood and the word of reconciliation. In this sense the "world" is reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:19).

We can provide scores of passages which teach that Christ shed His blood for our sins. Renewed creationists are going to have to provide at least *one* passage in Scripture which clearly teaches that Jesus died to redeem the cosmos. These passages (Acts 3:21; Rom 8:21; Eph 1:9-10; and Col 1:20) simply do not provide the proof their doctrine requires.

### **Our Lord's Return**

Seeing that the heavens and the earth will be destroyed, burned up, and dissolved with fervent conflagration at Christ's return (2 Pet 3:10-13), according to His promise (cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22), we look for a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Rev 21:1-2). We look for the new heavens and earth to appear after our Lord's return and final judgment on mankind (Rev 20:11-15). Christ's return should be viewed as literal. Upon His return, Paul wrote, "then comes the end" (1

Cor 15:23-24). He will initiate the general and universal resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29; 1 Thess 4:6 ff; 1 Cor 15:23 ff). He will then make a judgment upon humankind, thus, bringing the kingdom into its eternal state (Matt 25:31 ff).

Jesus will come in power and glory (Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 2 Thess 1:7). His coming will be sudden and unexpected, preceded only by normal human activity (Matt 24:37-39, 42-44, 45-51; Acts 1:7).

The second coming will be visible to every eye (Acts 1:11; Rev 1:7). His angels will accompany Him (Matt 13:39-49; 16:27; Mark 8:38; 2 Thess 1:7). The spirits of those now in Paradise will also return with the Savior (1 Thess 4:14; Jude 14). These spirits will be given their new spiritual bodies at the resurrection. The mortal bodies which are in the graves shall be changed into spiritual bodies in the resurrection (1 Cor 15:35-54; Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

We will hear the shout of the archangel and the last trumpet will sound (John 5:28; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16). His appearing is revealed *only* as a single event.

At His appearing, the dead in Christ will be raised first, those living will be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thess 4:16-18). No saved person will be left behind on earth. The world then will be destroyed (2 Pet 3:10-13). No wicked person will be left on earth as there will be no earth. The only thing to remain from this

world will be the citizens of the kingdom (Dan 2:44; 1 Cor 15:24, 52; Heb 12:26-29).

After His return, all nations shall be gathered before His throne of judgment (Rev 20:11-15). Judgment will be according to His word and according to our deeds (John 12:48; 2 Cor 5:10; Ecc1 12:13-14). All will be judged (Rom 14:10-12).

Death and Hades (Rev 20:14), the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41), and all who are disobedient to Christ (1 Thess 1:7-9; Rev 20:15; 21:8, 27) will be cast into the lake of fire which is the second death – i.e. eternal punishment in hell (Mark 9:48; Rev 14:11).

The righteous and the redeemed throughout the ages will witness a new heavens and new earth coming down as a bride adorned for her husband. God will dwell among them. In this celestial New Jerusalem, the inhabitants will never again know sin, sickness, or sorrow.

### **The New Heavens and New Earth**

The Isaiah passages speak of salvation and of a new creation. We would agree with Chisholm that these passages speak of a transformation which must occur in human society, where justice and peace will prevail.<sup>11</sup> The question remains, when, where, and how will this justice and peace prevail?

The justice and peace foretold by Isaiah can only be experienced on this earth under a new covenant and kingdom inaugurated by the Servant, the Christ of God. However, even then it is experienced in a limited sense. God's justice and peace will not be experienced in its fullest sense until judgment is made final and the new earth is brought down (Rev 21:1 ff).

Only by understanding the "already but not yet" tension of the kingdom can we grasp the correlation between Isaiah, Peter, and Revelation. Christians are now blessed as citizens of God's kingdom (Col 1:13; Heb 12:25-28); but we are not yet blessed as fully as we will be in heavenly state of the kingdom (Matt 25:34).

In a limited sense we can already appreciate the concept of a "new heavens and new earth" – a *new order* – even a new order in and under the rule of Christ, His covenant, and His kingdom. Yet, not yet, have we truly experienced the new heavens and new earth which shall appear after the final judgment.

We look for a new heavens and a new earth according to His promise. Christians will dwell upon a new earth – i.e. heaven – for eternity, as described in Rev 21-22. Christ has gone to prepare this place (Jn 14:1-6), it shall be presented as an adorned bride after the final judgment, and there we shall live with the Godhead and all the redeemed for ages without end.

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<sup>11</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 135.

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## Tomorrow's Preachers Today

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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

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## Gospel Gleaner

Vol. 31 ♦ No. 2

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## Tomorrow's Preachers Today

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gleaner* we will be featuring a few of the students in some of our schools of preaching. These schools are operated by various congregations and overseen by their respective elders. The schools we are featuring have a good reputation for being sound in their teaching and graduating good students of the Word.

Some of you may recall that we had a similar issue last year which met with good results and seemed to be greatly appreciated. We are happy to encourage the young men who have written for this issue and others like them. We should be thankful that such men are training to be *our* ministers. They are dedicating their lives to serving their Lord and His church. These young men and others like them will be the ones who teach and covert *our* children and grandchildren. They will be there to comfort and counsel *us*. They will conduct weddings and funerals. They will visit us in times of need to bring us cheer.

The effectiveness of their respective ministries will depend greatly upon us — *our* behavior, *our* words, and *our* actions. Let us love, encourage, teach, and inspire them. "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6).

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF PLEASING MEN

Brandon Foresha

Wisdom is found in Paul's statement to the Christians in Galatia: "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man" (Gal. 1:10-11).

When it appears as if everyone is happy with the work of their minister, it might be time for that minister to look at the object of his labors. The consequence of pleasing men is that God is no longer the focus of all that you do. When people are pleased, the world is pleased. In many instances, Christ did not attempt to please every person He met! Our Lord taught His disciples that the world would hate them because of His sake (John 15:18-19).

Balaam, a prophet of God, is a great example of what can happen when a person decides to please men rather than God. Balak, king of the Moabites, sent messengers to Balaam requesting that he come and curse the children of Israel. God spoke to Balaam and told him not to go with these princes of Moab. Balaam sent the messengers away, but more returned and Balaam showed a desire to go with them. The Lord had already given Balaam His answer, but He gave

Balaam the free-will to decide for himself what he would do (Num. 22:9-21). God was not pleased with Balaam's decision. The angel of the Lord was sent to kill Balaam for his treachery against God (Num. 22:22-23). This is the result of pleasing men rather than God!

When Saul decided to overstep his authority as king of Israel and sacrifice on behalf of his army, he was pleasing men. Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin; priests from Levi were the only people who could make sacrifices on behalf of Israel! Saul had a lapse in judgment when his desire to please his men outweighed his desire to please his God (1 Sam. 13:8-12). The punishment from God for such transgression was the kingdom departing from Saul's family (1 Sam. 13:13-14). When one remembers the punishment for Nadab and Abihu for tampering with God's plan in worship (Lev. 10:1-2), the mercy shown by God to Saul is remarkable! Saul learned a lesson of the consequences of being a people-pleaser and all must learn from his mistake.

The decision is simple for a Christian. One must serve God rather than man throughout the longevity of their lives (Acts 5:29)! The Lord requires complete service to Him and His kingdom; anything less is unaccepta-

ble. Three different men came to Jesus Christ and showed a desire to be in His service. All three times Jesus told them to count the cost of being His disciple (Luke 9:57-62). Matthew is the shining example of what one should do when Christ beckons someone into His service (Matt. 9:9). When one realizes that Christ suffered death on a cross for him, it should motivate him to serve Jesus with the remainder of his lives (Gal. 2:20)!

God has always asked man to love Him with all of his heart, soul, and mind (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36-37). Many of the rulers of the Jews believed Jesus to be the Christ, but because they loved the praise of men more; they rejected Him (John 12:35-43). Pleasing men will only last a short season, but pleasing God shall last for eternity.

**Brandon Foresha** was born in West Virginia and raised in Northeast Ohio. He also attended Freed Hardeman University and earned a BA in History. Brandon's father, Michael Foresha, is a Gospel preacher and a graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching, where he at one time taught.

He met his wife, Amber, at Gulf Coast Bible Camp in southern Mississippi. Amber and Brandon have been happily married for three years and are looking forward too many more years together.

Brandon is currently enrolled at the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville, West Virginia, where he is studying to be a full-time preacher.



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

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# ARE YOU CONTENT?

Garrett English

*"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep" – Eccl. 5:12 (NKJV)*

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes in the style of prose; thus, interpreting it is often difficult. To understand any passage in the book, we must understand the message of the book. The message of Ecclesiastes can be found in the emphatic, final two verses which Solomon slowly built up to. Each chapter expounds upon the vain treasures of life, and Solomon repeatedly discovers "all is vanity" under the sun (Eccl. 12:8).

Solomon's final words of the book conclude the whole thought and bring clarity to the messages within the book. He speaks to the vanity of riches, honor, knowledge, material things, and objectifying women. In the end, Solomon concludes that life without God is worthless no matter what you try to replace Him with!

Now that we know the message of the book, we must find how each chapter applies to the overall message, but especially for our purposes, chapter five. Throughout the book, Solomon makes contrasts between wisdom and folly (i.e. foolish living). In the context of chapter five, Solomon speaks of the vanity of wealth and

honor in a world without God. The idea begins with a broad testament to the vanities of riches in 5:8, but in 5:10 he begins describing the specific vanities of riches. He attests to the limited nature of riches and how they only amount to something pleasing to the eyes. In Ecclesiastes 5:12 Solomon indicates that riches had become the cause of anxiety which had then resulted in the loss of much sleep due to the constant worry that comes with the abundance of riches.

When Solomon remarked, "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet," he reveals to us that those who work hard for their family are able to sleep without worry or care because they have provided for their family and are satisfied. The man who labors is satisfied with the wages given to him, knowing God has provided for him the necessities of life (Matt. 6:31-34).

When Solomon mentions "the abundance of the rich," he begins the contrast between the laboring man and the rich man who does not labor much, if at all, for his wages. Because of the riches described as something limited to pleasing the eyes in the end, it seems the riches come with worries and anxieties that "will not permit him to sleep."

Perhaps Solomon in all his riches had experienced this firsthand! Perhaps he longed for the sweet sleep he

used to have when he labored in his youth as a shepherd; instead, Solomon likely stayed up through anxiety-filled, restless nights thinking about the abundance of material things he had as the King of Israel, never satisfied.

Solomon's wisdom reveals to us that all the things sought by a man who does not fear God or keep His commandments are meaningless. In a worldview without God, man's wisdom proves truly foolish. Riches and abundance of material things are vain because they do not make us content. Efforts of seeking happiness through riches will not be rewarded. Only God provides true contentment!

Are you content or always wanting more? Do you lose sleep focusing on acquiring more or are you happy with what you have?

Mankind always finds himself a fool compared to God. Let us seek a worldview focused on pleasing God by being content with what He has given us!

**Garrett English** is 25 years old, and grew up in Keller, TX. He married the former Brittany Word--of Devine, TX--in December of 2016. He intends to work full-time in the ministry of God's Word upon graduation.

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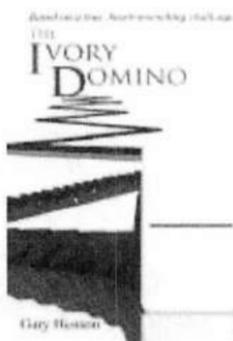
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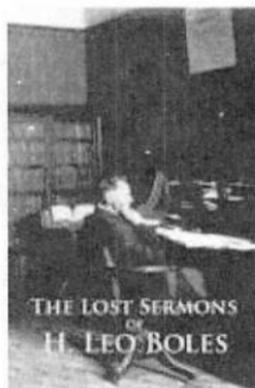
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# Evangelist, Minister, Preacher

Matt Langfield

We look to Jesus as the perfect example of Christian living. He lived a life that was always obedient to the Father's will, never gave into the temptations of the devil and was willing to suffer greatly to seek and save the lost (John 8:29; Matt. 26:42; Eph. 6:11; Luke 19:10). In Matthew 28:19, Jesus delivered the Great Commission, saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Faithful Christians strive to obey this command.

While we commonly preach "go therefore and make disciples," there is also the sometimes difficult task of reaching the lost, which falls between the two. We look for more effective and efficient ways to share the gospel with the world around us, but perhaps we should consider simply looking again to the perfect example of Christ.

In John chapter 4, we read the familiar account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. While the passage shows us the humanity of Jesus and the love he had for the lost—even those beyond the walls of Jerusalem—it also demonstrates Jesus as the perfect example of an evangelist, minister and preacher.

First, Jesus provided the perfect example of an evangelist by showing

the Samaritan woman what the gospel looks like. In John 4:7, Jesus began by simply saying to the woman, "Give Me a drink." She was surprised to be spoken to by a Jewish man and questioned why He would ask her for a drink (v. 9).

Jesus then took the opportunity to tell her of a better way to live and of "living water" that leads to "everlasting life" (vv. 10-14). Jesus demonstrated the gospel by first starting a conversation—in spite of racial, economic, political and cultural differences—and then by giving the woman hope for a better, eternal life.

Second, Jesus provided the perfect example of a minister by considering the needs of the woman and guiding her to the great blessings that come through obedient living. Jesus instructed the woman, "Go, call your husband, and come here." This demonstrated Christ's willingness to discuss the problems with which she struggled, an area in her life that she needed to change.

The woman's answer, "I have no husband," revealed her recognition of sin, or at least error, in her life (v. 17). The care and love that Jesus showed for the woman is evident by His willingness and desire to help her improve her life, which led to some very pointed doctrinal questions.

Finally, Jesus provided the perfect example of a preacher by providing the instruction that the woman needed to hear in order to find salvation. As the conversation unfolded, Jesus told the struggling Samaritan woman, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (v. 24). Jesus told the woman what she "must" do. The pattern that Jesus provides begins with evangelism, transitions to ministry, and results in preaching.

We need to follow the perfect example of Christ as we "go therefore and make disciples." We should consider following the pattern that we read in John chapter 4 by first striving to be Christ-like evangelists. We need to show the lost in the world around us what the gospel looks like. We must be willing to start simple conversations with people, regardless of our social similarities or differences. We should share with people the hope of a better life on this earth and an eternal life in heaven. Ministry is as necessary today as it was for Jesus as He sat near that well in Samaria.

Ultimately, we must preach. We must teach God's commands and explicitly teach what is necessary for any soul to find salvation. While it may be tempting at times to skip a step or focus on only one portion of seeking and saving the lost, if we sincerely desire to be Christ-like, we should follow Christ's perfect pattern.

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# Unity is the Antidote for Division

Brandon Blankenship

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10) (NASB).

Can a physical family be successful despite having division present on a normal basis? Imagine for a moment, a family that is continually involved in strife, quarreling, and conflict and logically consider whether or not they are productive. Furthermore, imagine whether or not unity is something that can be obtained in this particular situation. Most would agree that achieving unity in a family that continues to possess these characteristics is something very far-fetched.

Consequently, why would the church of Christ be any different? We as Christians are well aware that God requires unity in His church, nevertheless, it is not uncommon to find division to be prevalent in many congregations. I suppose one could simply speak the obvious and say, “it is sinful to have division in the Lord’s church!”

However, this statement in and of itself only identifies the problem without offering a solution. Fortunately, in 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul through the Holy Spirit offers a divine solution

to the problem of division and it is not as complicated as one would imagine. Unity is the antidote that the church must use to solve the problem of division. In this particular verse, Paul gives us the key principles that must be applied in order to allow unity to trump division.

The first of these divine principles that will be emphasized for the purpose of unity is the fact that the Church can avoid division if we “all agree.” This phrase is also translated “that you all speak the same thing” (ASV/NKJV/KJV).

The Corinthians were not in agreement, nor were they speaking the same things. It can clearly be determined that the Corinthian church was divided, simply by reading chapters 11-14, which exposes how they were conducting themselves in the assembly. This demands the question, could their worship possibly have been productive and successful despite so much division being present? Imagine if you will, a successful sports team. Can they function properly and be productive despite division being present or do they need to “all agree” on the ultimate goal (success) in order to win a championship?

Likewise, if the church wants to be productive and successful, we must seek agreement. This does not mean

that every individual is going to always agree on every single detail and decision in the church. However, it does mean that everyone should agree on divine truth and doctrinal decisions simply because we should agree with God.

Furthermore, we should agree that unity with regard to doctrinal truth is imperative simply because that is what God wants (John 17:20-23). Therefore, Paul is not suggesting that every member of the congregation must be in agreement with regard to what color carpet should be chosen for the auditorium.

Nevertheless, since these decisions do arise, unity should demand that they work diligently toward being patient with one another while working out a solution that the majority of the congregation can accept and be wise enough to understand that something as trivial as the carpet color certainly is not essential enough to divide the congregation.

The next divine principle that Paul uses to instruct the Corinthian Church with regard to unity is to seek to have "no divisions." What better way is there to avoid division than simply seeking to have "no divisions?" With that being said, one can read the book of first Corinthians and determine that the Corinthians were more interested in seeking to have division rather than unity.

We learn about the Corinthians elevating certain men (1:11, 12),

competing with one another (3:11-23), having division with regard to the Lord's supper, and being arrogant with regard to spiritual gifts (13-14). Thus, clearly, these Corinthians were certainly known for their division. However, Paul is stressing to them to have unity and to avoid divisions at all cost. As mentioned already, Paul obviously was not naive enough to think that the Corinthians could agree on every single detail in every situation. Nonetheless, a hearty effort to avoid divisions should encourage them to be united on all doctrinal matters and to seek to compromise on all non-essential matters.

It seems a modern day example of how the church should seek to have "no divisions" is the differences between non-institutional and mainstream congregations. Although some may satisfy their own preferences by having this division, biblically speaking, God does not seem to be pleased. Just as the Corinthian church fell short, the church today is sometimes guilty of finding more reasons to divide rather than to unite.

May we put aside our "pet peeves" and seek to be unified on the truth of God's word and bind where God binds and loosen where God has not bound. Ultimately, the principle that must be bound is the fact that there should be "no divisions."

The final divine principle that Paul uses to help the Corinthian Church become more unified is to be "made complete." It is interesting that Paul

not only instructs them to be “made complete,” but relates how they can accomplish this. He instructed them to be of the “same mind and in the same judgment.”

However, it is clear that these Corinthians were not of the “same mind and same judgment” on several issues. We can see that they were not on the same page with regard to unity (1:10-13), marriage (chapter 7), Lord’s supper (chapter 11), and especially spiritual gifts (chapters 12-13). Sadly, these Corinthians were divided in various areas and did not even seem to recognize it as a problem. Interestingly enough, it is sometimes easier to recognize the need for others to have unity than it is for our own selves.

Take for instance two surgeons that are performing surgery on you, would you want them to be unified? It is evident that they must be united with the “same mind” and the “same judgment” with regard to their decisions and actions that will be affecting you as a patient. If not, your health will be at risk and you could suffer great consequences from their division.

Likewise, the church as a whole can certainly suffer the consequences of division. Christians must be willing to reason together and seek to be “complete.” Being complete requires that we use biblical judgments rather than our own opinions with regard to spiritual matters. If we as the church seek to be made complete, we can

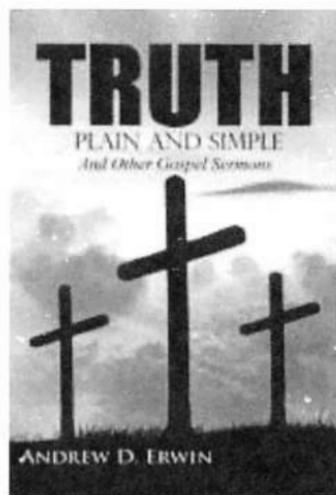
certainly be unified in the way that God intended.

In conclusion, if we as a church fail to apply these simple principles, it will inevitably lead to quarreling and division as it did in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:11, 12). Division should not even be mentioned with regard to Christianity because we should all be fully united in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:13). Christ is head of the church (1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23) and Christians should submit to His authority on all spiritual or doctrinal matters. Since heaven is our goal, we should all be willing to be united together to ensure that one another gets there.

If we follow Paul’s inspired instructions by seeking to be in agreement, avoiding division at all cost, and striving together to be complete (1 Corinthians 1:10), the church will undoubtedly be unified and be more productive in evangelizing to a lost and dying world, which will result in rescuing more and more souls from hell.

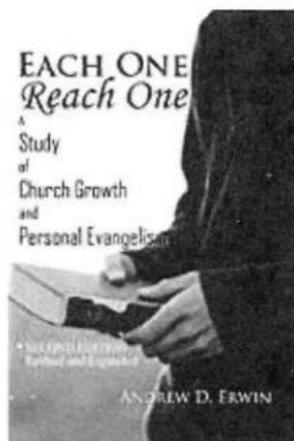
**Brandon Blankenship** is 33 years old from Chapmanville, WV. He is married with a family of 5 (2 boys and 1 girl). He is currently a sophomore at Bear Valley Bible Institute. of this year.

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# Living in No Man's Land

Adam Cox

1914 marked the beginning of one of the deadliest human conflicts in human history. Because of the number of countries involved in the war, it would soon become known as "The Great War" and would be fought on multiple continents.

One of the reasons why the war would become so bloody was due to the invention and usage of new military weapons. The use of aerial bombings, mustard gas, and the increased utilization of machine guns resulted in higher casualty rights for both sides. In conjunction with these new weapons, both sides relied on older military tactics that further increased casualty rates. For instance, most armies had not yet moved away from the strategy of having their soldiers stand in lines across a field and fire at one another. This strategy was typically thought of as being the respectable way to fight a battle, but these new weapons showed how outdated that type of military combat was.

Military commanders then attempted to figure out a new strategy to fight the war. Thus, from 1915-1916, WWI battlefields saw an increased usage of trenches to protect their soldiers. In many cases, the opposing armies would each have a series of trenches dug and constructed with an open field in between each army's

trench. These trenches did a much more effective job of protecting soldiers from death. However, the goal to win these battles was to cross over that open field to capture the enemy's trench. Doing this meant that the soldier had to leave the safety of the trench to cross the open field to capture the opposing army's trench. As a result, this open field that was often filled with waves of barbed wire was the main location where soldiers would die, and it became known as "No Man's Land."

While soldiers wanted to win the battle there was not always a sense of eagerness to cross into No Man's Land because of the dangers that awaited them. It was essentially a place where no man wanted to be stuck in, yet the images of No Man's Land would become some of the most well recognized images of WWI.

Certainly, we recognize that a physical No Man's Land does not exist today as it did on many of WWI's battlefields, but we certainly should recognize that a spiritual No Man's Land exists today. That No Man's Land is the world! It is a place where the Christian can struggle to maintain his spiritual life because of the contents of the world as John states, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the

eyes, and he pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 Jn. 2:16).

Yet, God has called Christians to fight against the wickedness of the world as Paul states, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

So, in a sense, Christians are stuck in No Man's Land, but just as the soldiers in WWI created trenches to protect themselves from bombings and machine gun fire, Christians have a trench that offers protection from the world: the Church. In Ephesians 2, Paul essentially addresses the nature of that spiritual No Man's Land, its effect on mankind, and the blessings of being in the church – the trench that protects us from No Man's Land.

In verses 2-3, Paul addresses the essence of the world and the author of all that is wrong in the world. Paul notes that the world walks a particular course that can be easily identified. Typically, when we think of the word "course," we think of a path that a runner might follow.

However, the Greek word that is translated course is "αἰών" meaning an extended period of time or age. Paul's stating that the way of the world has always been identifiable since sin entered through Adam in the Garden of Eden. Thus, the nature of the world has not changed; unright-

eousness has always been opposed to the will of God no matter the dispensation that one lives in.

It is the spiritual No Man's land that no obedient Christian should want to be stuck in as Paul states in verses 1 and 5 that living according to the principles of the world means spiritual death. In addition there is a creator and sustainer of the immorality that exists in this spiritual No Man's Land.

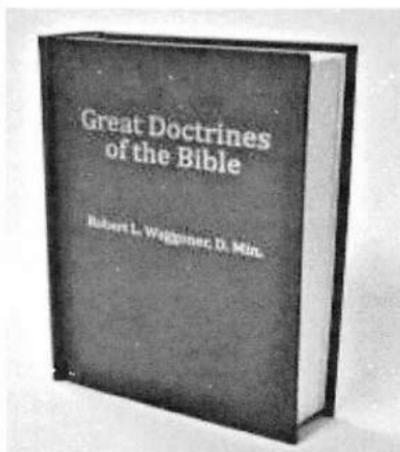
Paul points out that this is the prince of the power of the air – a reference to Satan. Satan is certainly the adversary as Paul states later on in the letter to put on the whole armor of God so that the Christian can withstand the craftiness of the devil's attacks (Eph 6:11).

After verse 3, Paul devotes the rest of the chapter illustrates the blessings of being in the trench – the church. Paul states that we are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places. According to verses 11-13, Paul notes that this was not always the case as the Jews and those that proselytized to Judaism held the special distinction of being called God's children.

Yet, the call of Christ to be a part of his body is an invitation extend to both Jew and Gentile and that through Christ the New Testament church was composed of individuals of different races. In addition, Paul notes that we are shown the riches of his grace in verse 7. Those riches are elaborated further in verses 19-20.

The Christian has his citizenship in heaven and thus has the hope of eternal life if he or she is obedient. Thus, being in the trench – the church – illustrates the result of man's acceptance of God's grace. Ultimately, why would the Christian desire to live according to the principles of that Spiritual No Man's Land where spiritual death is an inevitable reality.

**Adam Cox** is a first year student at NWFSBS. He is a graduate of Mississippi State University with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in History. Upon graduation, he plans to preach for a small congregation while teaching college History. His father is the preacher at Verona church of Christ (Verona, MS).



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# KOINE GREEK AND THE SIN OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Jackson W. Erwin

In the previous issues of the *Gleaner*, we have examined certain areas that are amid heated debates within 21<sup>st</sup> century American society. We have examined the subjects of abortion and transgenderism, but now attention will be turned to the popular subject of homosexuality. This is one issue in which the Bible is so clear in its admonition against the practice, and yet so many people, using bad and illogical argumentation, support it.

Lipscomb University, which has strayed into liberalism for several years now, celebrated *National Coming Out Month* in October of last year. In their own news service *Lumination Network*, Abbi Scott wrote:

In recognition of National Coming Out Day, Lipscomb's LGBTQ+ students painted the Bison rainbow colors, standing around it from early morning until evening on Thursday in support of the LGBT community on campus. Throughout the day, doughnuts were handed out, faces were painted and conversations took place. 'This is about the freedom to be who you are, especially on this 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.<sup>1</sup>

This is a matter of extreme importance, as it dictates whether the LGBTQ community should be included as faithful members of the church and without any need of repentance of their same-sex marriages before obeying the gospel. It determines whether gay preachers and church leaders should be in the pulpits and becoming active members in the church. Most importantly, this issue determines whether the Christian faith has been wrong in its interpretation of passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:10 and Romans 1:26-27.

While there are many (albeit bad) arguments provided by LGBTQ advocates, one that will be focused on primarily in this article is that the two Greek words ἀρσενικοῖται (*arsenokoitai*; literally "male-bed") and μαλακοὶ (*malakoi*; literally "soft") are too unclear for one to claim that they are condemning homosexuality. The words are found together in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, in which Paul wrote, "Do you not know that the unright-

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<sup>1</sup> <http://luminationnetwork.com/lipscomb-students-celebrate-national-coming-day/>

eous 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" (NKJV; emphasis added). The KJV renders the phrase as "nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind," (a translation which might be misleading) and the ESV translated the two as reading, "nor men who practice homosexuality" while also containing a footnote stating, "The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts."

However, despite the well-trained Greek scholars who translated this passage as referring to homosexuality, LGBTQ advocates hold these translations as being inaccurate and biased, stating that their meanings are too unclear to be used as texts condemning gay sex and marriage. One such advocate, Jerry Maneker, commented on these two Greek words, writing:

The word "homosexual" never appears in any biblical manuscript, as it was a word coined in the late 19th Century and first appeared in an English Bible translation, the Revised Standard Version, in 1946. The Greek word used for "homosexual," *arsenokoitai*, is an obscure word that doesn't seem to appear in any other ancient writings, and may very well have been

only used by the Apostle Paul. Its literal meaning is "male bed." No one knows what Paul was referring to but, if he wanted to denote same-sex love, there were other words available to him that he could have easily used. The word translated "effeminate" in 1 Corinthians 6:9 is *malakoi*. It means "soft." It's used elsewhere in Scripture to denote soft clothing. (Matthew 11:8) In this context it probably refers to people of soft morals, or people who lack courage. In any case, to translate it as "effeminate" in a pejorative way would contradict Paul's assertion of the equality of men and women in Christ. (Galatians 3:28).<sup>2</sup>

This is the general argumentation provided by the LGBTQ community and will thus be the basis of this article's refutation. Many things can be noticed in Maneker's argumentation that raise what might be called "doctrinal floodlights." First, the word "homosexual" never appears in any "manuscript" because the manuscripts of the New Testament were written in Koine Greek! Of course, this term won't be found verbatim in the manuscripts of the New Testament, but the Greek word for the sin will be found.

Secondly, when he states that the "Greek word used for 'homosexual,' *arsenokoitai*, is an obscure word that

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gaychurch.org/homosexuality-and-the-bible/some-talking-points-on-christianity-and-homosexuality/>

doesn't seem to appear in any other ancient writings, and may very well have been only used by the Apostle Paul," shows that this is not one who has done his homework on the subject.

The word was used by other men both in secular literature and in the Bible itself by Jews! In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., the term is found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13.

In Leviticus 18:22, our English translation reads, "*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination,*" an obvious passage refuting homosexuality. However, in the Greek Septuagint, Maneker's accusation is denied when it says, "καὶ μετὰ ἄρσενος οὐ κοιμηθήσῃ κοίτην γυναικός βδέλυγμα γάρ ἐστίν" (emphasis added).

The two words "ἄρσενος" ("male") and "κοίτην" ("bed"; or "lie") is used by the Septuagint to refer to the act of same-sex relations. Likewise, in Leviticus 20:13, the NKJV reads, "*If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.*"

The LXX also translated the verse as saying, "καὶ ὅς ἂν κοιμηθῇ μετὰ ἄρσενος κοίτην γυναικός βδέλυγμα ἐποίησαν ἀμφότεροι θανατούσθωσαν ἔνοχοι εἰσιν." Once again, the Septua-

gint, in referencing same-sex relations, uses the same terminology of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10.

It is also important to realize why Paul used this terminology in the two passages. He was a trained scholar of the Old Testament in a Greek-speaking society (cf. Acts 22:3; Phil 3:4-6; Gal. 1:13-14). He knew about the Septuagint and used it as his text when quoting from the Old Testament.

Likewise, Timothy, a preacher of the gospel and the church of Corinth, who had members associated with Judaism knew of the Septuagint and its teachings. Therefore, when Paul used this language, he did not use some mysterious, unused and unknown word, but one that was known of by students of the Bible and employed by them when speaking of the sin of homosexuality.

Maneker then mentions the term *malakoi* and how it too is unclear in its meaning. It is so strange how Paul condemned and taught things with words that no one even understood!

The souls of men were at stake and the entrance to the kingdom of God hindered, and yet the Holy Spirit couldn't even employ the correct language! It is true that the word does mean "soft" in certain contexts (cf. Matt. 11:8), but it could also mean "splendid" (Lk. 7:25), or "a male homosexual" (as in 1 Corinthians 6:9).

Maneker implies that “effeminate” is the standard translation of the word used by Christians today but, as stated earlier, the KJV, ASV and NASB could have done a much better job in translating it. Paul is not condemning men who are more feminine than others, but he is condemning the practice of a man submitting to another man for sexual relations.

The B.A.G., a standard lexicon for students of New Testament Greek, defines the word as being, “*men or boys who allow themselves to be mis-used homosexually.*”<sup>3</sup> The NKJV and ESV acknowledge the exact same usage of the word in their footnotes, as previously discussed, and it is unanimously decided among Greek scholars as to what these words mean and how they should be translated... Ἀρσενοκοῖται is the active party in homosexual relations who is the individual acting upon the other participant and μαλακοὶ is the passive party who is being acted upon by the previous homosexual partner.

The arguments against the use of the Greek words given by the Holy Spirit to condemn the practice of homosexuality is so prevalent that it cannot be factually and honestly argued against.

The Bible today is as clear as it ever was, and we can trust both the

original languages and our English translations to accurately teach us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Pet. 1:3).

**Jackson Erwin** is completing his second year of studies at the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development in Elizabethton, Tennessee.



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<sup>3</sup> Bauer, Walter, et al. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 4th ed., University of Chicago Press, 1952, p. 488.

# Common Misconceptions about the Preacher

Brian R. Kenyon

New Testament writers predicted that some would depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1-3). One needs only to look at the contemporary religious world to know that these predictions stand true. Thus, everyone must examine his or her life and beliefs to be sure that they are in harmony with God's word (2 Cor. 13:5). As one considers the Scriptural role of a preacher, it is easy to form non-biblical views based upon denominational errors, the portrayal of "preachers" in Hollywood, and/or the expectations of an unlearned and selfish society.

The Bible, however, gives distinct roles for Gospel preachers (see First and Second Timothy and Titus). Any conception of the role of a preacher that does not harmonize with the Bible is a misconception. Some of the more common misconceptions that this writer has observed are examined below.

## **The Preacher Is Not the "Pastor"**

One common misconception about the preacher is that he is "the Pastor." This largely comes from the erroneous doctrines of many denominational churches. The term "pastor" (translated from the Greek word *poimen*) is in the Bible (Eph. 4:11), but it is often misapplied. This Greek word occurs eighteen times in the Greek text from which the KJV is translated (Mt. 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mk. 6:34; 14:27; Lk. 2:8,

15, 18, 20; Jn. 10:2, 11 [twice], 12, 14, 16; Eph. 4:11; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:25). The word is usually translated "shepherd," and it *never* refers to the role of a preacher. In Ephesians 4:11 (the only place "pastors" is found), preachers are the "evangelists" and elders are the "pastors."

The verb form *poimaino* occurs eleven times (Mt. 2:6; Lk. 17:7; Jn. 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 9:7; 1 Pet. 5:2; Jude 12; Rev. 2:27; 7:17; 12:5; 19:15). This word is always translated in the KJV by some form of the English verb "feed" or "rule." This word is used twice to describe the work of elders (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2), but is nowhere used to describe the role of a preacher.

Some may think that because Peter was told by Christ to "Feed [Tend, NKJ; Shepherd, NAS] my sheep" (Jn. 21:16) that the preacher has authority to "shepherd" the flock.

While it is true that a form of the verb *poimaino* is used in this command, it must be remembered that Peter held a position that was unlike any preacher today. Peter was also an apostle. He was given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16:19), and, along with the other apostles, he was told, " whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt.

16:19; 18:18). Peter was also an elder (1 Pet. 5:1). The fact of the matter is that elders, not preachers, are the ones who are responsible for “shepherding” the flock. However, even in denominational circles, people do not know the Scriptural role of elders.

Contemplating the denominational idea of “the Pastor,” brings up a second common misconception about the role of a preacher among some members of the church.

### **The Preacher Is Not the “Head-Honcho-In-Charge”**

Some people commonly mistake the role of the preacher to be that of the “head-honcho-in-charge.” People consider the church to be “his church” and/or consider his word to be the final say. These “preachers” can be heard saying, “My members...,” or “I have a brother who...”

The true church of Christ, however, has no earthly head. Jesus is the one and only Head of the church (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). No preacher, no elder, no deacon, no member, no man, or no woman has the right or the place to be head of the church.

Although some people act as though they are the head of the church (cf. Diotrephes in 3 Jn. 9), that position belongs only to Deity! The Bible reveals how the church is to function (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Within Christ’s divine doctrine is the organization of the church. In His superior wisdom, Christ authorized a

plurality of elders to oversee the proper functioning of a local body of Christ (Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:2). These men are to meet God-given qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), and they have no authority to change God’s revealed will.

In His wisdom, Christ authorized special servants called “deacons” (Phil. 1:1). These men must also meet God-given qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13), and their task is to work in conjunction with the elders in whatever capacity is deemed expedient to help the church function better (cf. Acts 6:1-7).

In His wisdom, Christ authorized the role of the preacher/evangelist. These men also must meet God-given qualifications (1 Tim. 4:12-13, 15-16; 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:15, 22; Titus 2:7-8, etc.), and their work focuses upon teaching, preaching, and evangelizing (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1-5; Titus 2:1-6, etc.). The preacher is not given the responsibility to “run” the church. No single man on earth is given that responsibility. In His wisdom, Christ made every member of His body important to the proper functioning of the whole (1 Cor. 12:13-31). Every person added to the church is important, and every person has a role to fulfill! However, a misunderstanding of the responsibilities of every member of the church of Christ leads to other misconceptions about the role of a preacher.

### **The Preacher Is Not the “Official Visitor” of the Church**

Some people commonly mistake the role of a preacher to be the “official

visitor" and/or "tab keeper" of every member of a congregation. While it is true that many local preachers usually have more of an opportunity to visit members than the average member of the local church, this does not mean that others have no responsibility in this area.

The fact is that all Christians, whether preachers, elders, deacons, husbands, wives, singles, etc., are responsible for visiting the sick and/or other members in need (cf. Mt. 25:34-46; Jas. 1:27).

While it is true that a preacher is his "brother's keeper," like every other Christian should be, it is extremely difficult (if not impossible) for one person to keep up with all the needs and concerns of every member of a congregation. That is the reason why every member is important and needs to be involved in the work of the church (Eph. 4:15-16).

It is not wrong to look to the preacher for an example in visiting, because he should be a good example (Rom. 2:21-23; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12).

However, it is wrong and detrimental to the growth of the local church to expect a preacher to do the work of the elders, the deacons, and/or every member of the church.

Remember, each member is important to the proper functioning of the body (1 Cor. 12:13-31). Every person added to the church is important, and every person has a role to fulfill!

## **The Preacher Is Not (Necessarily) a Lazy Man Who Cannot Find a Job Anywhere Else**

Some people think that preaching is a "piece of cake" job in which the preacher gets paid for only four hours of work (one hour each for Sunday morning Bible class, morning sermon, evening sermon, and Wednesday night Bible study). Sadly, some preachers (in the States and overseas) are lazy. However, when a preacher is truly doing the "work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5), he cannot be lazy.

If preaching is such a "cushy" job, then why are not our preaching schools overflowing with students? Instead, some of the few drop out because the demands are so high. Studying is hard work (2 Tim. 2:15).

Preaching and teaching is easy compared to the time and energy it takes to study. If the reader does not think this is so, then why is it so hard to find Bible class teachers? Why do not more members fill-in for the preacher when he is gone?

Not only must a preacher prepare for lessons, he is also on "twenty-four hour call." At any moment he may be called upon to conduct a funeral. He may be involved in one-on-one Bible studies in the evening or counseling a couple who plan on marrying.

When others talk about going home after work to relax, watch their favorite TV show, go to the ball game, or go fishing, the conscientious preacher

realizes he still has work to do and often has to sacrifice these times of leisure. Does this mean he is bitter and angry? Absolutely not!

The conscientious preacher loves what he does no matter what the cost or the inconvenience because he serves the Master and knows that from Him his reward will be worth it all (2 Tim. 4:6-8 cf. Mt. 6:19-21).

### Conclusion

There are other misconceptions about the role of a preacher that could be mentioned but will not be in this article.

These have been given to help us realize the importance that God has placed upon each member in the local church doing his or her part.

The human body functions at its best when every member is healthy and involved. The spiritual body of Christ's church is no exception. When each member fulfills his or her God-given role, the church will grow (cf. Acts 6:7).

Until then, growth, at best, will be minimal. May the Lord help every one of us to recognize, appreciate, and fulfill his or her role in the church of Christ!



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## A CAPTIVE MIND

Dave Smith

As you go through the course of a day, what is the main focus of your mind? If you are a child of God, the emphasis should be upon Him and those things that are spiritual. Consider the following thoughts found in God's Holy Word (all scriptural references are from the NASB unless otherwise indicated).

When Jesus is asked by a lawyer "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?", He responds by saying "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" The lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all you mind; and your neighbor as yourself," to which the Savior replied "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live" (Luke 10:25-28). Take note that we should love the Lord God with all our mind.

In the apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthian brethren, he succinctly points out to them (and us) "We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Is obedience to the Savior holding your thoughts captive?

As we continue considering the mind, notice what Paul has to say to the saints in Rome when contrasting the flesh and the mind. In Romans 8 we read the following: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (vs. 5-8 KJV). True life and peace is found when our minds are set on the spiritual.

If we truly want to please our Heavenly Father, there must be a change, a transformation of our mind, which is what we find in Romans 12:2 where it says "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Our lives are no longer our own, but they belong to Jesus and we need to look to His selfless attitude (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:1-8).

We would do well to take to heart what Paul has to say to the Christians in Philippi as he drew that letter toward its closing: "And the peace of

God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:7-9).

So where do you find your thoughts, your mind, your heart? Are they on the things of this world or on things above (Colossians 3:2)?

## **The Destinies of the Nations**

Ronald Bryant

How would you describe where we are as a nation? How would you describe the people of this age? Long ago indifference toward the things of God gave way to hostility.

The downward spiral described in Romans 1:18-32, is on-going in our age; and many have reached the level of "the reprobate mind." (v. 28). This undeniable fact should serve to open the eyes of those who claim to know and honor God, to the incredibly important work that is theirs – the great necessity of their faithful imitation of

Christ, and the proclamation of His gospel. Many follow a very different agenda, for they have become religious customers, and have abandoned the will and purpose of God.

The work God calls His people to do has not changed. Yet, in too many instances awareness of and convictions regarding that work are weak. The indifference, detachment, and resistance to the will of God, presently on display are not new. It is easy to identify some with the church at Ephesus, that "left its first love" (Rev. 2:4), or with the church at Laodicea in their state of apathy, their being lukewarm (Rev. 3:15ff).

While the world is moving away from God, and is hostile toward the truth of God, it is not enough for those who would truly serve God to simply hold-services, or fret a little and wring their hands. Incredibly, some pseudo-leaders are urging believers to "court the world," to learn what the people of the world really want and work to honor that.

As the churches become more and more worldly, and society becomes more and more hostile toward God, the undeniable fact is that those who would serve God must desire and determine to return more fully to the will and purpose of God, and do His will, no matter the cost. It remains that belonging to God is the imperative, and necessitates earnest effort to bring hearts and souls captive to do God's will (II Cor. 10:5).

God's purpose for His people has not changed. Christ's commission remains the same: "Go make disciples," "Go preach the gospel to every creature" (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). God's people are the light of the world, and they must let their light shine. God's people are the salt of earth, and there is great tragedy attached to their losing their saltiness (Matthew 5:13-16). God's plan for the saving of man requires the greatest of passion and compassion on the part of the people of God. God's message is not vague counsel nor empty appeal. What is at stake is the eternal destiny of eternal souls. God has no other plan for the saving of mankind.

The professionals in contemporary religious groups have long championed a program of friendly fellowship, the solving of surface problems, and tutoring their "clients" to accept themselves and their failings in the context of religious trappings.

Challenging people to take an honest look at their purpose in life, in view of the will of God, is regarded as intimidating, even inappropriate. Calling people to faith in Christ and allegiance to Him is treated as secondary, while self-worth and obtaining a healthy self-concept are treated as primary.

It is the case that many who attend assemblies of worship and are looked upon as believers, are not believers at all! Their allegiance is to the leader or to the group, not to Christ.

While Christ is the excuse for their acts of devotion, He is not the reason! Many know next to nothing about worshiping God in spirit and in truth, nor are they concerned with doing so. They have even less concern about serving Him in reverence and godly fear? They know nothing of biblical faith or obedience, yet call themselves believers.

What about those that are religious, but are not Christ-centered, that are not servants of God? What is true about them? They may impress some of the people of world for a moment; however, they do not and cannot represent Christ! In speaking to such pretenders in His day, Jesus said, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8-9).

What happens when those who call themselves the people of God ignore or neglect the directive of Jesus gave to "go make disciples"? How many worship assemblies or classes attended will suffice to make up for the disregard of the charge to preach the word to the people of the world?

What happens when the people of God are content to simply meet and conduct services and enjoy time together in fellowship, but never truly labor to teach and convert the sinful and erring?

# A Letter of Significance from Franklin Camp to Willard Collins

Mel Futrell

[The letter below from Franklin Camp (1915-1991), to his old college roommate Willard Collins (1915-2007), and dated December 15, 1970, was given to me by sister Dot Perry in early 1999 just weeks after my family and I moved to Birmingham for me to serve as the preacher for the Shades Mountain church of Christ. Dot, who died last year, was serving in 1970 as brother Camp's secretary. Dot told me she typed the letter and then after Franklin read it, made four changes. Three were corrections of misspelled words and the other was the addition of the word "are" in the second paragraph. The retyped/corrected version was then mailed bearing the same date. I asked sister Dot upon receiving the letter why she had kept the original. Her response? "It seemed significant!" And with that I completely agree. I would want you to know that before publishing this letter I called David Camp, the youngest son of Franklin, and received his permission to put it before the brethren. Please read through the letter noting both the kindness, and conviction of brother Camp and then I'll have some final thoughts at the close. — M.F.]

Mr. Willard Collins

David Lipscomb College

Nashville, Tennessee

Dear Willard:

This is one of the most difficult letters I have ever had to write. We have known each other since the fall of 1934. I count you among the special friends that I have. You have always been a source of encouragement to me. I remember well when you asked me to speak regularly on the Lipscomb lectures. While I doubted my own qualifications for such a tremendous responsibility, I accepted because of my respect and appreciation for you. I have sought each time I have been on the lectures to face up to the problems facing the church and to discuss them in the light of the Bible and to speak the truth in love. It has opened doors for me to openly discuss the dangers of Modernism and Liberalism in practically all of the southern states. I am grateful for having had this opportunity and feel

that at least in a small way I have helped the church realize the dangers of this deadly evil.

I have tried to inform everyone, especially our young preachers, what all of this is about and have encouraged them to stand up and be counted in this battle. I have received numerous letters from young men thanking me for my efforts and their promise to stand firm. Now I am faced with the matter of standing up or else betraying my plea to these young men and denying by action what I have pleaded for with all of my being. In view of some that are on the lectures this year, I ask to be taken off. I have no desire to even suggest who Lipscomb has on its lecture programs as it is not my place to select men. I do feel, however, that I have the right to decide whether I want to be included along with some that have been in the lead in trying to carry the church down the road to Modernism. I have tried to make myself think that I would speak the truth on the subjects assigned to me and would not be responsible for what others may have done or what they would say. But I think the time is here when we must decide whether we are going to encourage these men or leave them alone. I cannot in good conscience lend any encouragement to them.

I tried to get brethren to see that it was a mistake to continue to use Pat Boone. Yet, brethren "fiddled" while he "boiled inside against the truth" and he is seeking to "fiddle" with the Pentecostals and burn the church down. It is my judgment that a failure to deal with this situation has given him an opportunity to do more damage to the Lord's church than anyone in our lifetime. Neither one of us will live long enough to completely overcome the damage he has wrought. I do not want to be a part of anything that will allow others to do this same thing.

There are good men on the lecture program but there are also some that both of us know have been on the far-out side in this battle against liberalism. It is these that I do not want to lend my influence to. I think it is the responsibility of the schools to refuse to give these men a platform to continue to use their influence in destroying the church. These men are not willing to take the Bible and try to prove by it they are right. They insist on doing what they want to do and do not care what good brethren that believe the Bible think about them or their doings.

I think you know me as well as anyone. I have never sought the limelight. I have dedicated my life to trying to know the will of God and preaching it as best I could. I have rejoiced in your success as a preacher and have told hundreds what a blessing it was to me in our association at Lipscomb. There is no one that I have more respect for than you. This letter is not to suggest that I think you are not sound in the faith. I have never known you to teach anything that I thought was unsound, I do not question in any way your faith in the Bible. My personal feelings for you are what they have always been. I hope your feeling

toward me will remain unchanged.

The Bible is under attack as never before in our lifetime. The church of the Lord is the last line of defense for it. The Protestant world has already thrown in the towel. I have a grave fear that many in the church are ready to join them. I cannot. Whatever time I may have left to live, I expect to use that time in trying in my small way to defend the Bible against all attacks of Modernism and Liberalism. It is here that we are going to either win or lose the battle. I expect to do what I can to help win it. It is because of the seriousness of the situation that I do not want to encourage some that have joined the enemy.

You did not tell me, but I happen to know that an attempt was made by some at Lipscomb to try to get you to take me off the lectures two or three years back, and you refused to do so. I am deeply grateful for your confidence in me and trust that I shall always be worthy of your confidence. This has added to the difficulty in making this decision. I have not made it in haste but have prayed about it and discussed it with others.

Sincerely,

Franklin Camp

[Author's Note: Franklin Camp was the second preacher for Shades Mountain, however he was the first "full-time" preacher here serving from 1962-1972. His influence is still felt in the congregation through a few members still living and worshipping with us that knew him then. I'm thankful for the privilege of preaching at a congregation where brother Camp once served in that same role. I can't help but believe that as bothered as he was at the direction David Lipscomb College/University was heading then, that he would be bowled over by where they are today. The latest episode being their apparently friendly disposition toward the LGBTQ movement on the Lipscomb campus. In multiple ways, from this letter alone, we see the farsightedness of Franklin Camp relative to a number of issues facing the church then and now.

In closing, I would like to echo a statement from brother Camp in the next to last paragraph: "The Bible is under attack as never before in our lifetime." This of course raises the question for us and the church that belongs to Christ in this generation, "Will we be as committed as he was then to 'standing up' and helping others 'realize the dangers' that the church is facing today?" My heart's desire and prayer to God is that we will. Let us fight the good fight of the faith and lay hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12)! — M.F.]

# CONTINUING STEADFASTLY

Bill Brandstatter

One of the marvelous statements about the early church is that they "Continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts 2:42 NKJV). As they did then, so must we also do now. Let us look briefly at what they emphasized.

**They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.** Who are "they"? This refers to those who heeded the word spoken and were baptized (Acts 2:41). This would be the three thousand that are mentioned.

The doctrine that they continued steadfastly in did not originate with the apostles, but is that which the apostles taught and preached. These men were inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Paul indicated that the things he wrote were the commandments of God (1 Cor. 14:37). They wrote what they were inspired by God to write. For that reason, the early church continued in that doctrine. Without teaching no one can be saved (Jn. 6:45).

Experience won't save anybody. Testimony won't get a person to heaven. What matters is the doctrine that is received and obeyed (Rom. 6:17). A person must obey a teaching to be saved. That teaching is found in the pages of the New Testament. It is the "apostles' doctrine."

**They continued steadfastly in fellowship.** The actual Greek states, "the fellowship." There is a fellowship that is unique to Christians and the church. The word "fellowship" is a very special word. We use it far too loosely in our religious vocabulary.

We talk about a "fellowship meal" and "fellowship building." But in the New Testament was very specific. John helps us with the specific nature of fellowship by stating, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 Jn. 1:7).

The word "fellowship" in the original language means a joint participation, common, sharing, and communion. If a person is not walking in the light, I have no fellowship with that person. Often we think that fellowship is association. But it is more than that.

Fellowship is not just a place we are at, it is a position we take. What is my position with Christ? Am I walking in the light as Christ is in the light? I cannot have fellowship with someone who is not. I might associate with someone who is not walking in the light. But my goal should be to get them in the light so that I can be in fellowship with them.

**They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread.** To what is this

referring? Some say an ordinary meal. However, later on in the same section of Scripture there is a distinction made that indicates an ordinary meal. In Acts 2:46, we read: "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house." Here is the ordinary meal. The term "breaking bread" here means simply eating together. However, in Acts 2:42 we have the phrase "breaking of bread."

This refers to the Lord's Supper. There is also the word "the" that begins the phrase in Acts 2:42. This definite article indicates it was a particular type of "breaking of bread." This phrase is sandwiched in between other spiritual exercises.

Therefore, it is logical to conclude it is the Lord's Supper. Similar wording is used by Luke in Acts 20:7 when he notes, "Now on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread." There is in this verse and in Acts 2:42 a principle of grammar. Part of something is put for the whole. "Breaking of bread" is put for the entire practice of the Lord's Supper.

In this also is included the fruit of the vine. We use this in everyday life. If I were to tell you I was going to start my car, you understand what is involved in the process although I only stated one part of it. It should also be noted that Acts 20:7 that the breaking of bread that is the Lord's

Supper took place on the first day of the week.

**They continued steadfastly in prayers.** The early church was a praying church. We see it here and other times throughout the New Testament history book of Acts. When persons were appointed for certain tasks in the early church, prayers were offered. In Acts 6:6 we read "Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them."

Then in Acts 13, when the church at Antioch sent out Saul and Barnabas, Luke records, "Then having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away." (Acts 13:3).

When elders were appointed in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, we read, "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:23 NKJV). There are other instances also where the early church prayed. Paul summarizes it by stating, "Pray without ceasing." (1 Th. 5:17).

May we be as devoted as the early church and continue steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship in breaking of the bread and in prayers. When we are as devoted as they were we will grow, the church will grow and God will be glorified.

# **The West Fayetteville Church of Christ**

## **Service Times**

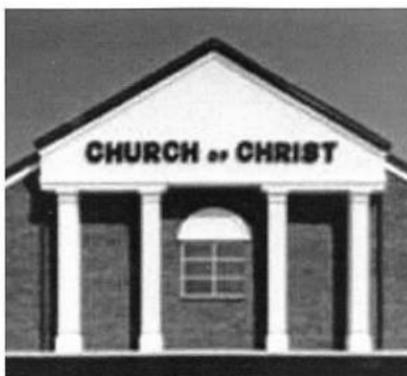
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# Gospel Gleaner

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



## Examining English Bible Translations

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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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## **Inside this Issue**

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be critiquing a few of the most popular English translations of the Bible. You will notice that we are doing our best not to promote one translation of the Bible over another translation. Our aim in this issue is to present the pros and cons of each version in a fair and balanced way. If a particular version has a unique quality, our desire is to highlight it. If that same version has some flaws, we wish to note them. Our objective is to give our readers some history and some understanding of the differences between the various translations and why these differences exist. It is up to each student to handle the word accurately (2 Timothy 2:15).

You will also find in this issue an article written by Steve Gibson concerning the "core beliefs" of present-day Lipscomb University as compared to the founding principles and desires of the school as stated in David Lipscomb's hand written deed in which he gave his farm to the school.

No one can read brother Lipscomb's wishes set forth in the deed of his farm to the Nashville Bible School (predecessor to Lipscomb University) while knowing the actions and teachings of the present board, administration, and Bible faculty and conclude that his wishes are being honored. I

believe you will find their actions to be in breach of the trust of the Lipscomb family and in violation of the deed he penned so many years ago.

# A Review of the King James Version

David Hester

In our day and time, there is a multiplicity of English translations of the Bible. Some of them are excellent; some have definitive problems; and some are (for lack of a better term) pitiful. I do not claim to be an expert on translations; Rodney Cloud, my main PhD Professor and Dean of the Turner School of Theology, fits that description perfectly. However, I do know enough to make clear distinctions (or, as clear as I can make them).

In my short time on this earth, perhaps no translation has been more vilified and lauded than the King James Version. I won't get into the details; others can do a far better job than me. I also won't recount the history of the making of the KJV (as fascinating as it is); I urge the reader to learn all you can on that. It's a rewarding study. I'm fully aware of all the shortcomings in the KJV. And, I well know those who think the KJV is somehow the original Bible used by the Lord.

The fact is that the KJV is a translation. The scholars who were involved in the process were not inspired of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, no translators are. Only the writers of Scripture can make claim to that. The Scriptures themselves are indeed fully inspired of God, and inerrant, as far as they are correctly translated.

The KJV contains errors. The translation has Isaiah saying, "But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and **satyrs shall dance there**" (Isa. 13:21). Further, it has the prophet declaring, "The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the **satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest**" (Isa. 34:14).

In Deuteronomy 33:17, the translators have Moses proclaiming, "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of **unicorns**: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Job is made to say, "Will the **unicorn** be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the **unicorn** with his band in the furrow? Or will he harrow the valleys after thee?" (Job 39:9-10)

Three times in the Psalms—22:21, 29:6, 92:10—David mentions the unicorn. Isaiah does not escape it, either; "And the **unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked**

with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness" (Isa. 34:7).

The perceptive reader knows that the two beasts referred to in the KJV are mythological animals. They do not exist, and have never existed. They were inventions of man. Yet, the KJV mentions them as if they are real. The actual animals referred to are the wild goat and wild ox, respectively. One might think this is trivial; but, consider this. Our society is more biblically illiterate than ever. If one is inclined to not believe Scripture, and he comes across the above passages and knows the beasts referred to by the KJV translators are mythical, then what does that do for his trust in the Bible?

But, there are far more serious errors in the KJV. Quite often, the KJV apologists will affirm that there are no doctrinal errors in the translation. That is not true, to say the least. Consider Acts 2:47 in the KJV: "The Lord added to the church daily **such as should be saved.**" That highlighted phrase is Calvinistic. The actual phrase is "those who were being saved." There is a BIG difference.

Further, in 1 John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he **cannot sin**, because he is born of God." That highlighted phrase is most definitely of Calvinism. Our brethren of old had to deal in public debate with denominational preachers on the subject of "once saved, always saved;" invariably, one of the "sugar

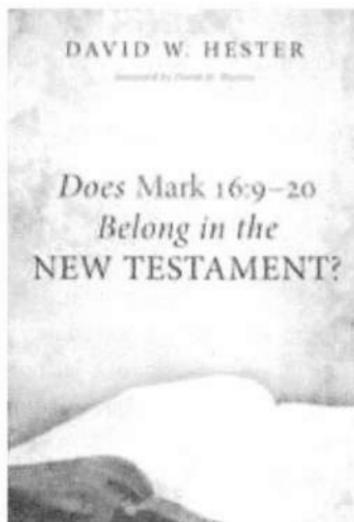
stick" passages those erring preachers would use was 1 John 3:9. Our brethren had arguments to answer them, to be sure; yet, it does not help matters when a translation contains fatal error, which the KJV does.

Having said all of that, I was reared on the KJV. I memorized Scriptures in KJV prose. When I think of Scripture, it's still in KJV style. Mind you, I have numerous translations in my library. Yet, there's something about the majesty of the prose of the KJV that continues to enthrall me. I will say that the rationale of the KJV translators needs to be read by everyone concerned with proper translation work. You can access it online at <http://www.ccel.org/bible/kjv/preface/pref1.htm>.

You will be amazed at what the translators of the KJV had to say about their work. They made mistakes, to be sure; they inserted error in the translation, no doubt; yet, they were trying to produce the best translation possible for the day in which they lived.

For all its flaws, the KJV has possibly had more influence on Western culture than any other piece of literature (besides Shakespeare). Think of "A house divided against itself," from the lips of the 16th President from Illinois. Consider also the magisterial tone of "Prepare to meet thy God," or, "Woe to them who are at ease in Zion," or the sublime rendering of Psalms 23 (still, in my mind, the best

translation of that chapter). Multiplied thousands of people have been converted to Christ as a result of study of the KJV. Many of them had no formal education; yet, they were able in general to understand the translation (which speaks more about the quality of education then, as opposed to the declining standards of today). And yet, we are treated to those who make a habit of dismissing the KJV altogether, and even belittling those who still use it. Don't count me in that number. It's contributed much good.



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# A Review of the New King James Version

John Board

Unless one has the ability to read the languages in which the Bible was originally penned (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) he is dependent upon a translation. A translation is simply the rendering of the language of the original document into one's own native language. Translations have served a wonderful purpose; they have provided to many, who otherwise would be unable to read the Bible, a precious privilege.

Different translations also hold different philosophies of translation. Of course in any translation there is involved more than simply a literal word for word rendering of the Greek/Hebrew text otherwise the result would be a rather choppy, difficult to follow, text. So humans, to the original inspired text, must apply some translation process.

One philosophy of translation known as Dynamic Equivalence seeks to use more free and idiomatic English without as much concern for the exact wording of the original. Dynamic Equivalence then allows for more human interpretation of the original.

The lack of concern for the exact wording of the original is problematic when one considers that the original languages, especially Greek, made points based upon the tenses and the plurality or singularity of certain

words (cf. Mt.22:32 "I am the God of Abraham" and Gal. 3:16 "seed" vs. "seeds").

The NKJV employs a different philosophy of translation—Formal Equivalence. In this philosophy of translation great effort is made to translate the words and the nuances of the original languages as literally as possible. I prefer this method of translation and would consider the translation philosophy of Formal Equivalence to be a positive trait of the NKJV.

A translation is not without its problems. Because the translation process involves a "human element," the potential for error exists. As a result, there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Though minor imperfections can be found in the best of translations, still men have benefitted immensely from the translation of Scripture into one's native vernacular.

The purpose of this article is to examine briefly the New King James Version (NKJV). In order to attempt to fulfill this purpose a few preliminaries must be considered.

## Many Changes

When one speaks of the NKJV there must be an understanding that there have been several editions issued by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The New Testament was copyrighted in 1979. Later in 1982 and then again in 1990 the entire Bible was copyrighted. In the intervening years literally thousands of changes have been made in the text of the NKJV. It is important to understand that though thousands of changes were made to the text of the NKJV, the changes did not always result in a new copyright. So, as one reads this review, his NKJV edition, may or may not include the element discussed.

While I do not use the KJV as my translation of choice, a strength of the KJV as a translation is that only one edition, the 1769 Oxford Standard, is most often used. Since this one edition is most used, the KJV presents a consistency of reading not found among the users of the NKJV.

### **Unlike Other Modern Translations**

A majority of conservative reviewers usually acknowledge that the NKJV does not present as many problems as the New International Version, the Revised English Bible, or the New Revised Standard Version. It is not a loose translation of the original and it does not remove the hundreds of words, phrases, and verses that are often a criticism of some modern translations. I consider all of these to be strengths of the NKJV.

Yet, the NKJV is not without criticism. The criticisms below are more than the often-noted criticism that the NKJV is not simply the KJV with

updated modern language, as many are led to believe.

Though there are legitimate criticisms in translation, sometimes critics get overly zealous. For example, though some critics object to the NKJV translation of "they" instead of "he" and in Isaiah 53:9 such may not necessarily be an incorrect translation as much as it is a translator preference. The Hebrew reads "one assigned his grave with criminals." But the subject of the singular is impersonal, and in these instances English typically uses "they" instead of "he."

The translators here chose to provide a more English reading while providing a marginal note that "they" is literally he or He. Whether this writer agrees with the choice of the NKJV translators, a claim that it is an error in translation might be a stretch. In my opinion there are other concerns with the choices of the NKJV translators that are much more difficult to overlook.

### **The Historical Present Tense**

Due to the brevity of this article allow one such example from the NKJV New Testament that highlights the failure of the NKJV translators to convey the historical present contained in the Greek. Greek writers for the sake of heightened vividness often used the historical present. In doing so they hoped to bring their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. This nuance of the original language was conveyed in the

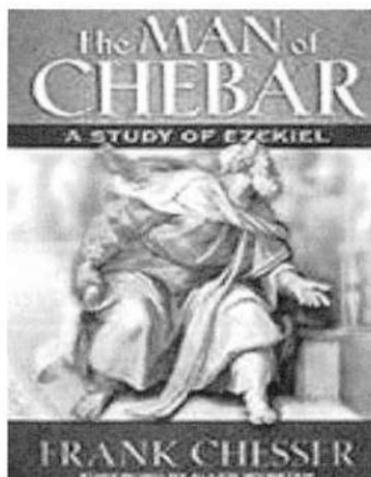
English of the KJV and ASV. The translators of the NASV, though they used the past tense in the text, they marked it with an asterisk to convey the nuance of the Greek.

An example is found in John 1:29. John through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, “on the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith...”

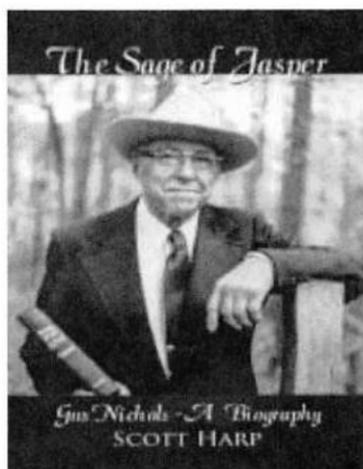
The NKJV translators chose to render the passage with a more modern vernacular: “The next day John (supplied for he) saw Jesus coming towards him, and said...” This rendering might provide an ease of reading (one part of the translation process) but here it seems to remove an important element of the Greek text. The intent of the NKJV seems to be to use the past tense to make the reading conform more to modern English usage. Such, in this writer’s opinion, is a weakness of translation.

In conclusion, the NKJV is not this writer’s choice of translation. Though it employs Formal Equivalence as a translation philosophy, the NKJV at times seems to forget this principle; instead they seek to use language that they believe will provide a greater readability for the English student of Scripture.

In my opinion, the NKJV does not provide enough of an enhanced readability to offset the choices of departure from the text.



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# A Review of the New American Standard Bible

Roger Shepherd

I have used the New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995) translation for over thirty years. I started with the American Standard Version (ASV) that is the most literal (word-for-word) translation. The translators smoothed out the English with some good and bad results. Christians must work from translations except those who know the Hebrew and Greek languages.

This translation began in 1959 by Lockman Foundation with a four-fold purpose. One, it shall be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages as inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). Second, it shall be grammatically correct using good contemporary English. Third, it shall be understandable. Four, translators shall give Christ His proper place, the place that the Word gives Him; therefore, no work will ever be personalized.

In this process they used the latest edition of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* for translation of the Hebrew in the Old Testament (OT) and the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece* in translating the Greek of the New Testament (NT).<sup>1</sup> Both were used in addition with the lexicography, cognate languages, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

## Old Testament Translations

In the Old Testament, there are some passages of great interest. First, the proper name for God is most significant and translated very well. This translation reminds us that it is inconceivable to think of a spiritual relationship with God without a proper designation for the Supreme Deity.

Thus, in this translation the most common name for the Deity is God from *Elohim*. One title for God is "Lord," a translation of *Adonai*. There is another name that is assigned to God as His proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH (Exod. 3:14; Isa. 42:8). This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name, thus, consistently translated LORD. The only exception to this translation of YHWH is when it occurs in immediate proximity to the word Lord, that is, *Adonai*.<sup>2</sup> In that case it is regularly translated "GOD" to avoid confusion.

God manifests the nature of the Supreme Being (I AM) who rules the universe and the hearts of obedient child of God. The term "LORD" conveys God's sovereignty and lordship in preparation for the coming kingdom of heaven. In this respect to God

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the New American Standard Bible, v-vii.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

it is strong to translate the masculine for God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit in both testaments.

The NASB also translates Psalms 51:5 accordingly, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." Scholars argue four options. One, this is a hyperbolic expression acknowledging the sinfulness of his life and everything around him. Two, His mother was a sinner. Three, He asserts he was born into a world of sin. Four, as in this translation, he was born a result of his mother's adultery.<sup>3</sup> One thing is for certain, David was not born a sinner. If he was born a sinner, this denies Ezekiel's argument that a person is not born with his/her father's sin (Ezek. 18:18, 20). The Bible teaches that children go astray in sin after birth (Job. 14:4; Ps. 58:3; Eph. 2:3).

The translation of Isaiah 7:14 is a good one, but the footnote is faulty. The translation is "a virgin will be with child and bear a son and call His name Immanuel." The footnote for virgin adds just simply "a maiden" that does not exactly represent the virgin birth of Christ.

The footnote for *Immanuel* is strong, for "God is with us." Matthew and Luke, inspired authors of the gospel, agree that this is an accurate translation (Matt. 1:23; cf. Luke 2:27).

<sup>3</sup> Cloer, Eddie, *Truth for Today Commentary Psalms 51-89* (Searcy, AR: Resource Publication, 2006), 8-9.

Isaiah's context is centered upon God being with us beginning with the virgin birth. I caution the serious Bible student to be aware of the footnotes that are the opinions of the translators.

### New Testament Translations

Likewise, in the New Testament we have a weakness in that they translated the word "fornication" (Matt. 19:9) as simply "immorality." This could be any act of immoral behavior that is too liberal. The word *porneia* is the root of the English terms "pornography, pornographic (*pornos*) which is derived from *pernaō*, "to sell off") or properly, a *selling off* (surrendering) of sexual purity; *promiscuity* of any (every) type. The primary translation is unlawful sexual intercourse such as sexual unfaithfulness and prostitution.<sup>4</sup>

The NASB also transliterates *Christos* as Christ, rather than translating it "Messiah" or "Anointed One of God" emphasizing His deity. The term *baptizo* is transliterated as baptism (Acts 2:38) instead of "immersion" in order to obtain the forgiveness of sin. We would have fewer problems with this requirement for salvation if it was correctly translated.

We find a hierarchy for church leadership represented by the word

<sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 854.

“office” in 1 Timothy 3:1, which is not in the Greek text. The word *episkopa* is correctly translated if anyone is seeking the work of an overseer. The ecclesiastical loanwords “office” and “bishop” are too technical and loaded with late historical baggage for precise signification of usage of *episkopos*.<sup>5</sup>

The common meaning is care, protection, and spiritual shepherding. It is God who grants gracious care and protection. People are directed to it through shepherds who oversee their spiritual lives. In context, an overseer is described as a shepherd (*episkopa*).<sup>6</sup> The correct usage of *episkopa* is for men to function as spiritual shepherds involved in the lives of the people. Shepherds are not hierarchal and administrative lords. They are examples of personal teaching, serving, and ministry to the spiritual needs of the people. Shepherds smell like sheep in the fold of God and must be involved in the lives of the people.

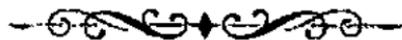
### Strengths of the NASB

I will mention three strengths. First, concerning the church: the “keys of the kingdom” is translated “shall have been bound and loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:18-19). It correctly translated the perfect passive action that is the authority of God concerning the church existed with God in the

beginning, stood firm in the present, and will continue in the future. Second, they strongly translate “buried” in baptism; as baptism is certainly a burial in water that results in a new life or salvation in Christ (Rom. 6:4; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Third, faith or belief is translated (Rom. 10:9-10) as “believe” that results in righteousness and salvation. Therefore, faith only does not save. It translates salvation by grace through faith accurately (Rom. 5:2; 6:23; Eph. 2:8-10).

### Conclusion

In an overall review, I recommend this translation, especially as a study Bible, for three reasons: One, it represents the original language in a word-for-word translation with good flowing contemporary English. Second, the scholars who did the translation had doctorates in biblical languages. Third, it has the reputation of being the most accurate translation of the Hebrew and Greek Bible.



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<sup>5</sup> Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker, 379.

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament, Vol. II* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 606-08.

# A Review of the New International Version

David O'Connell

The beginnings of the New International Version go back to the 1950's when there was a negative reaction among some evangelicals concerning the Revised Standard Version. In the late 1960's, an overseeing committee was formed and serious work began on the new translation. The New Testament came out in 1973, followed by the Old Testament being published in 1978. There have been over four million copies sold of the New International Version.

The translation was named "International" because the translators came from several English-speaking countries: the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand. Almost one hundred people worked on the original project. After the whole Bible was published, a standing committee of about fifteen scholars has met annually to discuss changes that should be made in the work. These translators come from America, Great Britain, India, et al.

Currently, the translation team is made up of thirteen men and two women. Originally, the translators were from thirteen different religious groups. The current group of translators is from eight different religious bodies. Each translator was asked to sign a document affirming their belief in the inspiration of Scripture and also

submitting to the authority of the Word of God. Their high view of Scripture was to be one of the main safeguards in their translation process.

The text which the NIV translators used was an eclectic text. This does have much to commend it. However, the idea of taking a "middle road" between the "Textus Receptus" and recent textual discoveries has its own set of problems. We want to show some of the strengths and also the weaknesses of the New International Version.

## Strengths

The main strengths of the NIV are threefold: (1) use of recent texts, discoveries, and scholarship in translation, (2) the commitment of the translators to a high view of scripture, and (3) its readability. The New International Version provides easy reading and comprehension. Some also believe a strength of the NIV to be its availability in a number of different attractive and inviting formats. This variety of formats and editions partially accounts for its popularity. However, these qualities are probably due to decisions by the publishers rather than the translators.

## Weaknesses

We also want to point out some of the weaknesses in the NIV.

In the Old Testament, the NIV reads in Psalm 51:5: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." An earlier edition of the NIV reads: "Surely I was a sinner from birth."

The KJV of this passage reads: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

The American Standard Version (1901) and the New American Standard (1963, 1971) both translate it: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. And in sin my mother conceived me."

It seems that the NIV was influenced more by Calvinistic theology than actual translating of this verse. There is no doubt that this is a difficult verse, but the NIV translation supports original or Adamic sin.

The New Testament has several places that are problematic. Some have criticized the very first verse of the NIV in the New Testament because it reads: "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ," whereas the KJV and ASV have: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ." The NIV nowhere else uses the word "record" in the sense of a book. This seems to be an inconsistency, but is not an effort to change the Word of God as some have charged.

In several places, the NIV translators left out the word "begotten" in reference to Christ. These passages are: John 1:14,18; John 3:16,18; and 1

John 4:9. The word "begotten" is in the footnote of each of those verses. The NIV translators have the phrase "one and only son" in the text, but this is not quite strong enough. All Christians are sons or daughters of God, but we are not His "only begotten" sons or daughters. It would have been a better translation if the text read "only unique Son" or "His divine Son." These are difficult passages because the Greek word for "only begotten" is "monogenes," and the word "begotten" is rarely used in contemporary society.

One of the greatest faults of the New International Version was the translation of the word "sarx." The KJV and ASV translated it "flesh," but the NIV translated it "sinful nature." Sixteen times, the NIV translates "sarx" as "sinful nature."

It also translates it once as "sinful man," once as "standards of the world," and once as "live in the world." This seems to be a clear instance of Calvinistic thinking on the part of the translators.

In most places, the NIV has "flesh" in a footnote. The word "flesh" is a word that can mean muscles and bone (human physical flesh), or it can mean that part of a person which makes a decision to live out of harmony with God's will.

John Calvin taught that all human beings inherited a "sinful nature" from Adam and his sin. However, the Scriptures are clear that no one inher-

its sin or a sinful nature from another (cf. Ezekiel 18:4-20; Deuteronomy 1:39; Matthew 19:14).

In all fairness to the NIV, the 2011 edition reversed positions and put "flesh" in the text and "sinful nature" in the footnotes. Some may feel that this does not matter, since the idea of "sinful nature" was in the text from 1973 until 2011. This certainly was the case, but they have changed the translation and did this because of the different thinking on the part of the current translation committee.

The NIV has the phrase "marital unfaithfulness" in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 instead of the word "fornication." In other instances, the NIV has "sexual immorality" (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; Acts 15:20,29; Romans 13:13; I Corinthians 5:1; 6:13,18; 7:2; Galatians 5:19; etc.). While "marital unfaithfulness" might convey the idea of sexual infidelity, it might mean something else as well. It is clear that the word "pornea" in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 14:9 can only mean sexual infidelity. The NIV translators should have been consistent and used "sexual immorality."

The New International Version has Phoebe as a "servant" of the church in Romans 16:1, with the word "deaconess" in the notes. However, in the 2011 edition, the word "deaconess" has been put into the text, and "servant" is in the notes. A footnote in the 2011 version also states that "deacon

refers to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways." In this same regard, the earlier editions of I Timothy 3:11 had "wives" of the deacons but had "deaconess" in the footnotes. The 2011 footnote reads "Possibly deacon's wives or women who are deacons."

The earlier rendition of Psalm 23:4 in the NIV reads: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." The updated NIV of 2011 reads: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley." A valley may be dark, it may be scary, but this does not necessarily connote "death."

The earlier NIV readings of Malachi 2:16 had: "I hate divorce says the Lord God of Israel, and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with a garment." The updated NIV has: "the man who hates and divorces his wife, says the Lord, the God of Israel, does violence to the one he should protect." In one, God is the subject and speaks saying, "I hate divorce." In the newer one, "the man" is the one who hates. This is quite a difference and not an improvement.

There are some times when the updated NIV makes an improvement in the text. In Isaiah 16:6 and Jeremiah 48:29, the old NIV had "overweening pride." The 2011 NIV has "great arrogance." The KJV has "haughtiness" and "exceeding pride."

Another edition of the NIV has made an attempt to be a "gender neu-

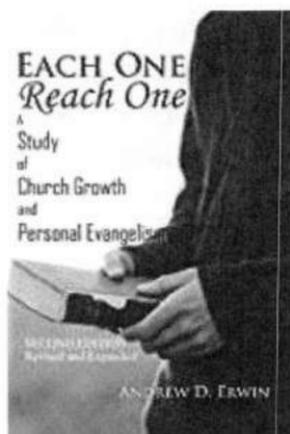
tral” translation. It is called “Today’s New International Version” (TNIV). The translating committee of the TNIV tried to make the translation “gender neutral” when certain texts included men and women. The older translations always had “he” or “him.”

An example of this is found in Hebrews 12:7, which says: “God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father” (NIV). The TNIV has: “What children are not disciplined by their parents?” The TNIV is obviously not making an effort to be closer to the Greek. Instead, it is a compromise with those in our society who are changing all differences between men and women. God’s prohibition to adding to His Word needs to be heeded (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18,19).

### Conclusion

We would not use the NIV as our only translation, but it certainly is helpful as a comparison version for study and, on occasion, to quote from when the text of the NIV is clearer.

Because there is no divine inspiration today, no translation is perfect. Every single translation has its strengths and its weaknesses. None are absolutely perfect. There is one area that, even though imperfect, is the most important part of the translation process. The ultimate goal of all translations is to translate the sacred Word of God from the text into the conduct of daily life. We pray we will all accomplish this goal.

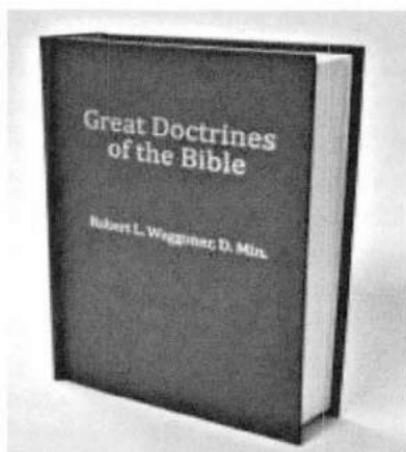


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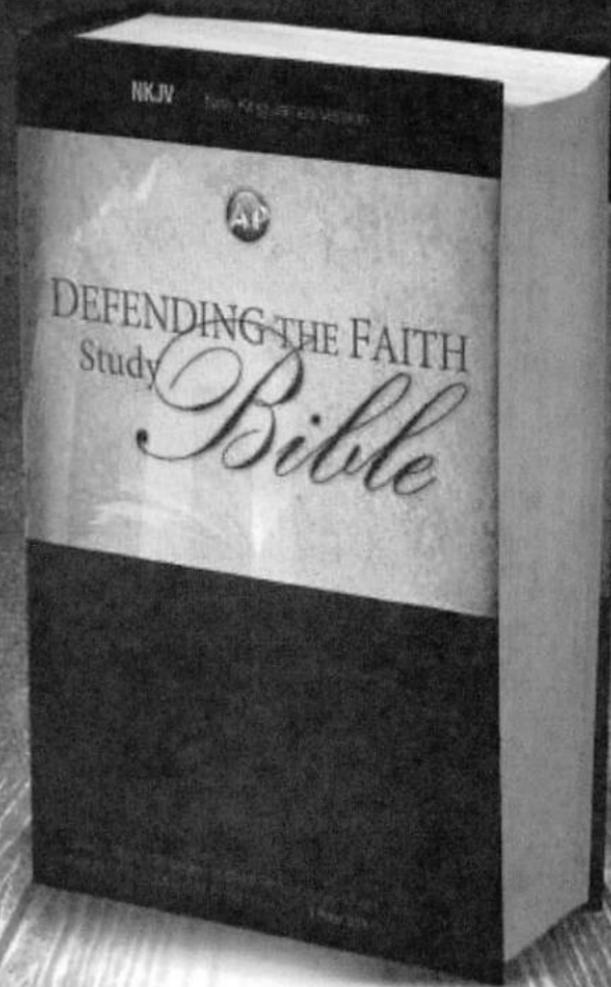
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# A Review of the English Standard Version

Denny Petrillo

Reviewing a translation is always perilous work. There are those who have become emotionally connected to the translation, thus to criticize it is to attack them personally. To commend it is to suggest that it is without flaw and should be embraced categorically. Yet it needs to be stated clearly upfront: *there is no perfect translation*. Every translation known to man has its flaws. Failure to acknowledge this is equivalent to burying one's head in the sand, refusing to face the facts.

## Background of the ESV

The English Standard Version (ESV) is a good translation (Standard Bible Society, Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books and Bibles, 2001). It has received recommendations from many. It really is not a new translation, but is almost completely a duplication of the Revised Standard Version.

Approximately 95% of the ESV is a reproduction of the RSV. This point alone is neither good nor bad. Many are unaware that the KJV of 1611 was basically the Bishop's Bible (1568) which was a revision of Matthew's Bible (1537). All of these Bibles leaned heavily on the work of William Tyndale and his Bible (1534). Even the modern edition of the KJV is the product of several revisions.

The textual basis of the English Standard Version (ESV) rests on eclectic critical Greek texts (the United Bible Societies Greek New Testament, 4th ed. and the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, 27th ed.). Thus, it uses a different textual base than the KJV and the NKJV which used the Textus Receptus (the edition of the Greek New Testament first edited by Erasmus, and revised by others through the centuries). However, since the ESV is virtually a reproduction of the RSV, it should not be implied that it is a "new" translation that started from scratch with either the Hebrew text or eclectic Greek texts.

The editors of the ESV all claim to believe in the inspiration of Scripture and maintain a conservative fundamentalist perspective. Their translating philosophy was to produce a version that was "essentially literal." They are openly critical of "dynamic equivalence," where the translator is not really attempting to translate the words, but rather to convey the idea. This philosophy is known as a "thought for thought" translation, and describes translations like the New International Version, the New Living Bible Translation and the Holman Christian Standard Bible. While they achieved their goal of being "essentially literal" (following other versions

like the KJV, NKJV and NASB), there are some verses that read more like a paraphrase.<sup>1</sup>

### Evaluation

In an article this size it is impossible to provide a comprehensive evaluation. However, I will divide this section into considering three areas in which the ESV falls short.

#### *Inaccurate Translations:*

1. **Matthew 16:18** – says the “gates of *hell* shall not prevail against it.” The Greek word is *αδου* (HADES). This word does not mean hell. This was an unfortunate error made in the KJV as well. However, they do correctly translate this word in Acts 2:27! Why the inconsistency in translation?
2. **1 Corinthians 14:12** – says: “So with yourselves, since you are eager for *manifestations* of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.” The word translated “manifestations” is not in the Greek. It is the simple *πνευματων* correctly translated “spiritual gifts” in most translations.
3. **1 Corinthians 12:7** – In conjunction with #2, the ESV also translates this verse as follows: “To each is given the *manifestation* of

the Spirit for the common good.” This is not the word *πνευματων* as in 1 Corinthians 14:12, but the word *φανερωσις*. One would incorrectly assume that the same Greek word is being used, since both passages say “manifestation.”

4. **1 Corinthians 8:4** – inexplicably translates the word “world” (Greek: *κοσμος*) as “real existence.” This is the only place the word is so translated, and it is totally unnecessary.
5. **Deuteronomy 15:18** – The ESV renders this “for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years.” This is neither an accurate rendering of the Hebrew (which literally reads “he has given you six years with double the amount of service”) nor a correct interpretation of the verse. The ESV would have been better served just translating the verse instead of trying to interpret it.
6. **Malachi 2:16** – The ESV has it where it is not God who “hates divorce” but the man “hates and divorces.”
7. **Romans 10:9-10** – the ESV translation of these verses has helped support the doctrine of “faith only.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kyle Pope, “A Review of the English Standard Version” *Biblical Insights* 11.3 (March 2011): 25

<sup>2</sup> As a result, Wayne Jackson specifically addressed the problem with the ESV rendering here:

8. **Proverbs 3:3; 14:22; 16:6; 20:28; 29:14** – translates the Hebrew word *'emeth* as “faithfulness,” which gives a totally different understanding of these verses than the usual meaning of *'emeth* as “truth” (which is the way most major translations translate it, except the NIV which also goes with “faithfulness”).
9. **Hebrews 6:5** – “goodness” is a noun, and the word *kalos* used here is an adjective. Therefore, “goodness” is an incorrect translation (the ESV is the only version I found that makes this mistake. The others correctly render

it as an adjective: “the good word...”).

10. **Psalm 94:9** – The ESV reads: “He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see?” What does “planted the ear” mean? Are we talking about an ear of corn? The idea is that God has made, formed or fashioned the human ear.

*Examples of Dynamic Equivalence (which is not a good translating approach)*

11. **1 Corinthians 11:30**, translates the Greek “fallen asleep” as “died” (whereas it translates the same Greek word as “fallen asleep” in 1 Thessalonians 4:14)
12. **Romans 8:37** – translates the strong adversative *alla* as “no” instead of the more common “but” (the NIV makes the same mistake)
13. **Matthew 7:13** – translates the Greek *eurucwros* as “easy.” Whereas that is the idea, is not a faithful translation of the word itself. The Greek says “the way is broad.” That is the literal meaning of the word.
14. **Matthew 7:14** – similar problem with Matthew 7:13. Translates the word “narrow” as “hard.”
15. **Romans 6:19** – The ESV says: “I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations.”

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Inasmuch as the Scriptures are verbally inspired of God (i.e., the words themselves are divinely-directed; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21), even their grammatical forms (e.g., nouns, verbs, prepositions, tense, voice, mood, singular, plural, etc.) are important. It is, therefore, a perilous venture for a translator to substitute his own wording for sacred forms, by radical changes in the text.

For example, in verse 10, the ESV translators alter the text by changing two “nouns” (righteousness and salvation) into “verbs” (justified and saved), and by transforming the twice-used preposition “unto” (Greek, *eis*) into conjunctions, “and.” Whereas in reality, the prepositions point to a goal towards which both the believing and the confessing are progressing — a goal not reached by either of these actions alone.

Jackson made the following conclusion regarding the ESV here: “No, this rendition does not teach the erroneous doctrine of “salvation by faith alone,” though it is not rendered as precisely as it ought to have been.” (Wayne Jackson, “Does the ESV Translation Promote “Faith Alone” Salvation?”)

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1078-does-the-esv-translation-promote-faith-alone-salvation>).

The Greek has the word “flesh” (*sarkos*). “Natural limitations” is a perfect example of a dynamic equivalent rather than a translation. Besides, the insertion of the word “natural” makes it sound (and support) the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity.

#### *Poorly Translated Verses*

16. **Ephesians 3:6**: The Greek here is beautifully written with three “*σὺν* (*sun-*) phrases. Unfortunately, the ESV fails to show this symmetry by translating it as follows: “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” By contrast, note the excellent rendering of the NAS: “that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (emphasis mine).

17. **James 1:25** – The Greek says “whoever *abides*” by the word (Greek: *meno*), but the ESV translated it “endures.” The word is not *hupomone* like in 1:3, 12. The point is that you need to abide/remain in the Word.

18. **Romans 1:17** – the ESV renders the phrase “from faith for faith.” The Greek here is ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, literally “out of faith into faith.” Translating the Greek preposition εἰς as “for” makes an

already difficult phrase nearly impossible to comprehend.

19. **Prov. 30:25-26** - “the ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs.” Are ants and badgers “people”? Plus the word order is clumsy and difficult.

20. Some verses are funny (although certainly not meant to be!): **Psalms 147:10** - “His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man.” **Amos 4:6** - “I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities.”

#### **Conclusion**

These few illustrations (there are many more)<sup>3</sup> demonstrates that the ESV has its share of translating issues. That being said, the translation did a good job in a majority of verses. It demonstrates a high regard for the inspiration of Scripture. It certainly is not perfect, but one can learn and teach the truth from this version.

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<sup>3</sup> Mark L. Strauss, “Why the English Standard Version (ESV) Should not become the Standard English Version.”

<https://zondervan.typepad.com/files/improvingesv2.pdf>

# A Summary of Thought on Bible Translations

Andy Erwin

Seeing that we have been briefly reviewing a few of the most popular English Bible translations in this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*, it seems appropriate to provide a summary of thought to what has been said. Much of the debate pertaining to Bible translations has to do with the Greek text being translated for the New Testament and the method used to translate the selected text.

The Hebrew text used to translate the Old Testament into English is not discussed nearly as much. In fact, modern English translations use essentially the same Hebrew text for the Old Testament, even though they may vary occasionally and in translating certain words or phrases.

Such is not the case with the New Testament. Modern English translations of the New Testament are derived from one of three Greek texts.

## THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

The story of the Greek text that came to be known as the *Textus Receptus*<sup>1</sup> begins with Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536). Erasmus was a Latin and Greek scholar who is credited with publishing the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516. Erasmus' New Tes-

tament consisted of parallel columns of Greek on the left and his own Latin translation on the right. Erasmus had hoped to find one Greek manuscript for the entire work but was unable. Therefore, he compiled half a dozen or so<sup>2</sup> minuscule-style<sup>3</sup> manuscripts which were dated no later than the tenth century. None of these manuscripts contained the entire New Testament. The only copy of Revelation available to Erasmus lacked verses 22:16-21, which caused him to translate these verses from the Latin Vulgate into his Greek text. Erasmus revised his Greek text four times (1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535). A second spurious manuscript appeared by the time of his 1522 revision which included 1 John 5:7-8. It is believed that both Luther<sup>4</sup> and Tyndale<sup>5</sup> used the 1522

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<sup>2</sup> Accounts vary as to just how many manuscripts Erasmus had when he first began this process. It is generally believed he had between six and eight. Although some have suggested he had as many as twelve documents.

<sup>3</sup> In his book, *God's Word into English*, Dewey Beegle notes: "About the ninth century A.D. a very attractive, smooth-flowing type of handwriting was developed which made it possible for scribes to connect many letters without raising the pen" p.19.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Luther translated the Bible into German in 1522.

<sup>5</sup> William Tyndale translated the New Testament in English in 1525.

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<sup>1</sup> In English, this Latin term is translated "Received Text."

edition for their respective translations.

Improvements to the Textus Receptus continued to be made throughout the nineteenth century as new manuscripts were discovered and added as variant readings to the text. In 1881, Frederick Scrivener (1813-1891) collated the Codex Sinaiticus<sup>6</sup> with the Textus Receptus. Scrivener compared the Textus Receptus with the editions of Stephanus (1550), Theodore Beza (1565), and Elzevier (1633) and enumerated all the differences. The Scrivener text was produced in an attempt to reconstruct the Greek text underlying the King James Version of 1611.

Amazingly, the translators of the King James Version never published the Greek text from which they worked. Therefore, Scrivener attempted to formulate the text they would have used by examining the various texts that would have been available to them. Scrivener matched various readings (primarily the Beza and Stephanus texts) to fit the English used by the translators. Thus, the Scrivener text properly belongs to the family of Textus Receptus. It can be rightly said that Scrivener's text was the best and most recent update for his time.

<sup>6</sup> The Codex Sinaiticus dates to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. It contains the earliest known complete copy of the New Testament.

The Textus Receptus as it appeared in Erasmus' 1522 edition was the Greek text for the early English translations of the New Testament, beginning with William Tyndale's translation of 1526.<sup>7 8</sup>

Translation	Date
William Tyndale's Translation	1526
Miles Coverdale's Translation: The Coverdale Bible	1535
John Rogers' Translation: The Matthew Bible	1537
Miles Coverdale's Second Translation: The Great Bible <sup>9</sup>	1539 <sup>10</sup>
William Whittingham's Translation: The Geneva Bible	1557 <sup>11</sup>
The Bishops' Bible <sup>12</sup>	1568
The King James Version	1611

<sup>7</sup> John Wycliffe's translation of the New Testament (1380) was derived from the Latin Vulgate rather than any Greek manuscripts.

<sup>8</sup> Tyndale also revised his translation of the New Testament in 1534 and 1535. In these revisions, he made corrections when needed, included fewer marginal notes, and shortened the introductions to each book.

<sup>9</sup> The Great Bible could be viewed as more of a revision of the Coverdale Bible than a new translation.

<sup>10</sup> Extensive revisions of this translation occurred through 1540-41

<sup>11</sup> The New Testament was completed in 1557. The entire Bible was finished in 1560.

<sup>12</sup> This version was done by a committee of Anglican Bishops overseen by Matthew Parker, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hence the name "Bishops' Bible" was supplied.

When the decision was made by Sam Moore and Thomas Nelson Publishers that the King James Version was to be revised and brought into twentieth century English, it was decided that the Textus Receptus would be the textual basis for their translation of New Testament.

### THE CRITICAL TEXT

The process of formulating a second Greek text of the New Testament began in the 1830s with the work of the German scholar Karl Lachmann (1793-1851). Lachmann published three editions of a Greek New Testament from 1831-1850, in which he used only uncial Alexandrian and Old Latin manuscripts. Lachmann's work was the first to break from the Textus Receptus which was based largely upon Byzantine manuscripts. Samuel Tregelles also published a text around this time using nearly the same principles as Lachmann.<sup>13</sup>

Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-1874) followed in the footsteps of Lachmann in that he gave decisive weight to the oldest manuscripts without balancing their testimony against that of the Textus Receptus. Tischendorf discovered and published more manuscripts in his day than any other scholar. He examined everything available to him – manuscripts, versions, church fathers, etc. His Greek

text was published and revised during the years 1867-1872. Eight editions in all were published. In 1881, B.F. Westcott (1825-1901) and F.J.A. Hort (1828-1902), took the work of Tischendorf and those who followed him, and revised it further in their text titled *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. Westcott and Hort were also able to rely heavily upon the Codex Vaticanus which was not accessible to Tischendorf or his revisers.

The Critical Text also underwent revisions. In the late 1940s, Erwin Nestle (1883-1972) employed Kurt Aland (1915-1994) to assist in revising the text which would be known as the Nestle-Aland text. This text is now in its 28<sup>th</sup> edition.

During this period, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger, Allen Wikgren, Eugene Nida, and Barbara Aland worked together as a committee for the United Bible Societies to produce *The Greek New Testament* which was first published in 1966. It is now in its fifth edition.

### THE MAJORITY TEXT

In 1982, Thomas Nelson Publishers produced *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*. Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad were the principal editors. The Majority Text has also undergone revision. Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont produced *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, in 1991 and a revision in 2005.

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography and Textual Criticism* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2005), 293.

## THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

With three possible Greek texts to choose from, a translating committee must decide which text they will use. Having decided on the text they are to translate, they must then decide how they will proceed in the translating process.

Does the translating committee have a high view of scripture? Will they treat the text with the reverence deserving of the word of God? Will they use an idiomatic approach? Will they seek to paraphrase the text or to translate the text as closely to the Greek as translation will allow? On this point we have the debate of thought-for-thought (dynamic equivalency) or word-for-word (literal) translations.

Many Bible students prefer thought-for-thought translations such as the Open Bible, NIV, Living Bible, or even The Message. However, these students must proceed with caution. I would recommend having a literal translation as well. Sadly, not every English translation has been produced by people with a great regard for inspiration. Many modern scholars deny the verbal inspiration of the Bible and are very reckless in the translations they publish.

Our desire as Bible students should be to know the word and to apply the word. Of course, application will prove impossible without knowledge.

I recommend that you have a good study Bible with an accurate translation, a Bible dictionary, and a good concordance. These three tools will help you immensely in your studies.

## IN CONCLUSION

Today, the overwhelming number of scholars, schools, and even Bible translations support the Critical Text. Certainly much work has been done and many pieces of evidence have been discovered since the time of Erasmus and even Scrivener.

While we continue to debate which Greek text is most accurate, there remains approximately 80% agreement between the texts. It is the 20% for which we disagree that includes passages whose authenticity must be settled. It could be said that these disputed passages do not affect the plan of salvation, and that one can be led to the truth without them. While others deem such an answer unsatisfactory and believe the issue is much deeper than that. These would maintain that *every* word of God must be represented in the Bible and that not one jot or tittle should be removed.

Emotions tend to run high with this discussion. Dialogue and study is what is needed most. Let us continue to study this issue and listen to others. Our desire should be to learn and to uphold the word of God, regardless of which version's name is imprinted on the cover.

## **Is Scriptural Worship a “Core Belief” for Lipscomb University?**

*Is Lipscomb University in violation of her founding purpose and guilty of a breach of contract? You be the judge.*

Steve Gibson

In July 2005, Lipscomb University inaugurated its seventeenth President, Dr. L. Randolph Lowery III. He has since brought unprecedented change to the school. After his ascension to leadership, Faculty Handbooks began to proclaim, “Indeed, a new day has dawned . . . People are already saying, ‘If you haven’t seen Lipscomb lately, you haven’t seen Lipscomb!’” It is not surprising, therefore, that the President and Board of Trustees of Lipscomb University have now initiated a formal process to reassess “how Lipscomb defines itself.”

A document is presently being circulated by one of the school’s Spiritual Formation officers entitled “Lipscomb University’s Centering Core: A Campus-wide Conversation.” In it the following observations are made: “For the most part Lipscomb has defined its Christian character the same way Churches of Christ have defined theirs—through a distinct core of beliefs and practices, though not formalized in an official creed. Further, in setting the qualifications for employment at Lipscomb, the University historically has assumed that declaring membership in a Church of Christ

provides a clear and adequate measure of Christian commitment . . . However, we face in the twenty-first century changing and challenging times . . . Churches of Christ themselves have experienced a ‘crisis of identity’ over the last several decades, becoming much more diverse in belief. Lipscomb, too, has undergone change. It is no longer the case, as it was for many years, that 100% of the members of the Lipscomb faculty belong to Churches of Christ . . . the President and Board of Trustees have asked us to re-engage the powerful vision for Christian unity that launched and guided the Stone-Campbell movement over two hundred years ago.”

Under the heading of “The ‘Centering Core’ of Churches of Christ” the document goes on to highlight ten essential doctrines, saying, “Something close to the following list is what counted as orthodox in the first several generations of the Stone-Campbell movement.”

Under the heading of “Lipscomb University’s Current Centering Core,” the proposal then continues, in part: “The university’s founders were lead-

ers in a fellowship that was becoming known in the late nineteenth century as the Churches of Christ. These churches grew from the American Restoration Movement, which sought to restore unity among believers by rejecting creeds and returning to the Bible, excluding all human opinions and philosophy, as the only rule of faith and practice. Churches of Christ are autonomous, non-denominational congregations associated by common core beliefs as recorded in the New Testament. Lipscomb University is not a church. Because of its strong heritage of association with the Churches of Christ, Lipscomb University adheres to the central doctrinal interpretations that characterize these churches . . . While we endorse and seek to teach absolute truths of scripture, we also acknowledge that the study of scripture results in questions on which there will never be consensus.”

### **Reconsidering How Lipscomb Defines Itself**

On information and belief, private meetings of invited faculty members are scheduled to begin in May 2019 for the purpose of assisting present administrators to better define, articulate, and update “Lipscomb University’s Current Centering Core.” Why is a progressive President now asking new faculty members that he himself has selected and hired (like Dr. Rubel Shelly) to reconsider “how Lipscomb defines itself”?

The document invites faculty members to gather and discuss the question, “In light of Lipscomb’s close 125-year connection to Churches of Christ, what are the key convictions you think most important to insure an intentional, and vibrant Christian university?”

While it remains to be seen what results this process will yield, a voice from the grave would surely answer that a continuing commitment to exclusively scriptural worship is among the University’s most important “key convictions.”

### **The Lipscomb Deed**

On September 17, 1904, David Lipscomb and his wife Margaret deeded portions of their farm on Granny White Pike to the Nashville Bible School subject to certain restrictions governing the land’s future use. The restrictive clause signed by David Lipscomb’s own hand states, in part:

“The land hereby conveyed is to be used for maintaining a school in which in addition to other branches of learning, the Bible as the recorded will of God and the only standard of faith and practice in religion, *excluding* all human systems and opinions, and *all innovations*, inventions and devices of man *from the service and worship of God* shall be taught as regular daily study to all who shall attend said school, and for no other purpose inconsistent with this object, this condition being herein inserted at the re-

quest of said Nashville Bible School, of which David Lipscomb was one of the founders, and the same is hereby declared *fundamental* and shall adhere to the premises conveyed as an *imperative restriction* on their use so long as the same shall be owned by said Nashville Bible School . . .

"All directors of said corporation, or trustees of the school, and regular members of the faculty, shall be *members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the teachings above set forth*, and desirous to carry them out. Any one failing to have those qualifications shall resign or be removed." Mr. and Mrs. Lipscomb also made it clear that the same restrictions would apply to any successor organization using the property or funded by its sale, "it being our purpose and intention to *impress* the trust declared by said limitations and restrictions *perpetually* upon the property" (1904 Deed Book of Davidson County, Tennessee, pp. 560-562 [handwritten]; same restrictions repeated in Deed No. 55646 to Nashville Bible School, signed by David Lipscomb and wife on Dec. 30, 1913; recorded on Jan. 12, 1914, per 1914 Deed Book, pp. 181-182 [typewritten]; emphasis added).

### The By-Laws

Sometime between April 1903 and January 1905 in connection with the Newbern church property trial held at Dyersburg, Tennessee, David Lipscomb affirmed under oath his conviction that a "church that adopts the

organ goes into apostasy" and that "a church that does this is not a church of Christ" ("Deposition of David Lipscomb: Cross-Examination," Vol. 1, pp. 23-24; per microfilm in Beaman Library of transcripts "faithfully compiled and arranged for library use by H. Leo Boles").

Forty years after it took his name in April 1918, the school continued to honor brother Lipscomb's stance of excluding all human innovations from the worship of God by enacting corporate by-laws: "All members of the Board of Directors shall be members of the church of Christ in good standing with their congregations. Each member shall be *opposed to all innovations* and departures in the work and *worship* as taught in the New Testament" (By-Laws of Board of Directors of David Lipscomb College, Article 2, Section 2, as cited in David Lipscomb College Faculty Handbook 1958-59, p. 8, emphasis added).

### A New "Centering Core"

Beyond doubt, the school's historic opposition to *innovations in the worship of God* included and was intended to condemn "the use of instrumental music in worship" (DLC Faculty Handbook 1962-63, p. 8). However, the new "Centering Core" advanced by current administrators appears to at least float the option of relaxing this historic conviction of the school. How so? "Lipscomb University's Centering Core" proposes that the school simply state, "We respect and endorse the

first-century practice of non-instrumental worship.”

But as a declaration of principle this is a half-truth that even the enemies of David Lipscomb could have approved. For the core concern of the school’s founder was that any innovation added to this practice be excluded! Unlike the school’s prior declarations, the present proposal stops short of labeling instrumental worship as an innovation, digression, or false doctrine not in accord with school policy.

Among items allegedly “counted as orthodox in the first several generations of the Stone-Campbell movement” the new proposal concludes with “(10) Worship without musical instruments is commanded by God (among those who became Churches of Christ in the latter nineteenth century).”

However, did nineteenth century opponents of instrumental music really believe that God had explicitly “commanded” them not to worship with it?

Does this language not resurrect the instrumentalists’ old straw-man that can be answered by a simple retort that there is no direct command explicitly forbidding its use?

Does the proposal’s summary not characterize opposition to instrumental music in worship as merely a fringe opinion in a much larger movement whose majority vision the

present administration now asks the University to re-engage?

Reflecting upon “The Heritage” of the school, the college said of itself in 1962:

“It is imperative that those of us who devote our strength to the work of David Lipscomb College understand and share the convictions which brought it into being. This is especially true in view of the fact that many of the spiritual perils which prevailed in 1891 exist today, although often in more sinister form. The history of higher education in the United States reveals that many religious groups have founded colleges to offset secularism and promote their interests. It is sobering to realize that few of these colleges have completed even one century in loyalty to its original purposes, with the exception of Catholic institutions. This tragic denial of founding ideals must not befall David Lipscomb College.

“The decade of the 1880’s saw the loss of many of the accomplishments of the Restoration Movement. A lack of fundamental understanding of the nature of the effort, coupled with a desire to be ‘like the nations around about,’ unleashed a wave of digression which swept congregations everywhere into departure.

“In Nashville only the South College Street congregation, where David Lipscomb was an elder, withstood the tide. In 1888, James A. Harding, perhaps the most widely known evange-

list in the brotherhood, stayed in the Lipscomb home while conducting a meeting at College Street church. The two men talked at length about the problem of rebuilding the cause on a foundation which could not again be swept away.

"They reached the conclusion that the answer was to be found in the establishment of a school whose central purpose would be to teach the Bible to every student every day. These two spiritual giants agreed to combine their abilities for this work. The result was the opening of the Nashville Bible School on October 5, 1891" (DLC Faculty Handbook 1962-63, pp. 6-8)

### **A Different Solution?**

Do "changing times" faced "in the twenty-first century" really call for a different solution than what David Lipscomb and James Harding conceived when the Restoration Movement was dividing in 1888?

How does the fact that some congregations associated with Lipscomb University "have experienced a 'crisis of identity' over the last several decades, becoming much more diverse in belief" differ from the critical decade of the school's founding when "the 1880's saw the loss of many of the accomplishments of the Restoration Movement" and "a wave of digression which swept congregations everywhere into departure"?

Is not a school modeled after David Lipscomb's original vision pre-

cisely what is needed in the Nashville of 2019 as well?

Henry Leo Boles, a personal associate of David Lipscomb and sixth President of his school when its name was officially changed to David Lipscomb College, once commented on Jesus' condemnation of hypocrisy in Matthew 23:29-31:

"This seventh woe pronounced upon these scribes and Pharisees condemns them for building 'the sepulchers of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous.' They built domes and columns over the graves of the prophets, and adorned or garnished them. They made it appear that they were honoring the prophets and righteous men of old, yet at the same time they were dishonoring them with their teachings and examples" (*Commentary on Matthew*, 1936, p. 453).

Will the current administration and faculty now bless under his name the very digression which brother Lipscomb himself so strenuously and sacrificially opposed? Does treating instrumental worship as a non-issue not amount to hypocritically adorning his tomb in lieu of honoring his teaching?

### **Basic Conditions and Commitments**

After distinguishing the founders' convictions from certain anti-doctrines of "recent origin," the 1962 statement went on to note:

“...there have been developed through the years a number of basic conditions and commitments which distinguish David Lipscomb College from many other institutions. A prerequisite for membership on the faculty is loyalty to New Testament Christianity as understood and traditionally practiced among churches of Christ. This includes complete and unwavering acceptance of the Bible as the divinely inspired word of God; opposition to such *false doctrines as the use of instrumental music in worship*, premillennialism, and missionary societies . . . Acceptance of a position on the faculty is considered a commitment to these principles. Opposition to them either in teaching, personal life, or influence would have to be judged a violation of the contract between a teacher and the College” (p. 8).

### **Remember Doug Varnado?**

Perhaps, the most celebrated test-case of Lipscomb University’s opposition to the use of instrumental music in worship arose in 1999 when faculty-member Doug Varnado was forced to resign for having lent his “influence” to acceptance of the practice at his home congregation, Hendersonville’s Community Church of Christ.

“If Community church is going to be an instrumental congregation, that’s not in accord with our policy,” Lipscomb’s sixteenth President Steve Flatt told a reporter, “Our identity for the last 108 years has included a cap-

PELLA. It still characterizes who we are and Doug understood that” (Ray Waddle, “Lipscomb, minister at odds—Bible teacher resigns over church’s musical tradition,” *The Tennessean*, August 29, 1999, p. B-1).

By including a carefully-worded restrictive clause in his deed, did David Lipscomb succeed in being able to rebuild the cause of restoration “on a foundation which could not again be swept away”? Ominously, the newspaper reporter concluded his article by noting that an elder at Community Church “predicts the music issue in Churches of Christ will fade away once young churchgoers, awash daily in music, become church leaders” (Ibid., p. B-8).

### **Twenty Years Later**

Almost twenty years after the Varnado controversy, it appears that a number of “young churchgoers” have indeed grown into “church leaders” who would now like to see “the music issue in Churches of Christ” simply “fade away.”

After all, the 2019 document freely admits:

“It is no longer the case, as it was for many years, that 100% of the members of the Lipscomb faculty belong to Churches of Christ”—despite the founders’ express decree that all “regular members of the faculty, shall be members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the”

strict “teachings” emphasized in the school’s property deed!

Indisputably, many Lipscomb faculty members now belong to congregations that have recently developed a new identity by adding an “instrumental” service to their program of worship. President Lowery is often seen attending Otter Creek or Harpeth Hills, both of which began offering instrumental worship in 2015.

That same year he hired as Lipscomb’s “Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Religion” Dr. Rubel Shelly, whose Woodmont Hills church introduced instruments in 2018, shortly after Shelly moved to preach at the Spring Hill campus of the Maury Hill Church, where he now follows a full band with his sermons. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHi8tUiy3Mk>).

In 2016, Lipscomb Bible Professor John Mark Hicks helped begin the All Saints Church of Christ, which meets on Sunday afternoons at the Vine Street Christian Church and alternates instrumental services.

The congregation presently boasting perhaps the greatest number of Lipscomb students and faculty members is still the Ethos Church, a mission work funded by Harpeth Hills in 2008 which “has multiple worship services, all with instruments” (*Christian Chronicle*, April 1, 2012).

Can Lipscomb University still say that “A prerequisite for membership

on the faculty is loyalty to New Testament Christianity as understood and traditionally practiced among churches of Christ,” including their historic “opposition to such false doctrines as the use of instrumental music in worship”? Or, was Varnado simply a victim guilty of being ahead of his time, paving the way for a new President to do penance for his firing through the even wider “influence” of successors like Shelly and Hicks?

### Re-affirm or Conform

In the past, Lipscomb University regularly reaffirmed the school’s commitment to scriptural acapella worship as one of the “distinguishing features of the institution.” Will it now respect its founder’s wishes enough to measure its new practices by its old policies? Will it, like its founder, insist that administrators and teachers betraying “sympathy” for instrumental worship “resign or be removed”? Or, will change its old policy to conform to its new ecumenical practice, watering-down its principles to tolerate the very species of rebellion David Lipscomb admonished it to guard against?

Will it disown his legacy and surrender the fortress he constructed in order to “re-engage” his ideological enemies, effectively returning his property to the mainstream of the digressing movement he himself felt constrained to abandon?

As the 1962 Faculty Handbook emphasized, such distinguishing fea-

tures as opposition to instrumental music in worship

"...are essentials which compose the very warp and woof of the College. They are not subject to modification, but rather the effort to make them a reality in the hearts of all is a fundamental part of our work. Any compromise or surrender of these commitments would leave no logical justification for the existence of the institution. They are received by us in sacred trust from all who have labored to make possible the campus we enjoy, and must be passed untarnished to those who will come after us. How faithfully we discharge this trust will determine our continuing ability to stand as an institution of peculiar purposes and holy aspirations. If we should fail, the College would lose its identity and become only another small unit in the vast complex of mass education" (pp. 2-3).

Let us pray that this sacred trust will not be tarnished by the upcoming "Campus-wide Conversation" over "Lipscomb University's Centering Core;" for, it constitutes a critical juncture that will likely determine whether the school will reaffirm the distinguishing features of scriptural worship memorialized in its founder's deed, or else forever "lose its identity" as David Lipscomb's school.

## Lipscomb University's Breach of Trust

Andy Erwin

With his own hand, David Lipscomb wrote, "The land hereby conveyed is to be used for maintaining a school in which in addition to other branches of learning, the Bible as the recorded will of God and the only standard of faith and practice in religion, *excluding* all human systems and opinions, and *all innovations*, inventions and devices of man *from the service and worship of God* shall be taught as regular daily study to all who shall attend said school, and for no other purpose inconsistent with this object, this condition being herein inserted at the request of said Nashville Bible School, of which David Lipscomb was one of the founders, and the same is hereby declared *fundamental* and shall adhere to the premises conveyed as an *imperative restriction* on their use so long as the same shall be owned by said Nashville Bible School . . .

"**All directors** of said corporation, or **trustees** of the school, and regular members of the **faculty**, shall be *members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the teachings above set forth*, and **desirous to carry them out**. Any one **failing to have those qualifications shall resign or be removed**...it being our purpose and intention to *impress* the trust declared by said limitations and re-



restrictions *perpetually upon the property*" (1904 Deed Book of Davidson County, Tennessee, pp. 560-562).

Now read a recent posting for an adjunct Bible professor in Costa Rica as part of Lipscomb's study abroad program:

"Lipscomb University is a private, Christian university associated with the fellowship of the Church of Christ and governed by religious tenets held by the Church of Christ. Hiring Statement For graduate, adjunct, and visiting faculty positions, **preference will be given** to applicants who are members of the Church of Christ, and **consideration will be given to applicants who are committed to the Christian faith.**"

Two things stand out to me in this job posting: (1) it is laughable to say that Lipscomb University is "governed by religious tenets held by the Church of Christ" as long as Randy Lowery is the president. He and his wife have even preached for various denominations and denominational functions in the Nashville area.

Moreover, you would be hard-pressed to find even one Bible teacher who is sympathetic to the school's founding purpose, or the doctrines which the mainstream of the brotherhood believe. The faculty of Lipscomb is full of revisionist historians who are attempting to rewrite our history in order to justify their transgressions.

(2) Lipscomb University is in violation of the restrictive clause in their original deed to consider those who are not "*members of the Church of Christ, in full sympathy with the teachings above set forth.*"

According to brother Lipscomb's own handwritten deed, every person now associated with Lipscomb University who is not in full sympathy with and desirous to carry out the school's founding purpose of maintaining a school which excludes "all human systems and opinions, and *all innovations, inventions and devices of man from the service and worship of God*" should "resign" or "be removed."

If they are not removed, the land which was the Lipscomb farm should be returned to an heir of the Lipscomb family. This is the right thing to do. I would prefer to see the digressive faction at Lipscomb resign – from the board down to the custodians if that is what it takes. If this means closing the school for several semesters in order to return to these founding principles, so be it.

If Lipscomb University will not do what is honorable then they should be forced to do what is lawful and return the land to the family. Now this raises another question: is there a member of the Lipscomb family who remains loyal to the founding purposes of the school and will hold the board and administration to the fire and force the issue?

# **The West Fayetteville Church of Christ**

## **Service Times**

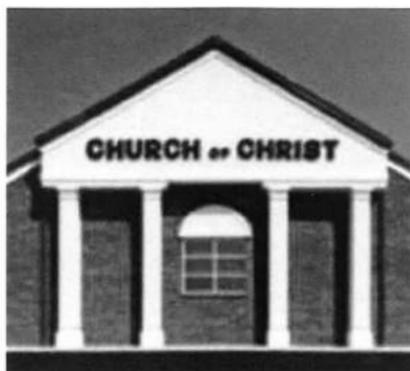
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Sunday Worship: 10:30 am

Sunday Evening Worship: 5:00 pm

Wednesday Evening Worship: 7:00 pm

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# Gospel Gleaner

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



## Things We Must Do

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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.

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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. 31 ♦ No. 4

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## Inside this Issue

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be encouraging brethren in some of things we must continue to do as Christians. Evangelism, benevolence, spiritual growth, and brotherly love are too important to neglect. I believe you will find the articles to be informative and encouraging.

Also, in this issue of the paper are two articles addressing the Mormon doctrines of polytheism and deification. In a recent trip to Idaho, via Salt Lake City, I was reminded of the widespread influence of this heresy in the western part of the United States. I even overheard a Mormon trying to evangelize a woman in the airport, who happened to be confined to a wheel chair and could not get away! The articles expose the movement for what it is – heresy. Also, you will find an advertisement for Charles A. Shook's book, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon*. Sam Hester has reprinted this book. If you have ever been curious about the full extent of the fraudulent claims of this movement, you will find this work to be worthy of your study.

One last note, three brotherhood bookstores happily carry the *Gleaner* and disperse it freely. These bookstores are Mars Hill Bookstore in Florence, Alabama, DeHoff Christian Bookstore in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and Christian Family Bookstore in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Should you need anything in the way of study materials, VBS, or church supplies, we recommend them highly.

# Evangelism: Personal and Public

Roger Shepherd

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:7-12, NASB).

The most significant approach to evangelism in the twenty-first century is relational evangelism. Relational evangelism seeks to build a loving relationship with God through Christ and then with one another in the church and community.

Does John give us an appropriate purpose statement for twenty-first century evangelism in 1 John 4:7-12? I desire to exegete this passage with this aim in mind. First, what is the teaching and application to the first readers? Second, does this passage teach principles for twenty-first century evangelism?

## KNOWING GOD

What does “knowing God” mean in this text and in the context of twenty-first century evangelism? Those who are loving others are “knowing God” (4:7, 8). The phrase in Greek is *ginoskei ton theon* (present tense) meaning “to arrive at a knowledge of someone or something, know, know about, make acquaintance of” that is in the context, God (4:2).<sup>1</sup>

John uses this term with a combination of two genitive constructions to be translated by *this we know that Jesus Christ remains in us, namely by the spirit* (4:13).<sup>2</sup> We have an acquaintance and relationship with God through biblical knowledge from Christ and the Spirit. In 1 John 2:3 the perfect tense indicates that believers know God, or *we have known Him* and our knowledge and obedience to His commandments still stands. Thus, John argues that saints have a personal relationship with God through the knowledge of His word. This is significant to evangelism in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 199. (abbr. BDAG)

<sup>2</sup>BDAG, 200.

## Born of God

In the phrase "born of God" John uses the perfect passive of *gennaō* meaning *has been born of God* (4:7). The first believers were already in that relationship with God at the time of this writing. This word ties this first letter of John to his Gospel. *Gennaō* in this context means "to become the parent of, beget by procreation according to the Spirit's design and the new birth spiritually; thus, *I became your father as Christians through the gospel* (4:7).<sup>3</sup>

In the new birth of the water and the Spirit, God literally becomes our Father spiritually! This cannot be real without a personal relationship with God. In the Great Commission Jesus commanded the disciples to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father" thus, a relationship (Matt. 28:19), "having been regenerated by Christ"<sup>4</sup> in conversion and then he/she teaches this to others.

God is a loving Father, and based upon this relationship we go and make other disciples. I argue that John is doing outreach both to the congregation of God and to those in the community at large. This is a characteris-

tic of those who have been born of God, loving God and community.

## LOVE ONE ANOTHER

The community can see a manifestation of God who is the source of love in our love for Him and one another in the congregation. In this the relationship with God and loving one another "manifested the love of God" (4:9).

What does "manifest" mean? The aorist passive form of *phaneroō* literally means "to cause to become known, disclose, show, make known, thus, being translated *become public knowledge, be disclosed, become known* (4:9).<sup>5</sup> God and His gospel become public knowledge through love practiced and expressed by Christians to God and one another. *Phaneroō* is primarily is "a manifestation of God who is love, therefore, "to cause to become visible, reveal, expose publicly with relatively more focus on the sensory aspect than on the cognitive (4:9)."<sup>6</sup> Love for God and others is an outward manifestation that will draw the lost to Christ.

## Relational Evangelism

Love for God and one another are a very significant qualities for twenty-first century evangelism. This is relational evangelism. It is building relationships with the people of God to maintain faith and with people in the

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<sup>3</sup>BDAG, 193.

<sup>4</sup>Daniel L. Akin, *The New American Commentary an Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture 1, 2, 3 John*, Vol. 38 (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing, 2001), 177.

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<sup>5</sup>Akin, 1048.

<sup>6</sup>Akin.

community to bring them to faith in Christ. Evangelism that reaches the un-churched in a postmodern society is built on relationships.

*Relational* is a word that means relationship, a partnership, to share common life, a connection, association, or involvement between people. The connection that people of all nations make with one another is from the example of God and Jesus. The relational approach is highly recommended as it seeks to build a strong relationship with lost people. It seeks to build a relationship with the never-churched, and then evangelize. It also has a holding power to keep the converted saved. Christians can successfully share their faith in Christ in today's churches after a relationship has been established.

### JESUS OUR PROPITIATION

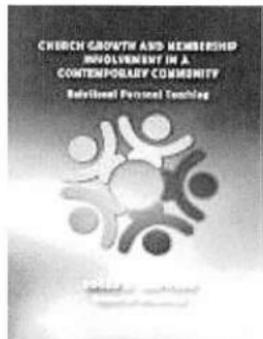
The first converts to Christianity were taught that Jesus is the "propitiation" (*hilasmos*) for their sins (4:9-10). Jesus is the "appeasement necessitated by sin, expiation, sacrifice to atone, a sin-offering."<sup>7</sup> John continues one of his themes concerning how sinners can live "through Him" (Jesus) and then "manifest the love of God" to the lost world (4:9).

Propitiation as "the standard of love is not what humans feel but what God has revealed in Christ's life and

death on the cross."<sup>8</sup> It is "cross" salvation through the love of God! Therefore, God *satisfied* His wrath for sin in Jesus, the propitiation for sin. This is the message for twenty-first century evangelism.

### CONCLUSION

In this passage, John provides a statement to be applied in the context of twenty-first century relational evangelism. We have an inner motivation for evangelism. First, God loved us and sent His Son as the propitiation or atoning sacrifice and Savior for the world. Second, as we love God and one another, we share Jesus with the lost. This is the heart of evangelism today! This certainly applies to twenty-first century evangelism.



*Church Growth and Membership Involvement  
in a Contemporary Community: Relational  
Personal Teaching*

**Roger Shepherd**

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<sup>7</sup>BDAG, 474.

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<sup>8</sup>Jeremy Royal Howard, Editor, *Holman Study Bible NKJV Edition* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2013), 2138.

# Works of Benevolence and Kindness

John T. Polk, II

On Paul's journey to Rome his shipwreck let him encounter "unusual" (unexpected, out of the ordinary, like the miracles in Acts 19:11-12) "kindness" (*philanthropia*, love of humans) from "natives" (*barbarians*, people of a foreign language).

"Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta. And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold" (Acts 28:1-2, NKJV).

Paul said these "barbarians" not only met him and his entourage's immediate needs, but later stated that, "They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary" (Acts 28:10). Their love of humanity helped Paul go on his way.

Jesus did not use this word, but described the action when He said the Samaritan "had compassion" (Luke 10:33-35). It is unexpected to find a love of mankind in a Samaritan, or in Barbarians, but it can be found.

The only other time the word "philanthropy" (translated "kindness") is used in the New Testament, is when used of God in Titus 3:3-4: "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various

lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the *kindness* and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared."

God showed His love for all mankind by sending "our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:3-4). The Divine love for mankind is thus universally identified.

A different Greek word is used for God's "kindness" in Ephesians 2:7: "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Christians must strive to have more of this God-like quality. "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is *kind* to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:35).

God's "kindness" to His enemies should also be reflected in His children. Sinners must become "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). In putting on Christ, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on

tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12); and to become "kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgive you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Peter summarized Jesus' life by showing "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). "Doing good" literally means "working well." It certainly applies to Jesus, for He never failed to meet the needs of anyone who approached Him with a request for benevolence.

Jesus helped people with miracles to prove that "God was with Him," but Christians must prove that God is with us by loving humankind with good works. Our "good works" may relieve someone's burden so that they may look to God. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Our "good works" may show our honorable conduct "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 2:12).

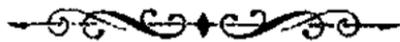
Christians "are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"

(Ephesians 2:10). "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Supporters of the gospel do good works ranging from the women who "provided for Him from their substance" (Luke 8:1-3); to "Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge" (Acts 21:16); to sending the faithful "forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God" (3 John 6). "Good works" support everyone and everything Jesus Christ supported while He was on earth!

"Good works" cannot support, or encourage sins which violate God's word. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11). "Good works" should not support or be included in "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Christians should "not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16).



# Growing in God's Grace and Knowledge

Ronald Bryant

The words contained in 2 Peter 3:18, seem simple, yet they are profound, even majestic, in what they require. It is obvious that the duty expressed in 2 Peter 3:18 is not optional.

Two powerful concepts are set forth: (1) The grace of our Lord, and (2) The knowledge of our Lord. Jesus is the source of the grace that brings life and hope. He is also the source of the knowledge (i.e. the truth) that leads to life. He is the grace to which we turn, and the source of the knowledge that we are to fully embrace. He is the subject and the object of the gospel; the focus of our faith.

2 Peter begins with two powerful concepts: (1) The knowledge of God, and (2) The divine power. The knowledge spoken of is a special kind of knowledge. It is the knowledge that is complete. Jesus is the source of that knowledge; of the truth which He lived, taught, and authored. The "divine power" is that which John referenced as "grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The Lord's deeds and words were ruled by grace and established by truth. All was by divine power, especially His resurrection (Romans 1:4). He was God's ultimate gift. His moral excellence, matchless teaching, sinless life, and sacrifice manifested

His obedience to the Father. They are undeniably the basis and the arena of the Christian life.

Peter understood how the Lord has "given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4, KJV). Thus, "for this very reason giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love" (2 Peter 1:5-7). Moreover, "if these things are yours and abound you will be neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8). Upon these exhortations, Christians are ultimately urged to make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Some of the dangers Christians would face are then spelled out (2:1-3:14). Peter admonished believers to be diligent to be found by Christ, in peace without spot and blameless, and value the longsuffering of the Lord (2 Peter 3:14-15). He warned them, "beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Peter 3:17). Rather than being led astray, the apos-

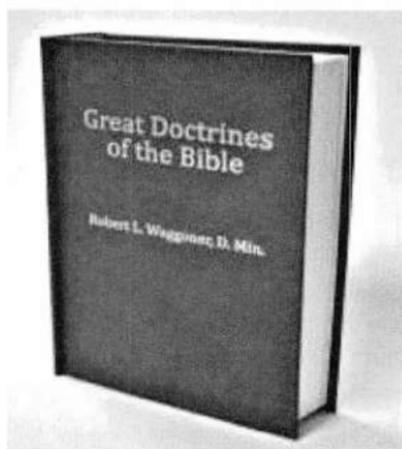
tle desired for Christians to “grow in the grace and the knowledge and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

The last verse of 2 Peter is simple, yet profound. It is enduring and perpetually valid. The life of faith is vital and productive. Growth is essential. Spiritual growth must be earnestly desired. It is axiomatic that if it is not desired it will not be sought nor can it be obtained.

The arena of growth for the believer is specific. It is obtained in the grace and the knowledge of Christ. These concepts are central in the gospel; in its reception and in its application. In this passage “grace” is far more than “God’s good will;” it has everything to do with the being and the character of Christ, what He accomplished, and provided. The word “knowledge” is not merely knowledge about Christ, but the knowledge, the truth that He proclaimed and authored. It has to do with that which He taught and epitomized (cf. Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-3; 5:8-9).

To reiterate, the “grace of Christ” has to do with His grace – His character and being; “the knowledge of Christ” has to do with His word – the words of the truth of the gospel which He authored. It is His character and will, made known in His work in His word that makes and sustains believers. Yet, it is readily apparent that each believer must choose to lay hold and make application of that which is supplied in and by Christ.

It is only in genuine commitment to Christ that a person can be united with Christ. It is only in personal communion with Him that one can grow in His grace (His character – His likeness), and in His knowledge (the truth He proclaimed, lived, and authored). It is only in knowing Him, in living in His presence and purpose, that one can be a partaker of the nature, add the virtues required (2 Peter 1:5-8), and make his calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10-11).



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# Promoting Brotherly Love and Fellowship

Raymond Elliott

It should be the desire of every disciple of Jesus Christ to promote greater love among members of the body of Christ. However, to accomplish such a wonderful effort, one must, of course, possess love for his brothers and sisters in his heart.

Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35, ESV).

One of the ways that we have "passed from death to life," is "because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). The apostle Peter wrote, "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart" (1 Peter 1:22). If a Christian claims to love God, but hates his brother, "he is a liar" and he "has not seen God" (1 John 4:20).

Loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is a spiritually maturing process. Consider Paul's observations of the church in Thessalonica concerning their love for their brethren, "Now about brotherly love, you do not need anyone to write to you, because you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. And indeed, you

are showing this love to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to excel more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:9, 10). The fact is, the more we love God, the greater love we will have for His children!

Perhaps the word, 'promote' does not always carry the correct connotation in spiritual matters. Of course, it does not intend to mean that we should 'promote' someone or some product to be bought. Some of the synonyms seem to present suitable meanings. Words like "encourage, foster, nurture," may be preferred.

The writer of Hebrews (10:24) wrote, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works..." Thus, we are admonished to encourage brethren to grow in their love for one another. But, how may we achieve this precious goal in our lives?

We can exhort brethren to be faithful (Hebrew 3:13) and to attend the worship assemblies (Hebrews 10:24, 25). We can encourage brethren to manifest the same care for all the members of one's congregation (1 Cor. 12:25) and to help a brother or sister who is in need (1 John 3:17, 18). If necessary, our love should be so great as to even "lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 1:16).

We are to be “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). Of course, we should always pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ (James 5:16).

In many ways we can foster brotherly love in the family of God. In a congregation of Christ, there are expedient methods and opportunities wherein we can encourage greater brotherly love.

- Plan a common meal where brethren can sit down and visit one another while eating.
- Divide the members into different groups for the purpose of visiting the sick and others who are in need of attention for various reasons. This will give brothers and sisters an opportunity to become better acquainted.
- In larger congregations, it would be good if members would change locations where they normally sit during the assemblies in order to meet, in a personal manner, members they had not met previously.
- It is very important that members do not form a ‘group’ wherein they only speak to and associate with their close friends.
- Inviting members of the church into your home for a visit is a good way to become better acquainted. Or, plan a time when you could visit in the homes of

the members of your congregation.

In 1 Peter 2:17, the apostle Peter gave this admonition, “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” We should love the collective family of God, even though we will never meet everyone in this lifetime.

However, there is the possibility of knowing brethren of other congregations in a general area. This was done more in generations past, mainly because of gospel meetings being conducted by various churches of Christ. I remember hearing brother Rex A. Turner, Sr., say, “I am glad that I grew up in the ‘gospel meeting era.’”

Still, there are special occasions when brethren can attend events that afford opportunities for brothers and sisters in Christ to get acquainted with one another. It is good that we become friends with our brothers and sisters from different congregations and grow in our love for them.

I want to mention the example of congregations in a county in this state (Alabama) who support one another during their gospel meetings. This might not always be wise; but, during the gospel meetings in this area the other churches will dismiss their Wednesday night Bible classes and attend the on-going meeting. I know of no other county in my personal experience where these rural and small town congregations are closer together in their love for one another.

In conclusion, I want to mention the passage of scripture found in 2 Peter 1:5-11, wherein are mentioned the qualities of character that should be found in the heart and life of every faithful Christian. Please note that “brotherly love” (ASV, “brotherly kindness,” ESV), is placed next to “love,” the “greatest,” as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13). Also, please contemplate the promises found in this text for the Christians whose life is filled with these ‘graces.’

“For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8-11, NKJV).

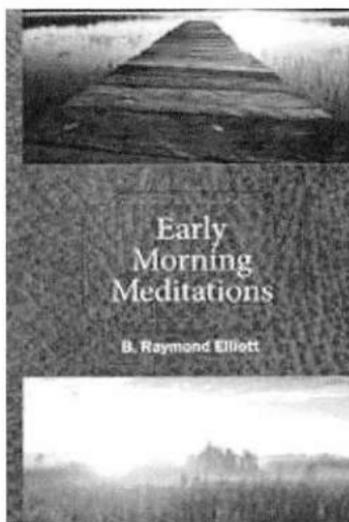
What precious promises! What blessed assurance! Faith will become sight, hope will become a reality, and our love for God and for all the redeemed will be eternal!

Read carefully the lyrics of this beautiful hymn, “How Sweet, How Heavenly”:

“How sweet how heav’nly is the sight,  
 When those that love the Lord  
 In one another’s peace delight, And so  
 fulfill the word.  
 When each can feel his brother’s sigh,  
 And with him bear apart;

When sorrow flows from eye to eye,  
 And joy from heart to heart.  
 When love in one delightful stream  
 Thro’ every bosom flows,  
 When union sweet and dear esteem In  
 every action glows.  
 Love is the golden chain that binds  
 The happy souls above;  
 And he’s an heir of heav’n who finds  
 His bosom glow with love.”

- Joseph Swain, 1792



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# HEAPS

Mark McWhorter

In 2 Chronicles 31, King Hezekiah led the Israelites back to a proper relationship with God. He appointed Levites and priests to rotations in service to the Temple. David had originally done this in 1 Chronicles 25. Some were appointed to prophesy with music. Others were for porters. Some were in charge of the gates. Others were to be officers and judges.

Sacrifices were to be offered for burnt and peace offerings. Burnt offerings were to bring the worshipper into the proper relationship with God. Peace offerings were in thanksgiving for the peace with God that the burnt offerings brought. The priests had to offer sacrifices first be sanctified for such service, then they offered for the people. There was to be praise in the gates.

Before all of this was done, the people destroyed all the idols of pagan worship. We are told they broke, cut down, and threw down until they had 'utterly destroyed them all.' They were committed to returning to God.

Hezekiah appropriated some of his wealth to sustain the Temple service. He did this out of a good heart and to be a proper example to the people. If the King was willing to give a significant portion of his wealth, then each

Israelite should have been willing to do so as well.

The people were commanded by the King to give their portions to the priests and Levites. This offering was to encourage those who gave service in the Temple. God had commanded such support when He gave the Law of Moses. But, the Israelites had not been following the Law for some time. Hezekiah was doing what he could to bring the Israelites into conformity with the Law.

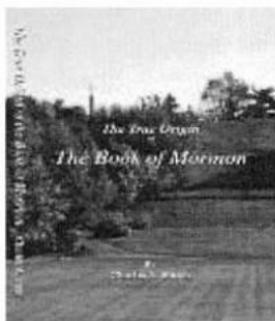
As soon as the people heard what Hezekiah wanted them to do, they did it. In verse five, we are told they brought an abundance of all the fruit of the fields. They also brought their tithes.

Verse seven tells us that they continued to bring things to the Temple for five months. Verse six records that they laid up 'heaps.' The Hebrew word means 'piles.' In this verse, the word is doubled. It says 'heaps, heaps.' This emphasis lets us know there was a very large amount contributed. There was so much, even Hezekiah asked why there were so many piles. He was told that the people had brought so much the priests and Levites could not use it all in this amount of time. He was told that the Lord had blessed them tremendously.

God had told the Israelites that if they followed His commands, and obeyed Him, He would bless them. Azariah, a chief priest, tells Hezekiah that God indeed blessed the people. God had blessed them with a great harvest of all things of the field.

It would have been easy for the people to keep almost all of it for themselves. That is what many people do today. They receive great blessings and then decide to keep them for their own desires. God is given a small amount (if any) of what He provided.

In this instance, the Israelites had the right attitude. They recognized that God provides all, they knew that those in the Temple required sustenance as commanded by God, they knew that daily sacrifices were required, and they wanted to show God how much they loved Him. May all of us follow their example!



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## THE CHURCH DOES NOT HAVE A MONEY PROBLEM

Douglas Hoff

In America today most churches do not have a money problem. Sure, there are plenty of small congregations that do not have a full time preacher. Some churches have full time preachers who work part time or even full time jobs so they can preach and teach the gospel. Often, the preachers' wives also work to supplement the family income. Other churches employ retired preachers who have Social Security income.

Some may think this shows churches do have a money problem. To a degree, that may be true. In general though, the church does not have a money problem, but we may be suffering from a giving problem. Look at the life of the average church member. Does he or she have a house to live in, clothes to wear, and food to eat (cf. 1 Tim. 6:8)? If we twenty-first century Americans are not careful, we may allow the deceitfulness of riches to enter our hearts (Mark 4:19), by concluding we are not rich and need "just a little bit more" (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Most American Christians today have more than enough money to take care of the basic necessities of life. One reason some congregations

struggle financially is due to the Christian's money being tied up paying for houses, cars, entertainment, luxuries, etc. Is it sinful to enjoy the fruit of our labors? No, the scriptures tell us that "the living God gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Abraham and Job were both blessed financially by God and they are counted among the faithful (James 2:23; 5:11). Being rich is not inherently bad but one's attitude toward riches will determine if money is his god. Remember, covetousness is called idolatry (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

Most churches have plenty of money. Sadly, only a very small percentage of it will ever be in the collection plate on the Lord's Day. Those who are "rich" in this present age are commanded to be "ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:18-19, NKJV). It seems the church has long suffered from a giving problem, not a money problem.

## PREACHING CAN CAUSE QUITE A STIR!

Gerald Cowan

Peter said he wanted to stir up the hearts of those he wrote to, in a positive and productive way (2 Peter 3:1). The gospel truth can in fact stir people in a negative way, no matter how careful, loving, and kind the preacher is. Some thought Paul and Silas turned their world "upside down" (Acts 17:6).

Preaching about God and certainly about the one true God will stir up atheists and idolaters. Preaching divine creation stirs up the evolutionists and materialists.

Preaching morality and absolute truth stirs up the immoral and the relativist who think in terms of social cultural viability. Preaching the authority of scripture stirs the liberal post-modern crowd who think we

have outgrown this "ancient and obsolete" Bible.

Preaching against liquor stirs up the social drinkers and drunkards. The same principle applies to other drugs, including tobacco – imagine preaching against marijuana which is well on its way to the same legal status as alcohol and tobacco. Those most heavily and hopelessly addicted raise their voices most loudly in objection to any negative mention of their mind-bending illusion-maker.

Preaching on marriage, divorce, and the home stirs the adulterer, the delinquent children, and the delinquent parents. It also stirs the homosexuals and the transgenders. Governments, courts, schools (pre-school through post-graduate schools), perse-

cute and prosecute critics of current culture for “hate crimes.”

Preaching on work stirs the lazy. Preaching against gambling may stir up the state and the nation, as well as all those who hope to get rich by gambling rather than by work. Preaching on honesty stirs the dishonest, the liar, the cheat, and the hypocrite. Preaching about proper speech and civility stirs the gossip, tale-peddler and rumor-monger, and the whole news and information industry (properly derided as “fake news” media). Preaching against the debauchery and corruption and elevation of evil in Hollyweird and the entertainment industry stirs up the “stars” who like to think they are the epitome and apex of everyone’s dreams and aspirations but, as a class, are beneath the bottom of the bottom dregs, the absolute nadir of humanity.

Even in religion, in the churches and the church – there are matters of particular concern. Preaching on modesty (common a few decades ago but hardly ever mentioned now) stirs the immodest and the attention-seeker. Preaching about attendance stirs the irregular and indifferent attenders. Preaching faithfulness stirs the unfaithful. Preaching dedication and commitment stirs the uncommitted. Preaching about giving stirs the covetous and stingy. Preaching about almost anything that limits freedom to be whatever you want to be in the present post-Christian church stirs up the post-modern post-moral, post-

scientific, post-human, post-spiritual generation who seems to think of God as the Great-Freebie-Giver who enjoys watching us enjoy ourselves and doesn’t want to restrict our freedom.

Unless the world and the church are now perfect, we still need to do a lot of stirring.

There are some common expressions that show a misunderstanding of the preacher’s intention and effort. Some think it is a compliment to tell the preacher, “You really stepped on my toes.” That often indicates that a temporary and soon-forgotten pain or discomfort has been suffered. But there is usually no change in performance or activity. They may have sore toes in the auditorium but they are able to walk as usual and with the pain having moved upward to lodge as frowns and grimaces on the face by the time they leave it.

Some think it is a compliment to say, “Our preacher preaches over our heads.” What that means is that his sermons cannot be understood and applied by his audience of ordinary people. But what good is a sermon if no one understands it? And what good is preaching what one ought to do if nobody does it, or even pretends that he intends to do it? The result would be no change and no growth, no improvement in performance and activity. The church joins the world in order to be allowed to exist in the world. That condition stirs a few – not as

many as it should, but at least a few – preachers.

No preacher is content to step on the toes or preach over the heads of people. Actually, that is a contradiction in terms. If it is hitting their toes it can't be over their heads. Maybe the two expressions should not be applied to the same sermon, or to the same person.

Preachers want to share the truth. They want the truth to be understood and applied. They want it to change the lives of those who hear it. Preachers do not want to inflict pain unnecessarily. They hope the pain will lead to a correction and cure of the problem. If the shoe hurts your foot but the shoe is right, then you should fix your foot.

Preachers want to be like Jesus, the Master preacher/teacher. There was an occasion on the road to Emmaus when He spoke to two disciples (Luke 24:25-32). He said to the disciples, *"O fools, and slow of heart to believe what the prophets spoke"* (24:25). He then carefully explained what the scripture meant (24:26-31). Later they said, *"Didn't our hearts burn within us when he spoke to us?"* (24:32).

If I step on your toes or preach over your heads, I am missing the mark. I have not found the proper range. I need to adjust my aim, because I am not hitting the target I'm aiming for. I want to hit you square in the heart with the word of God. I want to cause some holy heart burn.

When the word of God enters your heart, pricks your heart, cuts your heart, and burns your heart there's a chance you will be offended. There's a chance that you, not being a truth-seeker, will resist the truth and the truth-speaker (Acts 7:54, 57-58). In that case both the Lord and I will be deeply pained. But there's also a chance that you will be moved to accept it, obey it, adjust your life to it (Acts 2:37, John 3:20-21), and when that happens both you and I and the Lord will rejoice.

I suppose by now, if you are still reading this, you may be thinking it's just preacher talk, just a preacher trying to make you feel guilty. I remember an incident, about 50 years ago, in my first full-time "located" ministry after ten years of school and regular but part-time preaching, when a certain member of the congregation told me I was a successful preacher. He said, "You seem to think your job is to make all of us feel miserable and I'd say you are successful about 95% of the time."

That was one of the times (there's been an uncountable multitude of times) when I thought I would quit. That man went on to admonish me that, "You can catch a lot more flies with honey than with vinegar." I told him I didn't fancy myself, nor did I think God intended me to be, a fly-catcher.

Isn't there something said about being fishers of men? And isn't it

frustrating and futile to wait for and accept only the fish which jump unprompted into your boat?

He had a wise comeback for that too. He said, "You'll get more fish for the Master with permission than you will with prevention." Ok, but if I permit what the Lord doesn't permit He may throw me out along with my kettle of fish. And if He throws me out, can you persuade Him to put me back in? "I'll ask Him to have mercy on you as one of the well-intentioned but ignorant preachers I've had to tolerate," was his parting shot.

Peter said his intention was to "stir up your sincere mind" (NASB), or "stimulate you to wholesome thinking" (NIV). I like to think that is my motive and desire too. If I can make you think, honestly and sincerely, you will come to a proper understanding of the gospel of Christ. That's the only kind of stirring I want to do. If you feel I have missed it and am on the wrong path, please use the same resource for correcting me as I use for instructing (sometimes correcting) you – the word of God in the Bible. I have no artificial lure, no "bait" to dangle before you to attract you, tempt you, and catch you. If the truth of God isn't attractive to you, you may not be a fish attractive to me, or to Him.



## Remembering George Bailey

Hugh Fulford



George W. Bailey was born in Kaufman, Texas, on April 3, 1922. He was baptized into Christ in 1935 by Gayle Oler and began preaching when he was 14 years old. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, Southwestern Tech in Oklahoma, the University of New Mexico, and Abilene Christian College.

He served churches in Weatherford, OK; Albuquerque, NM; Oklahoma City, OK; Abilene, TX (where he preached for the College/University congregation for 15 years); and the Prestoncrest church in Dallas.

On a personal note, when I moved to Dallas in 1983 to preach at Skillman, George was the first preacher to come by my office to welcome me to Dallas. He no longer was the preach-

er at Prestoncrest, but was serving as one of the congregation's elders. We went to a nearby restaurant for a cup of coffee and a most enjoyable visit.

George Bailey was a man and master of the Book. His sermons were filled with scripture—dozens, scores, and perhaps sometimes a hundred scripture citations—all done perfectly from memory with never a note of any kind before him!

When J. D. Thomas selected 12 men as the great preachers of the day and published a volume of their sermons George Bailey was included (Volume 2). Two of my favorite Bailey sermons are “Can You Recommend Your Religion?” and “The Church Faces the Future with Confidence,” both of which I have preached on dozens of occasions. His sermon on “Life’s Inadequate Harbors,” based on Paul’s perilous voyage across the Mediterranean Sea (Acts 27), is an absolute masterpiece and I have outlined it, but no one can possibly preach it with the effectiveness with which George preached it.

George was the master of the epigrammatic statement (a pithy saying or remark expressing an idea in a clever and amusing way). In emphasizing the need for every Christian to be a missionary he said, “If you can’t go across in person, come across with your purse,” i.e., give so that others can go.

George conducted gospel meetings and area-wide campaigns for Christ

throughout the United States. He visited and preached in almost 100 foreign countries, including China and Russia, preaching in Moscow, Leningrad, and Rostov. In 1964 he was a guest speaker at the World’s Fair in New York City.

Between his pulpit ministries in Abilene and Dallas, he spent his full-time in evangelistic work, both in the U. S. and overseas. For several years he was a regular speaker on the Herald of Truth radio and television programs. He was a popular speaker on brotherhood lectureship programs.

My mother told of her and my father hearing him at an area-wide “Training for Service” series in Florence, Alabama, and how she sat utterly mesmerized by his preaching. One of the last times I heard him and visited with him was at Polishing the Pulpit in Sevierville, TN in 2009. We both spoke on the “Graybeards” session, and George kept the audience as well as all of us on the panel rolling with laughter at his reminiscences.

George was married to the former Ela Beth Todd for 68 years prior to her passing. They were the parents of two sons. George passed from this life on November 11, 2017 at the age of 95. He is buried in the Elliott-Hamil Garden of Memories Cemetery in Abilene, Texas.



# The Unchanging Christ

## Hebrews 1:12

### **Introduction:**

1. This text (Heb. 1:12) is part of a quotation from Psalms 102:25-27.
2. It describes the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God.
3. There is change and decay in all that we see, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8).

### **Discussion:**

- I. **Christ Is Unchanging in His Person.** "Thou art the same"
  - A. He is immutable. (2 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 7:26; 6:19).
  - B. He is Immortal. "Thy years shall not fail."
  - C. He is Invincible. "Sit...until..."
- II. **Christ is Unchanging in His Provision.** (v. 3) "When He had by himself purged our sins."
  - A. He is the victorious Savior. A complete victory over Satan, over sin, and over sin.
  - B. He is the vicarious sufferer, (Isaiah 53:5-6). All past and present sins are laid on Him.
  - C. He is the voice of supplication, (Hebrews 12:24). His blood cries out for mercy, not vengeance.
- III. **Christ Is Unchanging in His Power.** (v. 3) "Upholding all things by the word of His power."
  - A. His word is the New Covenant. (See Hebrews 8:10-12). In that covenant we find: a relationship, knowledge, and salvation.
  - B. His word tells us He will come again, (Hebrews 10:37; 9:27, 28; 10:34, 35).
  - C. He words tells us of the great city to come, (Hebrews 13:14) of endless duration.

### **Conclusion:**

Is your desire for Him who changes not to abide with you? We know the *new* soon becomes *old*. The here and now will soon be *past*. Let us place our all in Him who will never leave us or forsake us!

*-Mike Kiser*

# Mormon Polytheism

Andy Erwin

In the first of thirteen Articles of Faith, Joseph Smith declared in a very orthodox way, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”<sup>1</sup> However, as we delve deeper into Mormon beliefs, we find a very unusual and unorthodox doctrine for any religion, but especially for a religion claiming to be a restoration of true Christianity.

## HEAVENLY FATHER AND HEAVENLY MOTHER

In reality, Mormonism at its core is polytheistic. Mormon polytheism asserts that this universe consists of an infinite number of gods and goddesses, each ruling their own planet as a god-family. Mormons believe this line of father-gods and mother-gods reaches into an infinite eternity, but bear in mind that they teach each “god” had a birth and thus, a beginning. Therefore, none of their “gods” is eternal – without beginning or ending.

It so happens that the Mormon god, “Elohim,”<sup>2</sup> as they refer to him,

is the father-god of the planet Earth and he rules with his mother-god, the “Heavenly Mother.”<sup>3</sup> Mormons claim, “Though the scriptures contain only hints, statements from presidents of the church over the years indicate that human beings have a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.”<sup>4</sup> Of the unnamed Heavenly Mother:

Latter-day Saints believe that all the people of earth who lived or will live are actual spiritual offspring of God the Eternal Father (Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9). In this perspective, parenthood requires both father and mother, whether for the creation of spirits in the premortal life or of physical tabernacles on earth. A Heavenly Mother shares parenthood with the Heavenly Father. This concept leads Latter-day Saints to believe that she is like him in glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and holiness.<sup>5</sup>

Mormons teach that Jesus is the spiritual offspring of this particular father and mother god, and that the Mormon Jesus is the physical offspring of this father-god and the vir-

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Smith, *The Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from <http://lds.org/library/display/0%2C4945%2C106-1-2-1%2CFF.html>

<sup>2</sup> Stephen E. Robinson, *God the Father: Overview*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from [http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/God\\_the\\_Father](http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/God_the_Father)

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<sup>3</sup> Elaine Anderson, Cannon, *Heavenly Mother*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from [http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Heavenly\\_Mother](http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Heavenly_Mother)

<sup>4</sup> Anderson

<sup>5</sup> Anderson

gin Mary. Writing for the church-sanctioned *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Gerald Hansen Jr., writes:

Ancient and modern scriptures use the title **Only Begotten** to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints recognize Jesus as literally the **Only Begotten Son** of God the Father in the flesh (John 3:16; Doctrines and Covenants 93:11; Moses 6:52). This title signifies that Jesus' physical body was the offspring of a mortal mother and of the eternal Father (Luke 1:35, 1 Nephi 11:18). It is LDS doctrine that Jesus Christ is the child of Mary and God the Father, 'not in violation of natural law but in accordance with a higher manifestation thereof' (JC, p. 81)...Christ inherited the ability to die from his mortal mother and the power to resurrect himself from his immortal Father. Dying was for him a voluntary, deliberate act for mankind, made possible only because he was the **Only Begotten of the Father** (Doctrines and Covenants 20:18-26).<sup>6</sup>

If this doctrine is true, it would require that the Mormon "Elohim" leave his "Heavenly Mother" and celestial bride on their celestial residence nearest the planet "Kolob"<sup>7</sup> to

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<sup>6</sup> Gerald Hansen, Jr. *Jesus Christ: Only Begotten in the Flesh*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from [http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Jesus\\_Christ#Firstborn\\_in\\_the\\_Spirit](http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Jesus_Christ#Firstborn_in_the_Spirit)

<sup>7</sup> Kolob means "the first creation." It is the name of the planet "nearest to the celestial, or

come to the planet Earth and have an extra-marital sexual intercourse with Mary, thus causing her also to commit adultery against her espoused husband Joseph. Thus, the Mormon Jesus would have been the illegitimate child of a two-fold adulterous affair. We feel it is necessary to point out such things hoping to prove this doctrine is anti-biblical, anti-God, and anti-Christ.

### A GOD OF FLESH AND BONE

Mormons believe that "Elohim" is able to have such tangible relationships because their god is not purely spirit, as is the God of the Bible (John 4:24). Joseph Smith taught, "God is a glorified and perfected man, a personage of flesh and bones. Inside his tangible body is an eternal spirit."<sup>8</sup>

Mormons have "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man" (Romans 1:23). By changing the God of the Bible from the purely spirit, self-existing Creator that He is, into a physical, tangible created man, Mormons have, "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). Essentially,

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the residence of God." It is "first in government, the last pertaining to the measurement of time. . . . One day in Kolob is equal to a thousand years according to the measurement of this earth." (Book of Abraham, pp. 34-35; Abra. 3:3-9.) (Mormon Doctrine, p.428). In Utah, Kolob National Park has been named after this supposed planet.

<sup>8</sup> Doctrines and Covenants 130:22.

Mormons have denied the God of the Bible to create a lesser, inferior god of their own.

Mormons believe that the gods now residing throughout the universe were once mortal men on other planets who, through obedience to the commands of the gods of that planet, attained exaltation to godhood. Such is Mormon doctrine for how their "god" became a god. Moreover, they believe that we human beings have the potential of attaining the same measure of godhood as well, and that someday we can reign over a planet of our own with our celestial bride, which would have been sealed with us by eternal matrimony in this life.

Having once been a mortal being, born on a foreign planet, they believe that their god was once conceived of a father-god and mother-god just as they believe mortal men have been conceived by him and his god-wife. Joseph Smith wrote:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . He was once a man like us; yea that God himself, the Father

dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did...<sup>9</sup>

Brigham Young taught, "[T]hat God the Father was once a man on another planet who 'passed the ordeal we are now passing through...'"<sup>10</sup> While on this unidentified planet, the Mormon father-god met his mother-god. Together they produced spirit children.

At this point, it seems fair and reasonable to ask the question of how a man-like father-god and mother-god created "spirit children." Does it not follow that if the father and mother gods were personages of flesh and bones as Joseph Smith taught, this union would have produced after its kind? How could a union of two beings comprised of flesh and bones produce spirit children?

Mormon "Apostle" Bruce McConkie once affirmed:

An exalted and glorified man of holiness could not be a Father unless a woman of like glory, perfection, and holiness was associated with him as a Mother. The begetting of children makes a man a father and a woman a mother whether we are dealing

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1976), p.321.

<sup>10</sup> Brigham Young, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), p.29.

with man in his mortal or immortal state.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the Mormon gods did not become father and mother until they procreated. Their god is therefore not an everlasting father. Neither is he a creator of man, but a procreator, no different than a human male. Mormons therefore believe that all men and women on planet Earth are the physical offspring of their father and mother god.

James Talmage wrote, "God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title 'Elohim,' is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the spirits of the human race."<sup>12</sup>

Again, it is asserted that their god is the literal father of the spirits of the human race through procreation. For Mormons, flesh and bone creatures begat spiritual beings, of which Jesus is said to have been the first.

## CREATION OF EARTH

When the time came to create planet Earth, Joseph Smith wrote, "...the head of the gods called a council of the gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and (the) people in it."<sup>13</sup>

It was at this council that Lucifer rebelled against "Elohim's" decision

to use Jesus as the redeemer of the world. Lucifer influenced a third of the hosts of heaven to rebel with him and they warred against Adam (aka Michael the archangel according to Mormon doctrine) and his forces.

Lucifer was defeated. He and his followers were cursed to live on this planet as demons or evil spirits, being forever deprived of human bodies and the possibility of deification. The ones who sided with Jesus are born into this world in "white and delightful" skin. The ones who remained neutral during the war are born into this world with black skin as a curse against them. Though not readily admitted by Mormons, this doctrine contributed to the racism which forbade black priests in the Mormon Church until 1978. Let us now observe the official (but lengthy) Mormon explanation of these supposed events.<sup>14</sup>

## ADAM AND EVE

Once the "war in heaven" ended and "Elohim" proceeded with his creation, he placed Adam and Even in the Garden to serve as the father and mother of all mortals. Moreover, "In this physical-spiritual state in Eden, Adam was called the 'first man' (Moses 1:34) and given responsibility to dress the garden and 'open the way of the world' (*The Prophet Joseph*

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1991), p. 516.

<sup>12</sup> James Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake: Deseret Book Company, 1984), p. 421.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Smith, p. 349.

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<sup>14</sup> Brent L. Top, War in Heaven, Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from [http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/War\\_in\\_Heaven](http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/War_in_Heaven)

Smith, p. 12).<sup>15</sup> However, as long as Adam and Eve remained in the Garden, according to Mormon doctrine, they could not procreate, and therefore “Elohim’s” plan could not be enacted.

Accordingly, “In order to obey the command of God to multiply and people the earth, Adam and Eve transgressed the law. Their deliberate action resulted in their fall, and they were expelled from the garden. ‘Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy’ (2 Nephi 2:25). Thus, their action precipitated, as God had planned, the mortal phase of the Plan of Salvation.”<sup>16</sup>

Adam and Eve are viewed as noble martyrs in Mormon doctrine because they *obediently chose to sin* against the Mormon god. Because he obeyed their god by sinning, Adam is believed to be second only to Jesus insofar as human beings can be exalted.<sup>17</sup>

Today, the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* wishes to rewrite the Adam-God doctrine of Brigham Young. However, Mormon “Apostle” Bruce R. McConkie, stated in a letter to Mr. Eugene England (dated February 19, 1981) that “Young and others of the early Brethren” did in fact hold to the

view that Adam was their “Elohim.”<sup>18</sup> Not only did he admit such was the case, but also referred to Mormons now believing this doctrine as “cultists.”

Such disagreements over matters of doctrine are typical in most churches. However, in the Mormon Church, the ones disagreeing are claimed to be inspired “Prophets” and “Apostles” of God. Thus, one man supposedly led by the Holy Spirit called another man’s doctrine – supposedly led by the Holy Spirit – “cultist.” If Brigham Young was speaking the inspired word of God when promulgating the Adam-God doctrine, why did the Holy Spirit inspire McConkie to call it “cultist?” Are they not advocating that the Holy Spirit inspires “cultist” doctrine?

#### THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PROGRESSION

For one to understand the Mormon doctrine of their gods, one must also understand the Mormon doctrine of “eternal progression.” As we have observed, Mormons believe, “[A] plurality of gods exist . . . there is an infinite number of holy personages, drawn from worlds without number, who have passed on to exaltation and are thus gods.”<sup>19</sup> In the likeness of Adam, Mormons believe that these

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur A. Bailey, *Adam: LDS Sources*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Adam>

<sup>16</sup> Bailey

<sup>17</sup> Bailey

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<sup>18</sup> Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1982), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, (Salt Lake: Bookcraft, 1991), 576-577.

inhabitants on these innumerable planets are now “progressing, as are human beings on this earth, according to eternal principles towards a God-like life.”<sup>20</sup>

Concerning the inhabitants of Earth, Mormons believe, “Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so that undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God.”<sup>21</sup>

Stephen C. Walker expressed this doctrine thusly, “As children of God, men and women have infinite potential (see 2 Nephi 2:20; Heb. 12:9). As a result of their divine heritage, all people carry the inherent capacity and the predisposition to become as their heavenly parents.”<sup>22</sup>

## THE MORMON DOCTRINE OF EXALTATION

The result of Mormonism’s eternal progression is the doctrine of “exalta-

tion.” Margaret McConkie Pope defines the doctrine of exaltation thusly:

To Latter-day Saints, exaltation is a state that a person can attain in becoming like God—salvation in the ultimate sense (Doctrines and Covenants 132:17). Latter-day Saints believe that all mankind (except the sons of perdition) will receive varying degrees of glory in the afterlife. Exaltation is the greatest of all the gifts and attainments possible. It is available only in the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom and is reserved for members of the Church of the Firstborn. This exalted status, called eternal life, is available to be received by a man and wife. It means not only living in God’s presence, but receiving power to do as God does, including the power to bear children after the resurrection (*The Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 300-301; Doctrines and Covenants 132:19). Blessings and privileges of exaltation require unwavering faith, repentance, and complete obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Savior stated the following conditions: ‘Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation and continuation of the lives, and few there be that find it, because ye receive me not in the world neither do ye know me’ (Doctrines and Covenants 132:22). All Church ordinances lead to exaltation, and the essential crowning ordinances are the Endowment and the

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<sup>20</sup> Hollis R. Johnson, *Worlds*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from: <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Worlds>

<sup>21</sup> Heber J. Grant, Anthony W. Ivins, Charles W. Nibley, *Doctrinal Expositions of the First Presidency*. From the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*

<sup>22</sup> Stephen C. Walker, *Mankind*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Mankind>

eternal marriage covenant of the temple (Doctrines and Covenants 131:1-4, 132).<sup>23</sup>

#### IN SUMMARY

The Mormon doctrine of gods opposes the biblical doctrine of God in the following ways:

- 1.) It denies that God is an eternal, timeless being, without beginning or ending, from everlasting to everlasting.
- 2.) It turns God into a created being, spawned by other gods who pre-existed Him.
- 3.) It teaches that God had to be subject to a greater law than His own, and through obedience to this law, He became deity. Therefore, moral law would not emanate from God, but from the gods who pre-dated Him.
- 4.) It denies the immutable nature of God, claiming that He has changed from a man, as we are, into a god.
- 5.) It changes the nature of God from a pure spirit to flesh and bone.
- 6.) It makes God dependent on another god – a Heavenly Mother, as well as His god parents.
- 7.) It teaches that an infinite number of gods and goddesses co-inhabit an infinite number of planets.
- 8.) It teaches that God did not create man, but procreated man with the Heavenly Mother.
- 9.) It denies that God's throne is in heaven, but somewhere near the planet Kobol.
- 10.) It teaches that God can have sexual relations with a mother-god and an earthly woman.
- 11.) It renders God to have committed adultery against the mother-god with Mary.
- 12.) It teaches that two human-like gods can produce billions of spirit children, including Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- 13.) It therefore denies that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.
- 14.) Some, including Brigham Young, have taught that Adam was the Mormon god.
- 15.) It teaches that God can be honored and obeyed by sinning against Him.
- 16.) It teaches that mortal men can someday become a god, with all the attributes and power He possesses, literally perfect as God is perfect.
- 17.) It teaches that a man and a woman, who have achieved godhood, can someday procreate other beings on another planet.
- 18.) It teaches that the beings which man and woman procreate can al-

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<sup>23</sup> Margaret McConkie Pope, *Exaltation*. Retrieved on February 21, 2011 from the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, from <http://eom.byu.edu/index.php/Exaltation>

so become gods – equal to God – on a planet of their own.

### IN CONCLUSION

Members of the Lord's church and people in general should be aware of the depths of this evil heresy. Not one aspect of Mormon polytheism is true. It is utterly and entirely false from beginning to end.

If it were not for the use of biblical names, and a few wrongfully applied Bible references, one would not recognize any correlation whatsoever to the Bible. If one would take this story and simply change the names, you have a completely pagan mythology.

However, by using Bible names and references – although dreadfully misinterpreted – Mormons have succeeded in deceiving millions with their fables. While they continue to lead souls away from the God of the

Bible, we must be mindful to work that much harder to bring souls back to the God of the Bible. Only by truly knowing “God is,” and who God is, can we successfully help ourselves and others answer the threat of the Mormon doctrine of gods.



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# Do Men Become Gods?

Jackson Erwin

One of the more defining doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is that of deification. What does this doctrine teach? One Mormon apologist wrote:

Latter-day Saints see all people as children of God in a full and complete sense; they consider every person divine in origin, nature, and potential. Each has an eternal core and is "a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents." Each possesses seeds of divinity and must choose whether to live in harmony or tension with that divinity. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may "progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny." Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father's.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of deification is the belief that God was once a man who also was in subjection to another god. He lived faithfully under the laws of that god to the point that He Himself obtained divinity. Likewise, according to Mormonism we are of the same species as God and will, therefore,

become gods ourselves and reign over our own planets if we are faithful to Him.

## John 10

This is a doctrine which is completely foreign to biblical teaching. However, LDS members will warp both Scripture and the writings of early Christians in an attempt to prove their point. One such is found in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel.

The chapter begins with Christ teaching the foundational truth that He is the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:1-21). Then, as He was walking in the temple at the time of the Feast of Dedication, the Jews came to Him and asked, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly" (NASB). Christ then returned to His previous lesson on the Shepherd and the sheep. He demonstrated the Jew's rejection of Him as the Messiah. He then concluded His argument with a statement declaring His Deity, saying, "I and the Father are one," thus causing the Jews to pick up stones to execute Him.

When the Lord asked why they wished to kill Him, their answer was, "...for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." It was this reply that led Jesus to give a statement that has been a "proof-text" for Mormon missionaries

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<sup>1</sup> "Becoming Like God," *Gospel Topics* on LDS.org (25 February 2014)

for almost 200 years. "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (vs. 34-36).

The passage cited by Jesus comes from Psalm 82, which provides for us the Christ's intention for the phrase, "You are gods." This Psalm is the key to understanding John 10:34. While Mormons twist Psalm 82 to try and support deification, such an interpretation cannot be logically or hermeneutically held.

The Jews knew what Christ meant when He used this reference. He said, it was, "written in your Law." This came from the book the Jews held as being inspired by God. They found it authoritative and the foundation of spiritual truth. They understood the Psalm and what it meant and we must interpret John 10:34 in light of Psalm 82.

### Psalm 82

The Psalm of Asaph begins with the statement, "God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment..." (v.1) Who are these "gods"? As the text explains, they are the human, non-divine, judges of Israel. This is proven by Asaph's questions to these gods, "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Vindicate the weak and

needy; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked."

The Psalmist is writing of unjust judges who were standing in the place of God, as they were supposed to be ruling over Israel in the light of God's word and righteousness. However, they instead were cruel and covetous. They forsook the righteous decree of God and followed after their own desires. Remember, according to Mormons, these are supposed to be the faithful children of God who have ascended to a Divine godhood!

The verse Christ explicitly quotes is verse 6, which reads, "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.'" Who were the gods? Again, they were the judges of Israel, standing in the place of God. Just as Yahweh delivered justice and commandments to Israel, so also were these judges to make sure that such justice was being delivered. This language is not exclusive to Psalm 82.

### A Figure of Speech

The Lord spoke in the same way about Moses in Exodus 4:16, saying, "Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him." He says to Moses again in Exodus 7:1, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet." Therefore, it is not unknown for God to speak of those who are fulfilling His will as being "God" in the sense that they are

standing for God by His own authority.

However, a death stroke to the Mormon position of these being actual, fully transformed and divine beings comes in Psalm 82:7: "Nevertheless you will die like men and fall like any one of the princes." These weren't immortal, god-like beings who were ruling over their own planets in eternity. Rather, the truth is completely brought out that these are men who were living in wickedness and who would be destroyed because of their abuse of their God-given office. God doesn't die like a man because He is eternal. He is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). Because of His eternal nature, God does not face the danger of death or destruction.

From Isaiah 43:10-11, we learn that God declares the impossibility of men becoming gods by saying, "...Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me."

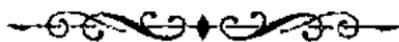
What is Christ meaning, then, when He utilizes this text to support His claim of Messiahship and Deity? He uses it to show that, if the men who were judges over Israel were called "gods" for declaring the word of God and executing His will, why then would it be blasphemy for Him to declare Himself the Son of God when doing the same thing? Christ was standing for the truth of God's word (John 5:19-20; 14:10). He never committed iniquity (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet.

2:22; 1 John 3:5) and always acted on behalf of the righteousness of God (Jn. 16:8; Rom. 10:4).

The "gospel" of Mormonism is not the gospel of Christ. It is not Christianity and it is certainly not a restoration of the first century church. The church of Christ can be found when one compares its teachings and organization with the true gospel of Christ (Jn. 8:31).

Mormonism teaches a different Christ, a different God, a different gospel, a different church founder, and a different authority than that found in Sacred Writ. Because of this, we cannot condone or extend the hand of fellowship. As it is written, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we preached to you, he is to be accursed" (Gal. 1:8).

Mormons must turn with a sincere and pure devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Mormons must turn to the faith that was "once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3). Mormons must turn to the church that we read of in the New Testament. They must lay aside all of the traditions and commandments of their fraudulent founders. Let them become dedicated to Christ and to the church which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).



# SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Ernest Underwood

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15)

Some verses in the Bible are simply amazing in the many lessons which they contain. Ephesians 4:15 is one of these verses. This passage speaks about truth -- the truth which makes one free from sin. Let us notice some of the lessons contained therein.

## THE MESSAGE OF TRUTH

Biblical truth, in order to be effective in the lives of men, must be spoken or proclaimed. Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Why the gospel? We must preach the gospel because the gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). It is by this truth that the soul is purified. Peter stated, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." (I Peter 1:22). Paul affirmed that those in Rome were "made free from sin" by their obedience to the doctrine (Romans 6:17-18).

A second thought is that truth must be spoken. Each week the general public is subjected to a variety of religious discourses. As one compares many of these religious speeches with the Bible he learns that much of that which is being taught is not truth, but

simply that which is formed in the doctrines and feelings of men.

We also learn of our individual responsibility to teach truth. Paul was writing to the saints at Ephesus, not just to preachers, elders, or other leading brethren. To these saints he gave the commandment to "speak the truth..." The question is also asked in another place, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). May each of us realize and fulfill our responsibility to speak the truth.

## THE MANNER OF TRUTH

The manner in which the truth is to be spoken is "in love." This word love invokes some strange thoughts to many people. Some seem to think that love means being willing to compromise with error and those who teach it. Others view love as a sentimental, giddy, emotional feeling about God, the cross, sin, and salvation. None of these convey the concept of true biblical love.

True biblical love expresses a genuine concern for others. It causes one to desire the highest good even for an enemy -- that highest good being the salvation of the soul. It involves telling one the truth when the risk is great that such action will bring about alienation of friends.

Jesus angered the scribes and Pharisees when he told them the truth about themselves and about God's attitude toward them in their present condition. Yet, this same Jesus looked upon them with love and lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matthew 23:37).

If we speak the truth in love we will call upon men to obey. To fail to tell men the truth is to fail to call them to obedience to that truth. To allow them to believe that they are saved short of that full obedience is nothing short of spiritual homicide. Men who would do such, although claiming to love the souls of their hearers, actually express a hateful contempt for them. A casual reading of Matthew 15:8-14 and the entire second chapter of 2 Peter will serve as proof for this statement.

### THE MOTIVE OF TRUTH

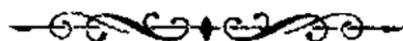
The proper motive of spiritual truth and those who proclaim it is that the recipient of that truth "may grow up in all things...even Christ." Motives which are simply to increase the numbers, the contribution, or the prestige of the proclaimer are impure and shameful motives. It is a sad but true fact that some teach truth so that they may manipulate those to whom they

preach. They teach truth in order to create a situation of what is commonly known as "preacher-itus" among their followers.

True Christians teach the truth so that souls may be saved. These do not first survey the racial, economic, or social standing of the ones to be taught before deciding if they are worthy. True children of God see the lost. They recognize that anyone who has not obeyed the gospel is lost, and they want to give them the opportunity to be saved. For this reason they seek the lost. They are willing to sacrifice time and money in an effort to search out and tell the saving gospel to the lost. Having found the lost, they save them by the preaching of the gospel.

Unfortunately, many who have been sought out and had the gospel preached to them turn a deaf ear to it and remain in their lost condition. However, the faithful saint will continue to see, seek, and save the lost as he has opportunity and ability.

There are other lessons which can be gleaned from our text, but these should suffice to make us appreciate the value of taking a text and studying it for our own benefit. May each of us have the zeal to do so.



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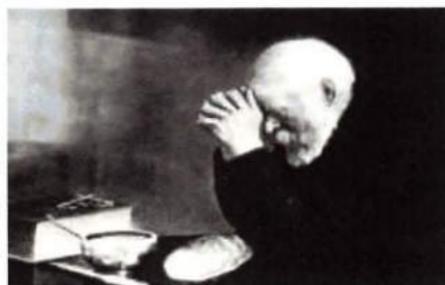
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# Gospel Gleaner

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



## Prayer and Providence

*Reminding Believers of the Principles of Prayer*

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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

Vol. 31 ♦ No. 5

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*Montgomery, Alabama*

## Inside this Issue

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be encouraging brethren with regard to prayer. The articles are timely and touching. Our prayer is that this issue will lead to more fervent and meaningful prayers among our readers.

I have a couple of prayer requests. One of our writers in this issue, Robert Waggoner, recently suffered a stroke, but is improving. Also, Ruby Bradd is the 3 year old daughter of one of our writers, Stephen Bradd and Ranea Bradd. She has recently been diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing treatments. Please remember these precious souls in your prayers.

You will also find in this issue a timely article on the problem of plagiarism among preachers. Steve Higginbotham does a fine job encouraging brethren to do their due diligence in their respective ministries and works for the Lord.

Raymond Elliott has also provided an article addressing the promise of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. Perhaps you know of someone confused by the teachings of the Charismatic Movement who will benefit from this study.

Hugh Fulford has also written an article remembering the great preacher V.P. Black. Many of brother Black's books on stewardship are still available. His sermon books can be found in used bookstores. Anytime you have an opportunity to read one of his books, you will not be wasting your time.

# The Basics of Prayer

Robert Waggoner

The prayer life of Jesus must have been impressive to his closest disciples. Many times he prayed alone and in private places (Matthew 14:33; 26:36, 39, 42, 44; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 14:32; 35, 39; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; 22:32, 41, 44). At other times his disciples would have heard him praying.

On one occasion, "Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples'" (Lk. 11:1).

Jesus responded by giving them a short model prayer. "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." (Luke 11:2-4; see also Matthew 6:9-13).

This prayer has four specific parts. First, it is addressed to the Father. Second, it gives reverence to the name of God. Third, it makes four requests, namely, that the kingdom come, that we have daily food, that our sins be forgiven, and that we be not led into temptation.

The request that the kingdom would come has already been fulfilled. We should now pray that the

kingdom spread. The request that our sins be forgiven requires that we be willing to forgive others who have sinned against us (Luke 3:4; Matthew 6:14-15).

Immediately following Luke's account of this model prayer, Jesus illustrated it, that just as a friend will give to someone who asks for bread, even though it is at an inconvenient time, so also God will give to those who ask him. Therefore, he exhorted, "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:9-10).

Jesus promised his disciples that "whatever you ask in my name, this I will do" (John 14:13-14; see also John 15:7, 16). In order to receive what is requested, you must believe that you will receive it (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; James 1:5-7). "Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him" (1 John 3:22). "For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12).

Jesus taught that people ought to be persistent in prayer. He told a

parable about a widow who wanted justice against her adversary. She pleaded with a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. Although he refused at first, yet because the widow kept pleading, he relented lest the widow "beat me down by her continual coming." Jesus said that unlike the human judge, God "will give justice" speedily (Luke 18:1-8).

Paul admonished that we "be constant in prayer" (Romans 12:12) and that we "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17, see also Ephesians 1:16; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Colossians 1:9).

Anna was known for "fasting and prayer night and day" (Luke 2:37). Cornelius was a devout Gentile who "prayed continually to God" (Acts 10:2).

Jesus also taught that people should pray humbly, like the tax collector, who said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," and not like the proud Pharisee, who said, "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." Jesus said that it was the tax collector, not the Pharisee, that went down to his house justified (Luke 18:9-14).

When giving his sermon on a mountain, Jesus said that "when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the

street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Matthew 6:5-7).

Jesus blessed the food when he fed the five thousand (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; John 6:11), when he fed the four thousand (Matthew 15:36; Mark 8:7), and when he instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17, 19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25). On two other occasions, Jesus thanked God in his prayers (Matthew 11:25-26; Luke 10:21, and John 11:41-42). We are to be thankful in our prayer lives (Ephesians 1:16; Colossians 1:3, 12; 4:2; 2 Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:2).

Jesus prayed for children (Matthew 19:13). He exhorted his disciples to pray for "those who abuse you" (Luke 6:28). On the cross, Jesus prayed for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, 46). He prayed that Peter's "faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32). He admonished his disciples to pray for laborers to work in the harvesting of souls (Matthew 9:37-38). He prayed that his disciples might be united "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). In the

Garden, he prayed for himself, "Father, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" (Matthew 26:39, 42, 33; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; Hebrews 5:7).

Jesus' model prayer, his teachings about prayer, and his own prayer life must surely have influenced the prayer lives of his disciples. After Jesus' ascension into heaven, his disciples stayed in Jerusalem, "devoting themselves to prayer" (Act 1:14). The disciples prayed that the Lord would show them who should replace Judas (Acts 1:24). After the church was established on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples devoted themselves not only to the apostles doctrine, fellowship, and breaking of bread, but also to prayers (Acts 2:42).

When the apostles Peter and John were arrested and placed in custody by the Sanhedrin counsel, the council charged them not to preach in the name of Jesus. But when they were released to their friends, they prayed and then continued to speak the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

When the Jerusalem church was unsettled because certain Hellenistic widows were neglected, the apostles determined to select men to serve their needs, but resolved to devote themselves "to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4, 6).

As Stephen was being stoned to death, "he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And falling to his

knees he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'" (Acts 7:59-60).

When Phillip went to a Samaritan city and preached the gospel, the apostles Peter and John "came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15).

At Joppa, Peter "knelt down and prayed" before raising Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:40).

When the servants of Cornelius arrived at Joppa to request that Peter come to Caesarea to tell Cornelius about the gospel, Peter had been praying (Acts 10:9, 30-31).

After James was killed by Herod, "Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church" (Acts 12:5).

After Paul's conversion, he was in "Jerusalem and was praying in the temple" when the Lord told him to leave because the people would not accept his testimony (Acts 22:17).

When Paul and Barnabas were returning on their first missionary journey, they had elders appointed in every church, "with prayer and fasting" (Acts 14:23).

Since there was no synagogue at Philippi, Paul and others went outside the city to the riverside on the Sabbath day where they supposed was a place of prayer. There, they spoke to the women. Lydia and her household

heard and were baptized (Acts 16:13-15).

As Paul concluded his third missionary journey, he spoke with the elders of the church at Ephesus. Afterward, "he knelt down and prayed with them all" (Acts 20:36).

While Paul and company waited for a ship to be unloaded at Tyre, before leaving, they met with the church and "kneeling down on the beach, we prayed" (Acts 21:5).

When Paul, Luke, and others were on a ship during a stormy voyage to Rome, the crew "let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come" (Acts 27:29). When day was about to come, Paul urged them to eat. Taking "bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat" (Acts 27:34-35). Arriving safely on the island of Malta, Paul visited the father of Publius who lay sick with fever and dysentery. He "prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him" (Acts 28:8).

In addition, the apostle Paul informed others that he was praying for them – not for their natural, physical, or material well-being, but for their faith and spiritual well-being. He informed the Romans that he prayed for all Israel to be saved (Romans 10:1; 11:26). He prayed that the Corinthians would do no wrong and that they would be restored (2 Corinthians 13:7-9). He also requested that the Corinthians "help us by

prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many" (2 Corinthians 1:11).

To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Ephesians 1:16-21).

To the Philippians, he wrote, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

To the Colossians, he wrote, “we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light” (Colossians 1:9-12).

To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote that “we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith” (1 Thessalonians 3:10). He also wrote that “We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

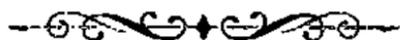
To Philemon, Paul wrote that “I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ” (Philemon 1:6). He also requested that the Colossians pray that he would have an open door for declaring the mystery of Christ while he was in prison (Colossians 4:3).

Regarding prayers for the sick, James wrote, “Is anyone among you

sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15).

Your prayers can be powerful. “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit” (James 5:16-18).

Although Jesus and others did pray occasionally about individual blessings during this earthly life, their emphasis in prayer was not primarily upon earthly needs but upon spiritual values. John put the emphasis well when he wrote to Gaius, saying, “I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul” (3 John 1:2). Should that not also be the emphasis in our prayers?



# The Power of Prayer

Tom McLemore

It was James who wrote, "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects" (James 5:16b). From this statement, we become aware that prayer's power is not unconditional. The epistle of James is filled with inspired teaching regarding the conditions under which this principle proves true.

In order that we might understand its power and learn to pray with more power, study with me what James has to say concerning prayer in his epistle. Open your New Testament and read all of James's words on this vital matter. We will proceed by asking James some fundamental questions regarding prayer.

## What Is Prayer?

For one thing, prayer is *asking* (James 1:5, 6; 4:2, 3). Prayer is also *blessing God*, that is, giving thanks or praising God for his blessings (James 3:9; cf. Nehemiah 9:5b, 6; 1 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 1:3).

To pray, says James, is to *draw near to God*, while humbling one's self before the Lord (James 4:8, 10; cf. Hebrews 4:16; 10:22). Sometimes, prayer involves cries that we utter to the Lord (James 5:4b; cf. Luke 18:1-8).

## Why Should We Pray?

James teaches that one reason why we should pray is *God's merciful and*

*generous nature* (James 1:5b, 17; 5:11). God is a God who listens and hears. Our cries reach his ears (James 5:4), the ears of the Lord of hosts.

Another reason why we should pray is that prayer is said to possess *great power in its effects* (James 5:16b). When we understand the nature of God, the One to whom we pray, we can see wherein the great power of prayer lies. He is merciful and generous, and he is also the Almighty, the Lord of hosts!

## What Are Some Causes of Failure in Prayer?

Sometimes failure is due to a *lack of faith* (James 1:6-8; cf. 5:15—the prayer of *faith* saves the sick). Perhaps the first order of prayer for us might be, "Increase our faith," or "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Luke 17: Mark 9:24). Since faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), God will increase and help our faith when we *open the Scriptures* and *listen to* and *obey* the word of the God to whom we pray!

It also may be *worldliness* that hinders our prayers (James. 4:1-5). It is hardly possible for our prayers to have much power if we live as *enemies* of the One to whom we pray! Our need is to cleanse ourselves in heart and life from worldly things (James 4:6-10).

## What Are Some Things for Which to Pray?

James tells us that we should pray for *wisdom* (James 1:5). James 3:13-18 gives a description of the wisdom that comes from above. We should pray for *grace* (James 4:6). In this context, grace is God's generous, active, effective help beyond what we deserve or can rightly expect. It is a conquering grace, manifested in victory over worldliness, evil, and the evil one. It was by means of grace in this sense that Paul accomplished what he did (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 4:7).

## What Are Some Occasions on Which to Pray?

From James 5:13-18 we learn when we ought to pray. James urges us to pray *when we are suffering*. We may and ought to pray *when people are sick*. Of course, the specific procedure James describes applied to the time when elders were miraculously endowed by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Still, the prayer of faith heals the sick today, but God now uses *means* rather than *miracle*. We may and ought to pray *when sin is confessed*. And, we must pray *when blessed by God* (James 3:9; cf. 1:17). When God has blessed us, it is always appropriate to bless (thank/praise) God!

## Whose Prayer Has Great Power in Its Effects?

As we noted at the beginning of our study, James writes that it is the

prayer of the *righteous* person that has great power in its effects (James 5:16b). Does James refer here to some elite type of person or some superhuman individual? NO! Elijah, who fervently prayed with power, in some features was extraordinary. Yet, he still was *an ordinary man* with respect to human nature (James 5:17). Elijah possessed the same natural limitations and the same human weaknesses that we possess.

Who then is the righteous person James has in mind? The righteous person is *the child of God*, begotten again by means of the word of truth (James 1:18), the one *whom God has chosen*, rich in faith and an heir of the kingdom (James 2:5), the one who *controls one's self*, who *works God's righteousness* (James 1:19, 20), the one who *stands the test and loves God* (James 1:12), and the one who *does the word of God*, rather than just hearing it (James 1:25).

The righteous person is the one who *practices pure religion*, which includes bridling the tongue (James 1:26, 27), the one who *lives by the law of the kingdom* (love one's neighbor as one's self) rather than showing partiality (James 2:8, 9), the one whose *faith works* (James 2:14-17), and the one who is *peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, and a peacemaker* (James 3:17, 18).

The righteous person to whom James refers is *the friend of God* (as Abraham) rather than the friend of the

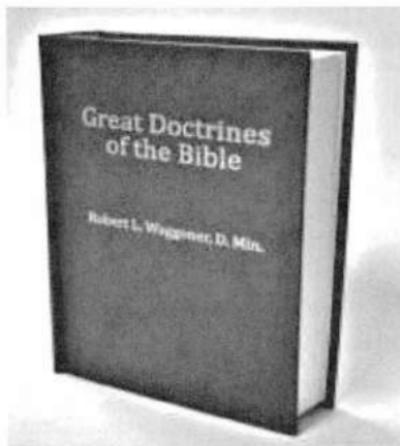
world (James 4:4; cf. 2:23), the one who is *humble* (James 4:6, 10), and the one who is *righteous in conduct* (James 5:6; cf. 1 John 2:2, 29). If our praying seems to lack power, we would do well to examine ourselves to see how closely we fit James's description of the righteous person.

### **Must Prayer Be Consistent with Speech and Life (and Vice Versa)?**

James laments that the same mouth sometimes utters prayer to God and curses a human being, that is, one who is in the similitude of God (James 3:8-12). He emphasizes that it ought not to be this way! It is *unnatural*. (James' illustrations in James 3:11, 12 are examples of an unnatural inconsistency). There must be consistency between *prayer* and *life* (James 4:15). Too often, we do not pray, "Thy will be done," because we are not proceeding on the basis of God's will in life. And, it is more likely that our lives will be *lived* in light of God's will if we are continually *praying* for his will to be done.

Let us pray and live according to the will of God. Let us live by the prayer we ought to pray. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10). In the garden, Jesus prayed, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39, 42 and parallels). All prayer must be uttered mindful of the will of God (1 John. 5:14). Let us pray as Jesus taught and determine to live consistent with our prayer.

Prayer indeed possesses power subject to certain conditions, and James provides much insight into the matter of praying with power. It is hoped that through applying what he teaches us to our own praying, we may experience more fully *the power of prayer*.



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# The Necessity of Prayer

Ron Thomas

The necessity of prayer in a Christian's life is so important that one might think it goes without saying. Yet, it can't "go without saying" because so many have failed to appreciate the value of prayer. Even for some who do value it and value it much, their prayer life is not as it should be because they are too distracted or, strangely, they have convinced themselves of its value but live a life that does not reflect that value!

The necessity of prayer in the life of a Christian corresponds to the hymn, "I need thee every hour." Think about some of the lines in the hymn: "No tender voice like thine can peace afford," "Temptations lose their power when thou art nigh," "come quickly and abide or life is vain."

Sentiments like these express the soul's struggle with life's problems. The thrust of this hymn is in relation to a Christian's dependence on Him who is the Creator and One who can "exodus us" from this world of despair.

In a religious world like ours, including the secular religions, people pray fervently. To what do they pray? Buddhism speaks of the importance of prayer associated with rituals; secularists say there has to be more to life than what presents itself to us, but they hardly want to recognize Christianity as being the solution to spiritual

and moral ailments, so they offer their "thoughts and prayers;" atheists and agnostics simply speak into the air as if they are speaking to some being they don't believe exists. It's a marvel, really.

In the life of a Christian, the necessity of prayer is connected to one's devotion to the Lord, determination to stay the course, and dependence on Him who is Deity, that is, God over all.

## Devotion

The necessity of prayer in the life of a child of God is in relation to *devotion*. In Acts 1, the Lord Jesus ascended into the heavenly realm, leaving instructions to His eleven apostles about their necessary wait in Jerusalem. While there, the scripture reads, "These all with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:14, ASV). The New American Standard Bible reads, "continually devoting themselves" in place of the American Standard Version's "continued stedfastly." Prayer is deeply associated with one's devotion to the Lord.

Some people, however, have approached prayer in a way similar to how some approach being a Christian. By that I mean, one will speak favorably about a person, "He has been

baptized!" but fail to appreciate and understand that baptism is the culmination of conversion, a contrite heart no longer doing something for the sake of doing, but thinking and living in accordance with a righteousness not one's own. The expression, evidently, is supposed to make all the difference. This morphs into "Let's teach him how to lead in public prayer."

When it comes to prayer, one's prayer is to be a reflection of a person's conversion to the Lord, one redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, "knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Prayer is a reflection of one's gratitude, an appeal to the Lord to hear the supplications of the heart that knows its own bitterness (cf. Prov. 14:10). This is a life of devotion.

Baptism without conversion is as meaningless as prayer without devotion. "He that is of God heareth the words of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47). Prayer without understanding and devotion to Him to whom all prayers ascend are like words floating in the air with a desire to land on something somewhere, hoping it will be a place that is agreeable. Because those words get tired floating about (if you will), they land nowhere. "He that turneth away his

ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).

When saints are devoted to the Lord, when they continue steadfastly in prayer, the direction of their prayers not only knows where it is going, but lands safely at the desired destination.

### **Determination**

The necessity of prayer in the life of the saved is in relation to *determination*. Devoted saints depend on the Lord for all that life presents to him and her. It was Peter who said unto the saints in his writings, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

It was Paul who wrote, while unjustly incarcerated, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

When the world thrusts you into a circumstance or circumstances that are unjust, unfair, and evil in all regards, what are you to do? There are two options before each person. You can rely on the Lord for wisdom, courage, perseverance, and guidance; or, you can turn away from the Lord. If the latter is chosen, then where will you go (cf. John 6:68)? After wisely choosing the first option, the devotion, dependence, and determination of the saint will pull him or her through.

Perhaps an illustration will be helpful. You're an athlete who is being called upon by the team to lead the others on the team to victory. You know that without your effort the contest will be lost, and your team needs to win this game to move on. You resolve to accomplish the task; you will not be defeated. Great athletes believe in their ability to put the team on their shoulders and lead them over the goal line (so to speak) for the victory. This determination is crucial in sports, but it applies in other endeavors in life also.

As an athlete, your determination to make it through to the other side, to accomplish what you desire, leaves a positive impression on those who have observed how you handled the circumstances. How much more when others notice your devoted prayer life to the God of all glory? They note your appeal to the Lord for strength, your positive disposition that all will work out, and if it does not work out in your favor, how it is that you respond to the Lord after that.

The Lord is on your side and with that there is no doubt! This is not a willful belief generated on the basis of "I want to believe." This is a response of the mind and heart devoted to Him who is able to do exceedingly more than all we hope, think or can ask. It was the Lord who said to the religious leaders of His day, "you are in error because you (the Sadducees) do not know the scripture, and neither do you

know the power of God" (cf. Matt. 22:29).

Many do not believe in prayer, and these same people are sad, you see!

### **Doctrine**

The necessity of prayer in the life of saints is in relation to the *doctrine* of Christ. If one were not to have any exhortation in the New Testament like "pray without ceasing," the saints still have the life of Christ as their example. The life of Christ is the blessed example, and there are exhortations from His very mouth about the importance and necessity of prayer in the life of the saints.

For instance, consider what is commonly called the "Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6:9-13 (more appropriately called the model prayer). Here, the Lord taught His disciples how to pray. The Lord taught them to appeal to the *Father* with gratitude about the holiness of His name, the righteousness of the life they are to live, the provisions of life they need in order to survive on earth, the protection from evil each disciple longs to have, and the forgiveness of sins that can come only from God.

In Luke 6:12-16, the Lord Jesus was engaged in prayer to the Father all night before He arose in the morning to call to Himself the twelve men who would serve as apostles (cf. John 6:70). While in the Garden, just before His arrest and kangaroo-court-trial that was forthcoming, Jesus was in prayer (John 17), praying to the

Father for the men He chose to carry His message from Jerusalem to the further parts of the world. When was the last time you spent two hours in devoted prayer to the Father, to say nothing of the whole night?

### Deity

The necessity of prayer in the life of the redeemed is in relation to *Deity*. To whom shall we pray? Can we pray to God, the Son as well as to God, the Father? The question is not new although it has been revisited recently.

The Lord plainly said to His disciples, "And in that day ye shall ask me no question. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name" (John 16:23).

We also find the following in John 14:13-14: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (NKJV). However, due to textual variants in the passage, the ESV and NASB render v.14 accordingly: "If you ask **Me** anything in My name, I will do it."

The issue continues in the book of Acts, as the disciples prayed to the "Lord." Often, "Lord" refers to Jesus. For instance, in Acts 1:6, 21, 24, the word "Lord" is used three times. Each time it refers to Jesus, to whom a prayer was addressed in 1:24.

J.W. McGarvey wrote, "Here is a simple address to the Lord, beautifully appropriate to the petition they are

about to present; then the petition itself concisely expressed, and the prayer is concluded" (*Original Commentary on Acts*, p. 23).

H. Leo Boles, however, saw the perplexity of this in his remarks on Acts 1, believing the word "Lord" can be understood to refer to the Father and to the Son (*Commentary on Acts*, p. 30).

Yet, Wayne Jackson succinctly states, "The context here would indicate that they were addressing Jesus, who chose the original group (1:2), and who is designated as 'Lord' in verse 21" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 14). Some brethren have also disagreed with brother Jackson on this issue.

Can Christians solicit Christ in prayer today? The norm (if you will) is to address one's prayer to the Father through the name (by the authority) of Jesus. But, if one offers a prayer to the Lord Jesus, as the apostles did in Acts 1:24, are we to understand that their prayer won't be heard or accepted? Is it the case one must have in mind, and even say, "Lord Father..." before the prayer is heard?

It seems that since Jesus is "Lord and God" prayers addressed to Him, while not the norm, would be perfectly acceptable since He and the Father are one (John 10:30). It was Jesus who said He was the "I am" of Exodus 3 (John 8:58). Obviously Thomas said to Jesus, not merely concerning Jesus, in John 20:28, "My Lord and my God!"

Whatever we conclude on this matter, essentially we should all agree that when prayer is offered to God through the devotion, dependence, and determination of His faithful children it lands at the feet of Him who sits on His throne receiving our anxiety because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). For that we should be most thankful.

## **The Language of Prayer**

Ronald Bryant

When do you pray? Where do you go to pray? What kind of words do you use? Do you value the blessing of prayer?

Our prayers reveal a great deal about us. They reveal much more about our spiritual health and maturity than we are prone to think. They tell of our grasp of truth and the measure of our devotion. They declare the depth of our reverence and humility.

A prayer is not a speech made to God or man. It is not a performance, nor a ritual. God is the focus; He is the one addressed. Faith in Him, and love for Him leads one to pray, even as it leads one to examine and strive to correctly order every aspect of his life. Empty words, no matter how well rehearsed or polished finally weaken one spiritually!

The Lord Jesus Christ prayed often, and He taught His disciples to

pray (Matthew 6:9-13). His prayer recorded in John 17 is without equal. The requests He made in that prayer were ruled by incomparable reverence, humility, and gratitude. In larger measure, His life exemplified not only His devotion to the Father, but also the language of prayer.

Inspired by God, the apostle Paul, recorded a number of his prayers. The book of Ephesians contains two of those "inspired prayers." The first chapter contains, what must be finally spoken of as an "anthem of praise" to God (Ephesians 1:3-14). It indicates that the language of prayer is the language of praise. The expression "Blessed be God..." literally means "praise be to God."

In Ephesians 1:15-16, Paul expressed thanksgiving for the church, and his words stand as an example of the expression of thanksgiving in prayer. Paul was specific in the expression of his thanksgiving.

In Ephesians 1:17-19, Paul made requests for the church. His requests were connected with Christ, and with the power by which He was raised from the dead. Paul was mindful of the fact that the same power was involved in the elevation of the redeemed – the church (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Paul's prayer (the words he used) stand in dramatic contrast to the words and phrases we commonly use! Questions: (1) Do we pray like Paul did? (2) Can we do so?

Beginning in Ephesians 3:14, Paul recorded another prayer. He began with a heart-warming expression: "I bow my knee unto the Father." The focus of prayer is "the Father." He is the one, "from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The family (the church) is named by Him! (Doubtless this implies more than simply a verbal designation.) The church is the family—the redeemed—those who are one with the Father and with one another. The language Paul used expresses the intimate spiritual unity of God's people.

Paul then spoke of "the riches of His glory," and requested that the church be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). The redeemed are not only recipients of "all spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3), they are also recipients of the virtues of spiritual devotion. Paul expressed this request, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:17), thus supplying the sense of belonging; having their hearts and minds molded and revitalized, enabling them to be "rooted and grounded in love" that they may together come to comprehend God's love and surpassing knowledge.

Paul prayed for their greatest need; their coming to grasp God's love, to the end they be "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19). His words illustrate the depth of prayer. Christians are to attain spirituality, and they are to desire to do so.

In this regard, it is to be carefully considered that two things make us strong: (1) A deep sense of need, and (2) A strong hope of supply. That supply, God alone can provide, and furthermore, He desires to do so. In this regard, it is to be insisted that the language of prayer is the language of "need" and of "desire."

Paul wrote of God's power for the benefit of the church – "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" – and exalted God as being "able to do more than we can think or ask" (Ephesians 3:20-21), "According to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 1:19-23).

To read and reflect upon Paul's prayers (inspired prayers) is to be drawn to ask a number of questions. The following are only suggestive: Is this the focus and content of our prayers? Do our prayers manifest a genuine desire to know and to honor God? Above all else, do the words of our prayers manifest a reverence for God, and a passion for Him?



# God's Answers to Prayer

David O'Connell

Prayer has always been an important part of worship for God's people. Many Christians realize that prayer is not only limited to specific worship periods but is utilized throughout their everyday activities. In corporate worship, many hymns are prayers. The songs "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind," "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," "Father, We Thank Thee," and "We Praise Thee, O God" are just a few of the prayer songs that are a part of our congregational worship.

Some have accused the Lord's church of believing that God is not active in the world today. It has been argued: "We believe God wrote the Bible and finished it at the end of the first century. Since then, we do not believe God has done anything." Nothing could be further from the truth!

The Scriptures teach that miraculous revelation and spiritual gifts were limited to the first century (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 4:11-13). However, that does not mean that God is not acting in the world today. Certainly, God acts through His providential care.

Joseph is a clear example of this. At the end of his life, he said to his brothers: "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 45:8;

50:20). This shows that God does work providentially for his people. Another way that God works in the world today is by answering prayer.

The fact that God answers the prayers of His people is abundantly affirmed in the Scriptures (Isaiah 55:6; 65:24; Matthew 6:5-13; 18:19; 21:22; John 14:13; 15:7,16; James 1:5-7). There are many examples of God answering prayer. Some of these would be: Hannah (1 Samuel 1:9-12), Elijah (James 5:17), and the Jerusalem church (Acts 12:5-12). There is no doubt that the first century church was a praying church, because Jesus was a Man of prayer. Since it emphasizes the prayer life of Jesus so much, the Gospel of Luke has been designated as "the gospel of prayer." Also, the Gospel of John has one whole chapter containing a prayer of our Lord (John 17:1-26).

The question often arises: "Why didn't the Lord answer my prayer?" One might request healing for a sick spouse or child, and then the loved one dies. A Christian might ask the Lord to have a job with a specific company, and then he is not hired. A preacher might pray for the local church to grow, and then this does not happen. People often claim: "God did not hear my prayer." The truth is that God heard and answered the prayer.

People often forget that there are many ways God can answer prayer. First, the Lord could answer a prayer with a "yes." In effect, the Lord is saying, "Yes - that is exactly what is needed in this case." Elijah's request for no rain (James 5:17) and Jonah's request to be delivered from the belly of the great fish (Jonah 2:1) are examples of God responding with a "Yes - this is exactly what you need." There are many examples of this in the Scriptures.

Second, the Lord may say, "No." In effect, the Lord is saying, "No - that is not what is best for you." The Lord Jesus was praying to His Father to "remove this cup" (Matthew 26:39-44). This was a prayer for God to remove the suffering that He was about to go through.

The Bible teaches that God heard His Son: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). Yet, the Father said, "No, you must go through this suffering." In our society today, many people have forgotten that "no" is still an answer. It may not be the answer we desire, but "no" is still a valid answer.

Third, the Lord may answer prayers by saying, "Yes - but not now." In effect, the Lord is saying, "Yes - but you need to wait a while." The psalmist cried out, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in

the night season, and am not silent" (Psalms 22:2). The Lord was telling David to wait.

Jeremiah, the prophet, had to wait ten days to receive an answer to his prayer (Jeremiah 42:4-7).

Mary and Martha wanted Jesus to come immediately and heal Lazarus. However, they had to wait four days before the Lord came (John 11:17). When Jesus came, it was on God's timetable.

The Hebrews prayed to be delivered from Egyptian bondage. God knew they needed a deliverer, but Moses was not ready until he had spent forty years in Midian (Acts 7:29-30).

The children of Israel were praying for hundreds of years for God to send the Messiah. The Scriptures state that Jesus came "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). It was the best time for the Savior to come into the world. Our Heavenly Father answered the prayers for the coming of the Messiah at just the right time. If Jesus had come one or two hundred years sooner, it would have been too early, and the world-wide circumstance would not have been perfect for the spread of the kingdom. God knew when the time was best.

Fourth, the Lord may answer prayers by saying, "Yes - but your request needs some adjustment." In effect, the Lord is saying, "I hear you and will answer you, but the request should be altered slightly."

A missionary's heart's desire may be to go to Brazil, but the Lord wants him to go to South Africa. Paul wanted to go throughout Asia (that is, Asia Minor). He wanted to go into Mysia and Bithynia. However, God wanted Paul in Troas so that he could then have the dream about going to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-12). Were there lost people in Asia? Yes. Were there lost people in Mysia and Bithynia? Yes. However, God's plan was for Paul to go to Philippi. Paul's desire to preach the gospel had to be altered slightly, because of God's wisdom and infinite knowledge.

When Paul prayed for the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh, God said, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Paul asked the Lord three times to remove this disability and was praying for physical relief. The Lord responded with a spiritual quality (grace) as the answer. Many people are disappointed if the Lord says, in effect, "Let me adjust your request - just a little." People need to remember that the all-knowing, all-wise, all-loving Father in heaven will do what is best for us.

Fifth, the Lord may answer a prayer by saying, "Yes - I will give you what you ask for

and more." When King Solomon prayed for wisdom, the Lord granted him wisdom and enormous wealth and honor (1 Kings 3:5-15). This is an illustration of God giving what was requested and more. The apostle Paul affirmed this point when he wrote that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20).

In summary, God can say: (1) Yes, (2) No, (3) Yes - but wait a while, (4) Yes - but adjust your request, or (5) Yes - and more.

As the old hymn says: "O how praying rests the weary! Prayer will change the night to day; so, when life seems dark and dreary, don't forget to pray."

God will answer every prayer. It may not be the answer that we want, but our Heavenly Father will answer every prayer. It is wonderful to keep in mind that, oftentimes, He gives us more than we requested.



Illustration by Lenny for Gospel Gleaner, used by permission of the author.

# Plagiarism among Preachers

Steve Higginbotham

I used to receive a church bulletin from a church in Texas and I noticed that nearly every week, the preacher at this church was publishing in their bulletin, articles that I had written. However, he was making one minor change to those articles. He was using "Whiteout" to remove my name under the title and was inserting his name in its place. When I inquired about his practice, he offered no apology, but simply removed me from their bulletin mailing list.

I once received an email from a preacher who asked me if he could reprint some articles I had written. I told him, "of course he could, and that he need not ask for my permission." He wrote back and thanked me and then asked, "Can I remove your name from the articles?" I wrote back and simply told him that one should never remove an author's name from his writings. I soon received a final email explaining why he asked this question. He shared with me that he had recently been fired from the church because his elders had discovered he was removing my name from articles I wrote and was passing them off as his own.

I have also learned of another preacher who, for years, has been taking personal illustrations that I use in my sermons and using them in his

sermons as though the events actually happened to him.

On another occasion, I had finished preaching a sermon in a gospel meeting and a preacher who was in the assembly asked me if I had copied that sermon from another preacher. He said my sermon was nearly "word-for-word" of what he heard another preacher preach. Out of curiosity, I went to this preacher's website and discovered that every week, for the past six years, this preacher has preached my sermons at his congregation, title by title, point by point, subpoint by subpoint, the week after I preach them at mine. He's not had an original thought to share with his congregation in six years!

These examples are a small sampling of acts of plagiarism by preachers. Because of this, I thought I would share a few thoughts on this topic that might be helpful to all of us who write and preach.

## Why Do Preachers Plagiarize?

**Laziness.** Some preachers are just too lazy to do their own study, research, and sermon preparation. It's much easier to rely on someone else to do the hard work of sermon development. Some preachers have found it easier to be a "Public Speaker" than a "legitimate Gospel Preacher."

**Pride.** Some preachers fail to give credit because they are full of pride. They want to take credit for a memorable thought, a pithy quote, or a creative phrase. They feign insightfulness in order to receive misplaced appreciation and respect of men. Their pride is more important to them than their integrity.

**To Look Intelligent.** Some preachers fail to give proper credit because they think it will make others think less of their intelligence. However, quite the opposite is true. By taking the time to credit another speaker or writer, a preacher is actually demonstrating that he has studied, listened, read, and researched his subject matter.

#### **Why Plagiarism Matters**

**It Harms One's Own Influence.** It's only a matter of time until someone discovers plagiarism, and when it is discovered, the plagiarist's influence is all but destroyed. A preacher who plagiarizes proves himself to be unethical and consequently, untrustworthy. If a gospel preacher doesn't have respect, credibility, and trust, then of what value is he? Once discovered, people will stop listening and reading to be edified and challenged but will start listening and reading to catch you in another "theft."

**It Harms The Influence of Others.** I once wrote an article I planned on publishing the following week and shared it with a preacher for review.

Unbeknownst to me, this preacher promptly published my article in our local newspaper, but removed my name from the article and put his own name on it. So when I published my article a week later, people thought that I had blatantly plagiarized his work. I spoke to this preacher about what he had done and he said, "Don't get so focused on who gets credit for the article, just be thankful the truth was taught." I explained to him that my concern was not a matter of "credit" but it was a matter of my reputation and credibility. What he had done caused, who knows how many people, to think that I had plagiarized him, potentially harming my integrity and influence.

**It Harms the Cause of Christ.** As spokesmen for God, we must give care to protect our integrity. If we show ourselves to be untrustworthy, it doesn't just reflect on us, but it also taints the cause of Christ. Paul told Titus to be a pattern of good works and in doctrine to show integrity, reverence, and incorruptibility, and to speak in a way that no one can condemn (Titus 2:7-8). When our actions don't rise to the level of the faith we preach, God is blasphemed (Romans 2:24).

#### **How to Avoid Plagiarism**

**Start doing your own research, study, and meditation.** Open your Bible and start mining for truths on your own before consulting what others have said about the text.

**Start giving credit.** It doesn't distract from a sermon to attribute a quote or a well-turned phrase to the person who originally said it. Trying to take credit for another man's work is unethical and places you in opposition to God.

**Learn from others, but do your own work.** Warren Wiersbe was known for telling preachers to "milk many cows, but churn your own butter." In other words, research, read after, learn from many sources, but take that body of material and work it into something that becomes your own.

**Keep your pride in check.** Potentially standing in front of hundreds of people who regularly tell you how wonderful, insightful, motivating, and ingenious you are can quickly go to your head. Pride is a plague among preachers. Don't become infected with it. Pray, stay on guard, enlist your spouse to warn you if she sees signs of it, and purposefully practice humility to overcome this sin.

I know that we are all working from a single source, and it is highly unlikely that you will come up with some insight that no one has ever before noticed. Surely, nearly everything we say has been said before. I get that, and that is not what I am talking about in this article. I'm not talking about two men studying a text and coming away from it with the same or similar thoughts. What I am talking about is trying to take credit for another man's work and words. Long ago, God told Jeremiah that he was against prophets who were stealing his words from other prophets (Jeremiah 23:30). Trying to take credit for another man's work is unethical and places you in opposition to God. Let's repent, if need be, and do better!



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# Biblical Preaching in Modern Times

Andy Erwin

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Timothy 4:2).

“Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men.”<sup>1</sup> Biblical preaching has always required preaching doctrine or “teaching” in a way that will “convince, rebuke, and exhort” the hearer. Such preaching appeals to the “whole of man”<sup>2</sup> realizing the spiritual as well as the intellectual nature of man.

Through preaching, we address the intellect; awaken the sensibilities; and appeal to the will of the listener.<sup>3</sup> We encourage those listening to be “doers of the word and not hearers only” (James 1:22). We expect them to respond faithfully to the message, but we should avoid gauging our success on the basis of their response.

## The Resolve of the Preacher

Preachers must resolve, therefore, to “preach the word” regardless of how God’s divine truth may be received by our fellow-man. Biblical preaching is the declaration of the Lord’s message to man, in order to

save man from sin, so that he might enjoy an abundant life now and eternal life with God in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

Faithful preaching is not just a matter of style, taste, or preference. Whether or not one preaches the word of God is a matter of authority. From whence does a preacher derive the necessary authority to solidify the things he has to say? Or, why should the listener believe his message is any more truthful than one being advocated by a Hollywood icon on a late night talk show? It’s simple. That which distinguishes the message of the preacher from the message of the world is the authority by which the message is spoken. Biblical preaching is a message authorized by God. It is the only message authorized by God, as it is derived from the word of God.

Haddon Robinson observed that preachers face the pressing temptation to deliver a message other than that of the Scriptures, noting, “...when they fail to preach the scriptures, they abandon their authority. No longer do they confront their hearers with a word from God. That is why most

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<sup>1</sup> Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1877), 5.

<sup>2</sup> William, M. Smith, *Twenty Lessons in Homiletics*. (Noblesville, IN: Newby Book Room, 1970), 9.

<sup>3</sup> William Smith, 9.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas H. Holland, *Preaching: Principles and Practice*. (Brentwood, TN: Penman Press, 1988), 13.

modern preaching evokes little more than a wide yawn. God is not in it.”<sup>5</sup>

When preachers forsake the word of God in their messages they forsake their authority and abandon their true usefulness in ministry. Only by preaching the word can a preacher speak with all *authority* (Titus 2:15).

### The Intention of the Sermon

In his book, *Saddlebags, City Streets, and Cyberspace (A History of Preaching in the Churches of Christ)*,<sup>6</sup> Michael W. Casey gave good attention to the impact of speech training among our preachers in the second half of the twentieth century. Casey researched the drift that has taken place from the kind of message/truth-oriented sermons that used to dominate church pulpits to the predominately listener-oriented preaching of today. This shift, though subtle and over a period of time, is one of the ways the contemporary world has affected the modern pulpit.

The primary difference in the two styles of preaching and preacher being considered is that one is devoted to the content of the sermon primarily, while the other is primarily concerned with how the sermon is being received by the listener. One type of preacher judges his sermon on the basis of its

use of scripture and truthfulness to the word. The other type of preacher deems his sermon to be successful when it is received gladly by its listeners. The result of this approach is the avoidance of any sermon that might be deemed even mildly controversial. Every preacher must decide if he is determined to serve man or God (Galatians 1:10).

The desire to please people rather than God prompted H.C. Brown, Jr., to write of the “clown prince of the pulpit.” He observed how “the clown prince of the pulpit...is so addicted to the laughter and applause of the people that he constantly overuses it [humor]. Rather than sprinkling a little salt on steak, he sprinkles hamburger meat on blocks of salt.”<sup>7</sup>

Forty years after H.C. Brown’s comment, it is still commonplace to hear preachers giving lessons filled with personal testimonials and humorous anecdotes, rather than honoring God and pointing the way to Him through His divine truth. Preachers such as “the clown prince” and the one “preaching to please” have devalued the work and the authority of the preacher in the contemporary world.

A third type of preacher must also be considered, and we believe this type should be the pattern for every gospel preacher. He is the preacher who preaches the truth through his

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<sup>5</sup> Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 20.

<sup>6</sup> Michael W. Casey, *Saddlebags, City Streets & Cyberspace*. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1995).

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<sup>7</sup> H.C. Brown, Jr. *A Quest for Reformation in Preaching*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1968), 18.

personality. Preaching truly is the conveyance of truth through personality.<sup>8</sup> The preacher must endeavor to be himself as attempting to act or mimic another's personality in the pulpit is "worse that offensive; for it robs the man of that distinctive and individual power which God has given to him for the very purpose of ministering to his efficiency."<sup>9</sup>

A preacher must realize the challenge in every sermon is to present a message that is *both* biblical *and* appealing to man. Being biblical does not require being boring. W.A. Bradford was one of the most biblical preachers of his day. He was far from boring. He was passionate and persuasive. He was one of the most successful preachers of his era. In the decade of the 1960s nearly 10,000 people responded publicly to his messages. We could use a little of that passion today!

Such a preacher cares about the truthfulness of the message *and* its reception. The people must know that their preacher loves them; but they must also know that he loves God *more*.

The sermon must direct the thoughts of the audience to and through the teachings of scripture. The preacher must be the conduit. Such biblical preaching is of the "very

essence" of Christianity,<sup>10</sup> and we must be able to distinguish between biblical preaching and non-preaching if our pulpits are to be impactful.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, much preaching has come to be viewed as a human endeavor to please with the interest centering upon spontaneity rather than substance; and passion above preparation.<sup>12</sup> We are advocating preaching that is full of both passion *and* preparation. The sermon must be true to the text and presented with the utmost desire of helping people to make an application, be reconciled to God, and live a life which honors Him..

### A New Homiletic

A "new hermeneutic" and subsequent "new homiletic" grew out of the ideals of a few misguided church leaders and scholars in second half of the twentieth century. They advocated that the Bible must be interpreted and preached experientially, culturally, and relatively. They began with a low view of scripture<sup>13</sup> and have led their followers to an even lower view of scripture.

The experiential approach causes men to believe the scripture says what "you feel it says." The cultural ap-

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel, T. Logan, Jr. (Ed.). *The Preacher and Preaching*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1986), 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Jimmy Jividen, *More than a Feeling*. (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1999), 138.

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<sup>8</sup> Phillips Brooks, 5.

<sup>9</sup> William M. Taylor, *The Ministry of the Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1975), 5.

proach would have the meaning of the text changing with the times to meet the latest liberation theology, etc.. And the relative view is simply that "...you can have 'your truth' and I can have 'my truth.'"<sup>14</sup>

How shall gospel preachers respond to the intuition and intellect of the modern man? First, we must recognize the difference between crafting a message of truth in such a way that our audience will be engaged in the text, and forsaking the text altogether to replace it with jokes, stories, and anecdotal material in order to be in their good graces. On the one hand the audience is engaged with the presentation of the Scriptures through good homiletical skills. On the other hand, the audience is riveted by a message which could have served just as well as an after dinner speech at the Rotary Club.

The real test of a preacher's effectiveness will come after the preacher has left the pulpit. Will his work stand the test of time (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:13)?<sup>15</sup> His works will follow him, for better or worse.

If a man's ministry is only to his personal self-interests, job security, and keeping the majority happy, he is doing nothing more than "peddling the word" (2 Corinthians 2:17), and will eventually find himself "exploit-

ing with deceptive words" (2 Peter 2:3), in order to receive "wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:13). Such an agenda will be reflected in the congregation long after he is gone.

To fulfill one's ministry (2 Timothy 4:5), a preacher must work and preach with the intention that the congregation will be healthy and pleasing to God even after he has left them. Such desire indicates the difference between a preacher who is self-serving and a preacher who is a servant to others, and most of all, to God.

### Two Questions

Every preacher should be required to answer two questions. (1) Why do you want to preach? (2) What type of preaching is needed today? If no one is willing to ask him these questions, he should at least be willing to ask them of himself.

Is the preacher's concern to preach Jesus and bring people closer to God (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Colossians 1:27-29)? Will he preach Christ to the glory God (1 Peter 4:11)? Will he preach the cross in order to save men from their sins (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21)? Will he humble himself to exalt His God? Preachers who will answer "yes" to such questions will likely answer "yes" when called upon to provide biblical preaching. God will use such a man to ensure the congregation has the kind of preacher and preaching which is needed most in this present evil age (Galatians 1:4)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 139

<sup>15</sup> Andrew W. Blackwood, *Preaching from the Bible*. (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), 224.

# THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED TO THE APOSTLES

Raymond Elliott

In an effort to understand a passage of scripture two questions among others should be considered, namely: who is the speaker, and to whom is he speaking? This will contribute greatly to the right interpretation of a passage of scripture.

We have no problem in understanding that it was God who was speaking to Noah instructing him to build an ark (Genesis 6); it was Abraham that God directed to offer up his son Isaac upon an altar (Genesis 22); and, it was the rich young ruler that Jesus required to sell all that he had and give to the poor (Mark 10). This principle would also be true in the study of the epistles that men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote to various congregations and individuals.

Some of the most misunderstood passages in the New Testament regarding the Holy Spirit are found in the gospel according to John, chapters 14, 15, 16. It is plain to see that the setting of these particular chapters in John is the occasion when Jesus was eating the Passover Supper with his twelve apostles (See Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14). So, Jesus was the speaker and the twelve apostles were the ones to whom Jesus was

addressing when He spoke of the promise of another Comforter who would be sent to help and assist them in the preaching of the truth after His departure.

Religious leaders of various denominations often apply what Jesus said to the apostles about the Holy Spirit to all believers in Christ. This is also the case among some teachers and writers who are members of the church. For example in a devotional publication that provides wonderful inspirational thoughts for each day of the year one writer asserted, "When Jesus went back to His Father, He sent the Holy Spirit as a Comforter and a Guide to teach us all things and to bring all things to our remembrance. We have the power on our spiritual journey. When faced with a mountain, don't fear or cry out. Take action! Use the power He has given us. Say, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me' (Philippians 4:13)."

While recognizing the sincerity and integrity of the Christian who wrote the preceding words, it must be brought out that this is a misunderstanding and a misuse of this passage of scripture that is found in John 14:26 which reads, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the

Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (ASV).

It is also recorded in John 16:13, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

The Holy Spirit would therefore assist the apostles in the following: (1) teach them all things; (2) bring to their remembrance what Jesus wanted them to know; (3) He would guide them into all truth; (4) the Holy Spirit would also tell the apostles things that were to come.

In Luke 24:49, prior to His ascension, Jesus spoke these words to His apostles: “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on High.”

Luke records basically the same instructions as recorded in Acts 1:4. In verse 5 of Acts 1, He informed the apostles that they would “be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Jesus also said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In Acts 2:1-4 we find the record of the twelve apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the Lord had previously promised them.

The apostle wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:10: “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” Paul made it very clear that which He and the other apostles taught were of the Holy Spirit as recorded in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

The apostle also claimed that he received what he proclaimed regarding the “mystery of Christ,” “by revelation” from the Lord (Ephesians 3:3-6). Concerning the gospel which Paul preached he wrote in Galatians 1:11, 12: “But I make known to you, brethren that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The writings of both the Old and New Testaments came by the "inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). In the beginning of the church age the inspired word was first in men.

Later, as the men who were inspired of the Holy Spirit began to write the various epistles, the inspired word was both in men and in written form. Eventually, the time came when that "which is perfect is come" that which "is in part shall be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10). That is to say, the revealed will of God for man was now complete and no longer partly in man and partly in written form.

Eventually, Jude would write in his short epistle these words: "Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (verse 3).

The system of faith was once and for all time deposited and there is no additional revelation from God needed. The work of the Holy Spirit in revealing all the truth necessary for our salvation has been completed.



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# Remembering V.P. Black

Hugh Fulford



V. P. BLACK (1918-2007)

Vanderbilt Pierpont (V. P.) Black was born on December 15, 1918 in Millport, Alabama. He was baptized into Christ in 1936 and began preaching in Booneville, Mississippi in 1938. He served congregations in Booneville; Avon Park, Florida; and then the Plateau church in Mobile, Alabama for over 20 years.

After resigning the pulpit at Plateau, brother Black continued to serve as one of the elders of the congregation and his association with the Plateau church extended over 40 years. He was highly esteemed by the Plateau church, as well as the Lord's people throughout the city of Mobile.

In 1965, when the churches of Christ in Mobile decided to conduct a campaign for Christ, they immediately chose V. P. Black to be the speaker. The wisdom of their decision lies in the fact that during the campaign 269 people responded to the gospel invitation, with 98 of these being baptisms.

In a meeting with Plateau, his home congregation, there were 52 baptisms. When I moved to Mobile in 1972 to preach for the Pleasant Valley church I was fortunate that brother Black still lived in the city, and while I had known of him for many years, and had heard him preach on a few occasions, I was able to get to know him better.

After giving up regular preaching for the Plateau church, brother Black devoted his time to preaching in gospel meetings all across the country, preaching in up to 45 meetings per year. Even while engaged in local work, he often preached in 12 to 18 meetings each year.

One of the things that always impressed me about V. P. Black (besides his matchless preaching) was the fact that he would go wherever the brethren called him, making no distinction between big churches and small churches, rich churches and poor churches. He was equally at home preaching in meetings in Gaskin, Florida or Quitman, Mississippi as in preaching in meetings at the University church in Abilene, Texas or the Prestoncrest church in Dallas!

Scott Harp tells of hearing brother Black on a sticky, hot summer night in a little country church south of Haleyville, Alabama. He said the

speaker was dressed in an all-white suit, white shoes, "and not a wrinkle could be found in his polished appearance." Scott continued:

"He began his sermon, as many do, soft-toned, kind and gentle. Not a time did he look at a note, but with exactness and clarity, he proceeded to preach the gospel of Jesus. It was not long before his passion for the message was felt by all in the audience. His voice got louder and more convicting with every quotation of passage upon passage of Scripture.

"That man of God preached on the level of such intensity, that at times his face turned blood red. Contrasted with the white suit he wore, the awe-inspired audience in that little country church in North Alabama sat without so much as a blink of the eye for over an hour. What a preacher! What passion! What a Savior he proclaimed!"

My longtime friend, Alan Highers, shared with me his memories of brother Black who conducted a gospel meeting at the Getwell church in Memphis when Alan served there as the local preacher. Alan wrote,

"He was always a very snappy dresser. He liked Edwin Clapp shoes. His suits were always pressed, his shoes were shined to perfection, he wore a stiff white collar. When he stepped into the pulpit, his appearance was impeccable and you expected to hear something. You would not be disappointed. He was serious about preaching. It seemed every word was meas-

ured. His language was elegant and eloquent. It was uplifting to hear him speak."

For many years brother Black served as Vice-President of Alabama Christian College/Faulkner University and raised thousands of dollars for the school. He personally gave over \$100,000 to the school from the sale of his books. He helped lead its transition from Alabama Christian College to Faulkner University. He also set up a \$100,000 ministerial fund at Freed-Hardeman University to help train gospel preachers.

It can truthfully be said that V. P. Black was "ready unto every good work" (Titus 3:1). He authored at least three books on stewardship (*My God and My Money*, *Rust as a Witness*, and *Giving Our Way to Prosperity*) and at least two volumes of sermons (*We Persuade Men* and *This Crooked Generation*). J. D. Thomas of Abilene, Texas also published a volume of brother Black's sermons in the 12-volume series "Twentieth Century Sermons."

A V. P. Black sermon that I have attempted to preach at various times over the years is titled "Happiness: Is it Just a Word?" Brother Black was strong on the great fundamentals of the faith, but he also could address the everyday concerns of people's lives. He spoke numerous times on the lectureship programs of Faulkner University, Freed-Hardeman University, as well as other schools among the

people of God. From its inception in 1975 until 2004, he was an annual speaker on the Florida School of Preaching Lectures in Lakeland, Florida.

The 1993 Freed-Hardeman lecture-ship book was dedicated to him. In it Winford Claiborne wrote:

“One of the remarkable features of his preaching is that during his fifty-four years of preaching he has never been involved in a church fuss or a church split. He believes if preachers were busy trying to convert people and teaching on unity and brotherly love much of the trouble in the Lord’s church would never have gotten started or would cease. Brother Black’s influence has been positive and powerful.”

Freed-Hardeman University bestowed on him an honorary LL.D. degree. For the last several years of his life, he and sister Black made their home in Montgomery, Alabama.

Brother Black passed from this life on Sunday, February 4, 2007, at the age of 88. He is buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Montgomery. Beyond question, he was one of the truly great gospel preachers of the past!



## *LGBTQ in SBL*

Andy Erwin

On August 5, I received an email from the Society of Biblical Literature informing its members that “the SBL Council formed an LGBTQ+ Task Force. The Task Force’s charge is to identify how SBL can best support LGBTQ+ scholars and scholarship and to report recommendations to Council.

“Recommendations might include policies, practices, and programs to assure: (1) the full participation of LGBTQ+ scholars in SBL; (2) their contribution to teaching, research, and scholarship; and (3) the advancement of the discipline, including the ways in which the Task Force can impact the public square by promoting SBL’s core values of diversity and inclusivity.”

Here we have another example of so-called biblical scholars advancing a far-left agenda. The list of churches now affirming and defending the LGBTQ movement is growing and includes many major denominations in North America. Once a church begins to compromise with sin, the depths to which it will sink are truly bottomless.

A lesson must be learned from the sins of others. Let us hold fast to God’s word. The best way to prevent compromising with the devil is never to begin.

## OUR DUTY TO OTHERS

Titus 2:11-12

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Duty to God – put Him first – supreme duty and aim in life.
- B. Duty to self – own soul most important.
- C. Duty to others – our lesson today.

### DISCUSSION

#### A. Love One Another.

- 1. John 15:12 “This is My commandment that ye love one another.”
- 2. John 13:34-35 “A new commandment I give...”
- 3. 1 John 4:20 “If any man says I love God and hates his brother...”

#### B. Forgive One Another.

- 1. Matthew 6:15 “If ye forgive not men their...”
- 2. Matthew 18:21-22 “How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?”
- 3. Luke 17:4 “And if he sin against thee seven times in a day and seven times in a day turns and says ‘I repent’ thou shalt forgive him.”

#### C. Bear One Another’s Burdens.

- 1. Galatians 6:2 “Bear ye one another’s burdens...” Help him.
- 2. Galatians 6:5 “For every man shall bear his own burden...” Some things man must do for himself.

#### D. Pray For One Another.

- 1. 1 Thessalonians 5:25 “Brethren, pray for us.”
- 2. James 5:16 “Confess your sins one to another...”
- 3. 1 Samuel 12:23 “God forbid that I should sin against God in ceasing to pray for you.”

### CONCLUSION

- A. Galatians 5:14 “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”
- B. 1 Corinthians 13:13 “And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three: and the greatest of these is love.”

*-W.A. Bradfield*

# **The West Fayetteville Church of Christ**

## **Service Times**

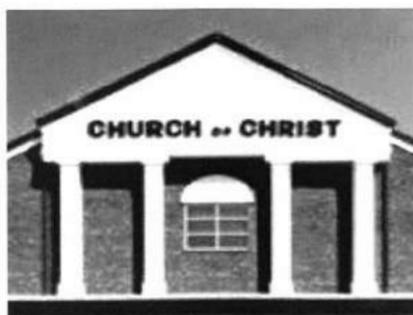
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# Gospel Gleaner

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



## The Cross of Christ

*Broken by Sin and Healed by the Cross*

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Ronald Bryant	When I Survey the Wondrous Cross	p. 4
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John T. Polk, II	Glorying in the Cross	p. 10
Jimmy Clark	The Way of the Cross Leads Home	p. 13

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Andy Erwin	Shepherd Leadership Models in the Scriptures	p. 22
Mike Kiser	What Held Jesus to the Cross?	p. 30

## **“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

Vol. 31 ♦ No. 6

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## Inside this Issue

Andy Erwin

In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* we will be reflecting on the redemption made possible by the death of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ separates the Christian religion from all the other religions of men. No other religion has a cross in it!

We can never truthfully and fully know Jesus until and unless we know Him as the crucified Savior of the world. Moreover, we will never reach our full potential toward God and toward man without understanding the cross. Such a lack of understanding is at the heart of many of society's ongoing problems.

We are also saddened by the untimely passing of a dear friend and brother, Al Franks. You will find a tribute to brother Al in this issue. You will also find a reprint of a tribute to R.W. Comer. Brother Comer continues to bless churches through the Comer Trust, which is to be distributed among churches of Christ in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Hugh Fulford has also written an article asking the question, "Why do liberals stay among us?" You will find articles which encourage you to be obedient to Christ's commandments, to be converted to Christ, and an article covering the theme of shepherding in the Old Testament. Our prayer is that this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* will be a great benefit to you as you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

# What Does the Cross Mean to Me?

Elliott Hamm

What does the cross mean to me? When I ask myself the question, I'm reminded of the word *purpose*. Often, we hear individuals in society discuss the need to find their "purpose in life." What exactly does this entail? Are they searching for material things? Most importantly, where are they looking for guidance to define their purpose? Are they searching the Scriptures?

When I think of our purpose, I immediately think of Ecclesiastes 12: 13, "Fear God, and keep his commandments." As Christians, how do we answer the question regarding our purpose? Does it involve the cross?

"What does the cross mean to me?" For myself, I think of Jesus and Jesus' purpose. If we recall, Jesus tells us in Luke 19: 10 that His purpose is to "seek and to save that which was lost." Are we striving to follow in the steps of Jesus? Are we trying to *save the lost*? We have been commanded as much (Mark 16: 15).

Let us use the example of Jesus on the cross. It was from the cross that Jesus spoke His last words as a mortal man. In Luke 23: 23 - 49, we have the account of His crucifixion and death. We can read of Jesus being forgiving. In verse 23 He said,

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

We can read of Jesus telling one of the thieves with Him, "Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Amidst His own suffering, He was describing *salvation*.

We can read of Jesus anticipating His death and being confident when He said in verse 46, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These powerful words spoken on the cross still resonate with us today. Jesus was confident in His mission being accomplished. He came to do His Father's will (John 6: 38) and endured the cross. Such forgiveness, salvation, and confidence help us to see Jesus' purpose and give us insight into our purpose.

When considering the meaning of the cross and Jesus, we cannot forget another important part, which is His death. But, what does His death signify? Before we can answer this, we need to clarify several facts. First, we must understand that His death was not an accident or a mistake. It was divinely determined. It was predestined, foreordained, and was God's plan. His plan was revealed through the Old Testament prophets. Secondly, we know that Jesus' death

is proof that God loves us (John 3: 16). Thirdly, Jesus even spoke of His forthcoming death, as recorded in John 12: 27 – 35. More specifically, this is discussed in verse 32 when Jesus says, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Jesus even went as far to explain His death in John 16: 25 – 33. Verse 33 explains that He overcame the world. What does Jesus’ death signify? His death signifies *victory* (Luke 19: 30).

A logical and thought-provoking question is, “What does Christ’s death mean to you?” When I think of Jesus’ death, I think of the opportunity for the salvation that we have been offered (Luke 19: 10). I think of His power to deliver us from the world (Galatians 1: 4).

The Bible reveals to us what Christ’s death should mean to us; it shows us the significance. It is evident that Paul sees significance in the death of Christ. In Philippians 2: 8, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The significance is not just that Jesus died, but how He died, “even the death of the cross.” Paul is teaching humility of the heart. Christ’s death was a showing of humility. Peter writes, in 1 Peter 2: 24, that “by whose stripes ye were healed.” When I read and study that passage, I see clearly that Jesus’ death was a

recompensing death. Through His death, we have *atonement for sins*.

When thinking about Christ’s death, let us look at the course of his death. It was cruel. Crucifixion was a cruel method of execution. Under Roman law, this form of execution was reserved for those condemned of murder, theft, and insurrection. For the Jews, this method of death was fitting for a blasphemer, which Jesus was accused, because of His being the Son of God (Luke 22: 66 – 71). Jesus’ death was intended to touch our hearts. It should touch our hearts not only emotionally, but spiritually.

As we reflect on our original question regarding the meaning of the cross, we can see the answer to this question is rather difficult to simplify. It is a question that also requires us to be reminded that our purpose in this life is to share God’s word with others so that we can live for Him.

We are also reminded that serving God may not always be easy. Jesus suffered a cruel death on the cross to save us from sin. Despite obstacles that may come our way, our victory is our eternal resting place with God in Heaven.

By our answer, the cross means purpose, saving the lost, salvation, victory, and atonement for sins. Now the question remains, what does the cross mean to you?

# When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Ronald Bryant

In its physical essence there is nothing attractive or appealing about the crucifixion of Jesus. Physically, there is nothing in it that inspires lofty thought or adoration. The incredible horror of His violent death is enough to force any normal person to turn away from that scene. The suffering, the blood, and shame of execution is set forth in horrific detail. To add to it the place, the hostility, the violence, the terror, and the despair of the few disciples who stood at a distance to observe what was taking place, is to be drawn into their despair.

Admittedly, the death of Christ on the hill of Golgotha (the place of the skull), is the most famous death in all of history. Through the years, artists have tried to depict that event in detail. Not surprisingly, a death on a cross on a hill that is part of a garbage dump is not, nor can it ever be a thing of beauty. In the same vein, a caricature of a man's body on a "crucifix" is but a misrepresentation of the real event. Additionally, a cross as a piece of jewelry may proclaim a message, but who can really state what that message is?

Biblical truth alone transforms and elevates thought regarding the cross. The "why" of the cross is established by the Lord God of heaven in His inspired word. The whole of the Bible is necessary to an understanding

of the place, the purpose, and the significance of the cross. The words of men will never be adequate to the task.

The death of Christ is undeniably a historical fact. It is not a religious story or human theory. The facts supplied in Scripture stand above and beyond the thoughts and the imagination of men. These facts are supported by the testimony of many witnesses, and even by the critics. Among the many witnesses are the writers of the books of the New Testament, and those who proclaimed Christ as is recorded in the book of Acts. The critics inadvertently supply evidence of Christ, even as they deny Him. (How many non-entities are identified and opposed by scholars?)

The reality is that the death of Christ on the cross stands as the center-point of history, and of the Scriptures. The Old Testament sets forth specific promises and prophecies about the birth, the life, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ. One of the greatest and most beneficial studies is the study of the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, and their fulfillment. Another study of tremendous benefit is in taking each book of the New Testament; studying each in turn, noting carefully the statements made by Jesus about His death (the predictions He made),

and then the accounts set forth detailing the event itself. This is a demanding study, for approximately one-fourth to one-third of each of the gospels record the last week of Jesus' life on earth; specifically, the events of the trials, the suffering, His crucifixion, His burial, and His resurrection. Additionally, one can study the sermons recorded in the book of Acts, which center upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The epistles also supply additional details regarding the fact and the purpose of the death of Christ. It is evident that a prayerful and consistent study of each of the sections of the whole Bible is essential.

The Scriptures center upon God's purpose, not on the drama of some events. What Jesus did and said is the focus of the New Testament, and they focus upon the fulfillment of God's promises and prophecies regarding Him. Holy purposes alone transform the events, explain the "Why" of the cross. God's perspective and purpose alone sheds the necessary light upon the cross of Christ. The wisdom of man is not adequate to express its meaning or purpose.

Categorically, the crucifixion stands as a horrific and tragic event. Tragically, Jesus was despised and rejected by His own people. Tragically, He was betrayed by one of His disciples; Judas Iscariot.

Tragically, the religious leaders: the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, and the Pharisees plotted to destroy Jesus.

Tragically, Pilate, the Roman governor, although confessing that Jesus was innocent, was intimidated into signing the death sentence demanded by the Jewish leader – in a criminal act he participated in the death of Jesus.

In the face of the tragedy and violence of the crucifixion, there is this undeniable fact: Jesus came to earth, not to live, but to die. He came to give His life as a ransom for all (Mark 10:45; I Timothy 2:6). He repeatedly and consistently declared this fact.

At least seven hundred years before Christ came to the earth, the prophet Isaiah wrote out the details concerning the suffering and death of Christ. He spelled out in clear detail the facts and the purpose of the suffering and the death of Christ. (Read: Isaiah 53:1-12). It was for us!

In Scripture, Christ is revealed as the perfectly sinless Son of God. He is also identified with sinful men. He was spoken of as "the friend of sinners." It is readily apparent that He did not view sinners as unworthy rejects. He sought to serve them and to lead them to life eternal. He looked upon them as oppressed and as ruled by their sins, but not as unworthy of His life.

He, the "good Shepherd" gave His life for the lost (John 10:10-11). He said, "Therefore My Father loves me because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have

power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17-18).

In His death, Jesus clearly identified with sinners. He died between two thieves. His manner of death bore the stigma of a curse (Galatians 3:10-13). He lived His life under the shadow of an ignominious death. He, the perfectly obedient Son of God bore the sins of all mankind and became the sacrifice for sin. He bore our sin and our guilt, but not for any sins of His own. He was never guilty of sin!

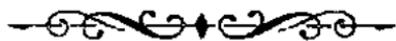
As the Son of God, He had perfect fellowship with His Father. That fellowship was not broken except in that moment when He was fully one as a sacrifice for sin. The Father placed on Him the sins of us all. He was in that moment so fully identified with sinful man, that He experienced the horror of separation from His Father. His words reveal the price that He paid (Matthew 27:46). (It is doubted that we will ever fully understand the terror that He knew, in that moment.).

That moment passed and Jesus then declared, "It is finished." He was not saying, "it is over," but "it is accomplished." Heavens purpose was accomplished when Jesus became the sacrifice for sin. The Father was "in Christ" in that moment. Paul stated this clearly, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

It is correct to affirm that Jesus knew there was a price to be paid for the salvation of sinners, and He paid it. He knew that there was a judgment to be faced, and He faced it. He knew there was a penalty to the borne, and He bore it. He knew there was victory to be won, and He won it.

May the Father hasten the day when it is true and each of us can say, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).



# The Preaching of the Cross

Andy Robison

The cross was torture and death for disgraced criminals and enemies of the Roman state. The disciples understandably were shaken, therefore, when Jesus said His followers had to take up one to follow Him.

This startling sequence of events recorded is recorded in Matthew 16, Mark 8, and Luke 9. First, upon Jesus' questioning of the disciples, Peter announces their conclusion that He is, indeed, the Christ. The next thing is that Jesus announces the Jewish leaders will kill Him, and He will be raised the third day. Apparently not processing the thought of a resurrection, Peter rebukes Jesus for saying He would be killed. That is when Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan." Peter's thinking was way too worldly.

At that point, Jesus makes the earth-shattering announcement that anyone who would follow Him must take up a cross. Power and palaces would not be the lot of Christ's followers; pain, anguish and sacrifice would be. If I were one of the twelve at that point, I think I would have been flustered, too.

Most of those twelve disciples would catch on after Jesus' resurrection appearances, preach the cross faithfully through many trials, and become martyrs for Christ's cause. What sounded outlandish to them in

Christ's sake had become their own destiny. Whether Christ meant His statement metaphorically (i.e. "You'll have hard times"), or literally ("Some of you will die by crucifixion"), it is believed that many of these disciples experienced both.

People in the world thought them quite foolish for this. They bucked the tide of culture, stubbornly refused religious submission to emperor worship, and upset the balance of pagan-based economies for nothing but pain, anguish, and death for themselves. Who but a fool would do that?

Saul of Tarsus was one who would have thought them foolish. Quite angered that these upstarts were wrecking the religion of his youth, his education, and his adult profession, he retaliated with persecution. He would make sure some of them, at least metaphorically, carried their crosses.

That is, until He saw a light on a trip, heard a voice, and went on into the town of Damascus to hear more about the resurrected Lord. Then, he changed. What was foolishness to him prior became salvation to him in the end. The facts did not change, but his evaluation of them and his attitude toward them surely did. He went from pushing the cross on the saved to preaching the cross to the lost.

He, then, was uniquely qualified to write the Spirit-inspired words, "For the message (preaching—KJV; word—ASV) of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18 NKJV).

The very nature of the Christian religion—taught from early in Jesus' ministry—was that it would be unpopular and even counter-cultural. To those worldly folks who profess themselves to be wise, but are the real fools (Rom. 1:22), Jesus of Nazareth was nothing more than a rabble-rousing criminal rightly executed by the Roman Empire as a matter of political recourse. They didn't need trouble and He was causing it, so the powers put Him to death. Why would anybody follow Him? "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing..."

Saved people, rather, see honor in humility. The Creator who made the world loved His people—the pinnacle of His creation—enough to allow His only Son to leave the pleasantries of heaven and endure the trials of earth. The Son loved enough to permit false accusations to spur against Him physical abuse ranging from spitting and slapping to ultimate stabbing to release blood and water from the mutilated corpse.

Saved people see and appreciate that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). They appreciate such selfless-

ness and want to emulate it so much as they are called upon to do so. "...To those who are being saved, it is the power of God."

It's all in how one looks at the matter, and how one looks at his or her life. Worldly wisdom is about self-advancement, power, money, and prestige. But worldly wisdom, the apostle Paul (formerly Saul of Tarsus) concluded, was the real foolishness, the ultimate futility. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). God had destroyed the wisdom of the wise on Old Testament occasions (cf. Isa. 29:14; 1 Cor. 1:19), and He did it again in the cross of Christ.

People might not like it, but God wins. "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:22-24). The Creator knows how His creation operates. It might be corrupted in sin, but He is not. Therefore, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25).

The Creator set forth a creation that was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). When corrupted with sin, the world's degradation and desperation is only mitigated by those who will practice—against all cultural tides—godliness. "Noah found grace in the

eyes of the Lord," though colossal judgment came on the rest (Gen. 6:8). He preached righteousness, and the masses would not listen (2 Pet. 2:5). God actively proved Himself right, and the masses foolish.

The world corrupted itself in a vile cesspool of sin and violence (Gen. 6:5, 11). God would not lower Himself to such absence of standards. He is holy, and His holiness would prevail—if only in a few (cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

The few, therefore, often call out the most for their misguided ways. Few would find the narrow path, the Savior taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:13,14), but those few would be a light to the world and salt to the earth (Matt. 5:13-16). They would be the ones holding forth the word of life when most were content to walk into the wages of sin—death (Rom. 3:23; 6:21-23). Those who seem unwise in the ways of the masses have been the ones carrying the widely misunderstood and ignored message of true wisdom.

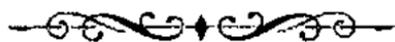
Not many of those high-minded people are called (1 Cor. 1:26). "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor.

1:27-29). Since God's ways are so unseemly to the world, His victory by those means becomes all the more amazing.

No fleshly being or group thereof can invent a message even close to the humble and glorious, simple and salvific word of the cross. They can continue to think it foolishness, but for that stubbornness, they will someday pay. Those who embrace its simple, even (arguably) counterintuitive wisdom—those who submit and carry their own crosses—will be the ones rewarded with a resurrection likened to the one following that crucifixion at Golgotha (cf. John 5:28-29; 1 John 3:1-3).

Speakers may dazzle audiences with brilliance, endear themselves to listeners with humor, or impress seekers with shallow truisms. Charlatans may tickle itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3). This is worldly wisdom and sophistry.

Contrarily, true evangelists preach the love of Christ and the response of self-sacrifice it demands. This is the preaching of the cross.



# Glorying in the Cross

John T. Polk, II

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption-- that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD [taken from Jeremiah 9:23-24].’” (1 Corinthians 1:27-31)

It seems that it is a normal, worldly attitude to “boast, or brag” about one’s achievements. This problem was rife in the church of Christ at Corinth. Nearly every Christian found something about which to brag/boast/glorify, while trying to elevate themselves above others. In other words, to them, “glorying” seemed to be a shortcut to spiritual recognition. Throughout the entire Epistle, the inspired Apostle Paul dealt with this most prevalent problem. It was of major concern then, and is probably even more so today!

Our present society gives ample opportunities for competition that gives one “bragging rights” over oth-

ers. Churches give in to this mania and compete by promotions within the local congregation (“Easter,” “Christmas,” “Mothers,” “Fathers,” “Grandparents,” every special day, except “The Lord’s Day!”) and without (“featured worship entertainment,” “famous speakers,” “awesome recreational activities”).

Before any Christian can boast because he/she is a “Christian,” and therefore to be elevated above all others, Paul reminds us that the “chosen” of God are not those who would impress the worldly: “foolish,” “weak,” “base,” “despised,” “are not.”

A Christian should never expect worldly recognition, acclaim, or elevation just by becoming a Christian. It is only by realizing how low our lives have become (“repenting”) and entering the lowest point of Jesus’ life on earth (“baptized into His death”), that we fully appreciate what it means for God to “raise us to newness of life” (Romans 6:3,4).

We must not boast that we are a Christian, but that Jesus Christ made it possible. “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). No one is “free” from sins without Jesus Christ.

Remember the principle “that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1

Corinthians 1:29), for no one should brag/glory before God that they have grown spiritually because of: (1) who preached to them (1:10-12; 3:1-11); (2) who baptized them (1:13-17); (3) their prominence before baptism (1:18-29); (4) following after men (1:30-31; 3:18-21); (5) not following Scripture (4:6-16); (6) not needing the Apostle Paul to visit them (4:17-21; 2 Corinthians 10:7-11; 11:16-31); (7) sympathizing with the immoral (5:1-7).

Every problem in the Corinthian church that caused division among them centered on this grasping for recognition. The appeal to them (and us!) was to remind them that their salvation depended entirely upon accepting God's: (1) calling (1:2-10); (2) preaching the message of the cross of Christ (1:17-18, 21; 2:1-5); (3) gift (4:4-7); (4) forgiveness (5:9-13; 6:1-11, 15-20); (5) overcoming temptations (10:1-14); (6) created individual sexual identity (11:2-16); (7) miraculous spiritual gifts (12:1-11); (8) resurrection of Jesus (15:1-20).

All the way through the epistle, Paul reminds us that we would be nothing, have nothing, hope for nothing, if it were not for God! Therefore even "if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). Paul even emphasized: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Christians must realize that, as Jesus has said, "when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10).

As a matter of fact, we cannot boast of our future without God. Solomon said: "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). James confirmed this for us today (James 4:13-17).

People boast/brag/glory about themselves when they refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon all that God is, has, and does for them. "Arrogance" is the inflated opinion we get when we look only at our achievements, and not at the help God gives us so that we may accomplish our achievements! Arrogance consumes the minds of: children who do not appreciate what their parents have provided them; politicians who think they, and not God, have sole control over wealth, lands and citizens; and religious leaders who think that religions which appeal to carnal minds and worldly interests, can spiritually elevate anyone!

Even our giving comes from what God has given us: "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And

God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: 'He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.' [from Psalm 112:9] Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God" (2 Corinthians 9:6-11).

Our jobs simply provide us a means to do more than just support ourselves. "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28). Truly, we must "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

Knowing that we must turn ourselves over to Jesus Christ, maybe we can now understand what Paul wrote: "As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has

been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jess neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:12-15).

Anyone who imposes unauthorized "laws" on a Christian may have "bragging rights" as if they have control over that Christian, but what they have done is really "wrong." A Christian must "boast" that only "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" has made the difference in his, or her, life. "God forbid" (may it never be so!) that we would "brag" about what we have done, but, rather, what God has done for, and with, us.

We must conclude with Paul, that "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

The "message of the cross" includes the resurrected Jesus' instruction to "every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Anyone who imposes doctrines and practices that God never authorized in His New Testament is "boasting in your flesh," and that is very wrong! God promises no salvation without faith and before baptism. "But 'he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.' For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the

Lord commends" (2 Corinthians 10:17-18).

Humanly-devised doctrines and practices, such as teaching that sinners are saved by a prayer, or twisting

Scriptures to emphasize the thief on the cross instead of "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) cannot, and have never, saved anyone, for they boast in the flesh.

## The Way of the Cross Leads Home

Jimmy Clark

The song "The Way of the Cross Leads Home" begins with the words "I must needs go home by the way of the cross: There's no other way but this; I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light If the way of the cross I miss."

Two passages that are cited with this song are Jesus' words to the one who wanted to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21).

The other passage is Peter's words to the Sanhedrin, where was stated, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Jesus explicitly said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"

(John 14:6). A study of the topic of the cross is vital to a home in heaven. Consequently, one must see that there are two crosses that lead home.

The first cross that leads home is the one Jesus bore for the sins of the world. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross provided the atonement for the world to have access to God. Sin brought separation from God. Isaiah wrote, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2).

James wrote concerning sin, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15).

Someone had to take the place of those who sinned that life might be

possible. Isaiah thus stated, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

Paul wrote, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. . . . For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:19, 21).

The rule of law demanded that the penalty for sin be executed. Christ having no sin and being both God and man provides the needed substitute for sinful man.

However, the cross of Christ is not the only cross to bear to go home to heaven. Jesus explicitly said to his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). Luke's account gives further details of this exhortation, where it is written, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

Taking up one's cross daily involves the constant sacrifice of life in order to please God. Paul stated of his life in view of the resurrection, "And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:30-31). Paul wrote of the motivating power of the cross and the love that was exemplified from it, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

Seeing that the cross of Christ motivates the child of God to die unto sin and to live unto the Lord, he then becomes the model for life. Obedience is modeled after him. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

He is the model of humble service. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8).

Out of this comes the conclusion, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my ab-

sence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

The very model of perseverance is in Christ. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye

be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. 12:2-3).

Jesus truly said that the way to life involved a gate that was "strait" and a way that was "narrow" with "few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). Nevertheless, any suffering or affliction as a Christian "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

## BE CONVERTED

Johnny Trail

Conversion is defined as "an experience associated with the definite and decisive adoption of a religion." (Miriam-Webster) Conversion was mentioned by Jesus at various points during His earthly ministry. In Matthew 18:3 Jesus said, "...Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." What does it mean to "be converted" to the extent of one becoming like a little child?

The Greek word used for converted in Matthew 18:3 is *στρέφω* (*strephō*) The word means to *turn* quite around or *reverse* (literally or figuratively); to convert, turn (again, back again, self, self about). The person who is converted turns himself around morally speaking. One might

say that there is a "revolution" in his life when he is converted to Christ.

While true conversion is crucial to salvation, one should never seek to downplay the importance of baptism. Most people in protestant denominationalism tend to do this very thing, and faithful members of the Lord's body are found defending the very thing taught in God's word. Baptism remits sin (Acts 2:38). Baptism saves a person (1 Peter 3:21). Baptism washes sins away and is the means by which one "calls upon the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

These things having been said, we have some people in the Lord's body who have merely gotten wet and have not been converted to New Testament Christianity. There is more to living a godly life than just being bap-

tized. Some are under the assumption that all they had to do was be baptized without any expectation of living the life of a servant.

The fact of the matter is that scripture is replete with passages that teach the necessity of conversion. Acts 28:27 says, "For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." These words are spoken to the Jews who have been given audience to Paul upon his arrival to Rome. Some of the Israelites who heard Paul believed him, and some did not. These unbelievers are the ones who have a heart that is dull, ears that are hard of hearing, and eyes that are closed.

Conversely, those converted to Christ are people who have opened their hearts, opened their eyes, and open their ears to the proclamation of God's message. Those truly converted are the ones who respond to the message of the New Testament by taking action. One must be a hearer and doer of the word to truly be a disciple of Jesus. James 1:22 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

In all honesty, we have too many people who are merely warming a pew. While church attendance is important, it is not at the pinnacle of

Christian responsibility. No person was ever complimented by an inspired writer for church attendance. They were complemented for being a fellow laborer in Christ. For being a worker in the church, Paul had the highest regard and praise.

Peter summed up the major responsibility of all Christians. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Those in Christ have been chosen by God to make intercession on behalf of Christ. That is, we entreat others to become children of God by the proclamation of the gospel. This cannot be done by people who feel no responsibility towards the lost or no urgency to teach individuals who are lost and dying in sin.

Moreover, conversion means that a person is very sensitive to the power of sin. Unlike some of the brethren at Rome, we need to avoid sin. Romans 6:1-2 says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Some people who are baptized show no real change in their lives after they arise from the waters of baptism. There needs to be a revolution in the lives of people who would desire to live a Christian life. Paul points this out in the very same chapter in verses eleven and

twelve. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

This might best be underscored by those who obeyed the gospel at Ephesus. Notice how they responded to the message of Jesus. Acts 19:19-20 says, "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." These newly converted Christians understood that their "curious arts" were not consistent with their profession of Christ, and they burned books valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver! What did you give up to follow Jesus?

In further consideration of these verses in Acts nineteen, one might consider verse twenty in particular. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." The word of God had a leavening effect upon all those who witnessed the conversion of these soothsayers, sorcerers, and charlatans. These people burned the sources of their unsavory financial gain. From these passages, one learns that the word of God is powerful when it falls into fertile ground. It has the ability to forever alter a person's life.

Evidently, the Corinthian church understood that conversion meant giving up former sinful practices. Paul lists every sin imaginable when he discusses their former manner of living. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Instead of arguing for the "right" to continue sinful behaviors, these brethren forsook their sins, repented, were "washed," and lived a sanctified life. Wouldn't it be good if people in our age responded to the gospel in the same way?

We must be converted to have eternal life. Acts 3:19 says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." God's people should seek to be as innocent and as blameless as a little child. Matthew 18:3 "...Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

# Why Do Liberals Stay among Us?

Hugh Fulford

If the church of Christ is just another denomination beset with as many sins, shortcomings, failures, and uninformed views as the leftist/progressive members of it say that it is why do they not leave it for “a different denomination,” a better and more perfect one, or at least one that is more in keeping with their views?

If loyal churches of Christ are behind the times because they refuse to adopt instrumental music in the worship of the church, utilize women preachers, admit to being a denomination, or accept as members those who have not been immersed for the remission of sins (or some biblically synonymous reason), etc. why do the leftists stay?

If the church is out of step on matters pertaining to race (though I cannot name a single congregation anywhere that does not welcome people of all races, with many of them having a racially integrated leadership of elders, deacons, and ministers), is out of step with reference to the Old Testament and its relation to the New Testament, is out of step concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, is out of step regarding sexual identity and same-sex relationships, etc. why do the progressives stay?

I will tell you why they stay. They have succeeded in capturing some of

the larger, more affluent congregations in various parts of the country. They have succeeded in capturing several of the once faithful Christian universities. They will not be satisfied until they have shipwrecked the faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20) of as many other Christians, congregations, and colleges as they can.

They stay because they see themselves as the “saviors” of the church of Christ. They see the church as narrow and sectarian and they are out to reform it. Some of the preachers among them can write of nothing other than why the churches ought to have instrumental music and women preachers, why they should stop insisting on the necessity of immersion for the remission of sins, and why they should acknowledge that the church is a denomination! They are ashamed of the church in its allegiance to the simple New Testament way, and they desire to change it to make it more in step with the culture around it and the denominational churches that men have established.

They contend that all who believe in Jesus, regardless of whether they have been immersed for the remission of sin and regardless of doctrinal differences and worship practice differences, are members of the one body of Christ. They seem to think that no false doctrines or practices have arisen

since the close of the New Testament, and that the New Testament in its first century context does not address any false doctrines or unscriptural practices that may possibly exist today. They seem to think that the Bible should not be used to address and refute any doctrine or practice that may be considered contrary to the Scriptures.

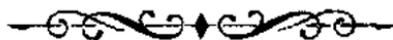
One of their number, in responding to another who was giving book, chapter, and verse in refutation of a particular doctrine, condescendingly asked, "Are you reading the Bible or just quoting verses?" They do not like book, chapter, and verse preaching, and often charge those who do that kind of preaching with "proof-texting." They think that they and they alone know how to correctly read the Bible!

Their view of how the Scriptures are to be handled allows for wide doctrinal differences and beliefs and for great variety of worship practices. They "read" the Bible in such a way as for all who profess faith in Christ (regardless of doctrine and practice) to be acceptable to God, and foolishly assert that all who believe in Jesus are already united in Him, in spite of their many obvious differences! And these are only some of the more "visible" issues that the progressives are championing.

Their doctrine is contrary to the sound doctrine of the New Testament. The "faith" they espouse is not the "one faith" of the New Testament for

which loyal Christians are to earnestly contend (Ephesians 4:5; Philippians 1:27-28; Jude 3). As one highly respected leader among God's faithful people said to me not long ago (speaking of the liberals among us), "Their 'faith' is a different faith than ours." They parade as churches of Christ but they are not churches of the New Testament faith and order. The sooner the rest of us recognize them for who they are the better off we will be (see Romans 16:17-18). Most informed brethren have already done so.

To the credit and integrity of progressives and liberals of the past, they went to the digressive Christian Church or left to join the Disciples of Christ, the Methodists, the Episcopalians, the Catholics, or various other denominational churches. I have a whole lot more respect for them than I do for the lack of integrity characteristic of those who now stay, "worm" their way into congregations, gatherings of preachers, Bible departments of Christian schools and universities, and other venues, and corrupt the faith of others, "beguiling unstable souls" (2 Peter 2:14). The liberals and leftists in the church today do not have the kind of integrity that will permit them to leave.



# Keeping Jesus' Commandments

Owen Olbricht

Giving commandments is Jesus's part; our part is keeping them. We are not asked to agree with them. We are asked to teach and obey them. When Jesus sent the apostles to preach to all the world, He told them to teach those they baptized "to observe all I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus' commandments have been written for us by inspired men, like Paul, who wrote, "the commandments I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). John concluded the book of Revelation by writing, "blessed are those who do His commandments" (Revelation 22:14). Instead of blessing us, Jesus will take vengeance on us if we do not obey (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

## Obey All Commandments

Obedying the commandments means keeping "all" of them (Matthew 28:20). We are not to pick and choose which commandments we will obey. Paul wrote, "You who abhor idols, do you rob temples" (Romans 2:22). Just because a person hated idols did not give him the right to rob temples. Obeying the commandments we like does not give us license to fail to observe the ones we do not like.

As I was leaving an area where we knocked doors in a campaign, I drove to pick up a couple of workers. One was a young man who was a college

student and the girl was in high school. They were tightly embraced and were kissing while standing on one of the downtown street corners. I confronted them. "I cannot believe you were kissing in the open public on a street corner." He replied, "This is one of my weaknesses. I do well with all the other commandments."

He seemed to think it was all right to violate one commandment because he kept all the others. It does not work that way. Paul admonished, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1). James wrote, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, He is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

## Keep All Included in Each Commandment

Keeping a commandment requires observing all of it, and not just keeping a part of it. This is what was expected of Saul in response to God's instruction.

Samuel gave Saul God's word, "...utterly destroy all that they (the Amalekites) have, and do not spare them" (1 Samuel 15:3). Saul destroyed all but the king, and let the people keep the best of the Amalekite's belongings. Saul told Samuel that he had "obeyed the voice of the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:26).

Saul and the people had obeyed most of what God commanded, but they failed to keep all. Samuel told him, "...you have rejected the word of the Lord" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Keeping a part of God's commandment is not enough. Keeping only a part is "rebellion (1 Samuel 15:23). Are we rebelling when we attend some of the gatherings of the church, and not all of them (Heb. 10:25)? Is keeping some but not all the traffic laws rebellion (1 Pet. 2:13)? What else do members do that is only a part of a commandment?

#### **Not Add to Commandments**

Not only are we not to diminish what is included in a commandment, but we are not to add to what is included. Jesus told the apostles to teach those they baptized "...to observe all I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). "Observe *all*" is inclusive and restrictive. If a person has added to what Jesus commanded and observing it, he is not keeping what Jesus commanded, but is observing what Jesus has not commanded.

Moses did this. When God told him to speak to the rock, he added to what God told him to do, and struck the rock two times, thus he did something God had not commanded, and he did not give God credit for the water that came from the rock. Because of this God did not permit him to enter the promised land (Num. 20:7-12). Adding to what God said may seem like a small thing, but with God it is

going beyond what He requires, which is written in Scripture (1 Corinthians 4:6), and doing what He has not commanded.

#### **Obey What We Can**

God requires of us to do what we are able to do, and not what we are unable to do. This principle governs everything that is required of us. Paul wrote about our giving, "...it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what at he does not have" (2 Corinthians 8:12). This principle can be found in the parable of the talents; each man had to give account for the money given to him (Mathew 25:14-30). Each of them was expected to serve with what he was given to him according to his ability to use it. God does not require of us what we do not have and what we are unable to do.

A person is not expected to give if he has no money, or to attend if he is in the hospital and cannot be released. If someone cannot talk to confess his faith in Jesus, a hand sign or nod of the head can be his confession instead of a confession with his mouth (Romans 10:10). God expects us to obey to the fullest with what we have and with what we can do. We are not held accountable for what we do not have and what we cannot do.

#### **Conclusion**

We are required to observe all Jesus commanded in all areas where Jesus has given commandments. It is

wrong for us to add to or take away from what He has commanded (Deut. 4:2), for His every word is pure (Pro. 30:5, 6). Just as with pure water, if we

add or take anything away from it, we contaminate it. God forbid that we should teach and practice a contaminated Word of God.

## Shepherd Leadership in the Scriptures

Andy Erwin

In the Old Testament, the verb of “shepherd” (*raah*) is translated to pasture, tend, feed, lead, and keep the flock.<sup>1</sup> The verb can also represent the entire job of a shepherd. A “shepherd” is simply a feeder or tender of sheep.<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament, the verbs *bosko* and *poimaino* are translated to feed, herd, and to tend as a shepherd.<sup>3</sup> Again, the entirety of the work can be represented in this word. Accordingly, a “shepherd” (*poimen*) is likewise one who herds or tends sheep.<sup>4</sup>

Shepherds were providers, guides, protectors, and constant companions of sheep. Sheep were totally dependent on shepherds for protection, rescuing, grazing, watering, shelter, and

tending to injuries. Without a caring shepherd, sheep would not have lived long in the ancient world.

Using the shepherd as a metaphor, the shepherd leader concept in the Old Testament begins with God. He is depicted as a Shepherd to Israel (Gen. 48:15; Gen. 49:24).<sup>5</sup> Throughout the Old Testament, God is shown leading His flock (Ps. 31:3). He leads out of love (Exod. 15:13),<sup>6</sup> and goes before them (Ps. 68:7), driving out the enemy to make room for His own flock (Ps. 78:52–55).

The Shepherd Psalm (Ps. 23) depicts God as a personal Shepherd (v.1) who leads His sheep to pastures and waters (v.2), while protecting them with His rod and staff (v.4), even restoring them to health (v.3). He also gathers His sheep (Isa. 56:8) and carries them in His bosom to safety (Isa. 40:11; cf. Ps. 28:9). As Shepherd over His flock, God is presented guiding (Deut. 26:5–8; Ps. 77:20; 80:1), pro-

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<sup>1</sup> William L. Holliday, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 342.

<sup>2</sup> William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 388.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, edited by Fredrick William Danker, third edition (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 842.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 843.

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<sup>5</sup> For more Old Testament depictions of God acting as a shepherd, see Ps. 79:13; Ps. 80:1; Ps. 95:7; Ps. 100:3; Isa. 63:11; Mic. 7:14; Zech. 9:16.

<sup>6</sup> On one occasion God is viewed as shepherding with anger (Ps. 74:1).

tecting (Ps. 78:52), saving (Ezek. 34:22), leading (Jer. 50:19; Mic. 2:12, 13), keeping careful watch over (Jer. 31:10; Ps. 121:4), and caring for His flock (Zech. 10:3).

During Israel's Old Testament history God did not merely serve as a Shepherd who led by example. To the contrary, He actively directed His flock in paths of righteousness (Ps. 23:3). God served as leader, protector, and ruler for Israel.<sup>7</sup> God led according to His core attributes of righteousness, holiness, justice, and love. God's reputation among the nations depended upon the standards of the people

who bore His name.<sup>8</sup> He sought to remove wicked influences from the flock He pastured (Zech. 11:7). The goals, vision, and work of the flock were derived from His leadership, while being executed through their participation in His plan. God sought to encourage the spiritual transformation of His people through their participation and the mutual relationship developed through experienced faith and reward.

God began the practice of utilizing "under shepherds"<sup>9</sup> to look after the needs of His vulnerable flock (cf. 2 Sam. 23:3-4).<sup>10</sup> Moses and Aaron are depicted as shepherds over the flock (Ps. 77:20; Isa. 63:11). God did not want Israel to as sheep without a shepherd upon their deaths, and thus He appointed Joshua to shepherd leadership (Num. 27:16-21). The Judges followed in this capacity (2 Sam. 7:7). David then served God and His flock as a shepherd king (2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Chron. 11:2; Ps. 78:70-72).<sup>11</sup>

God's desire was to give His flock shepherds after His own heart to feed them with knowledge and understanding (Jer. 3:15). Yet, contrasted against

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<sup>8</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 111.

<sup>9</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds*, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Laniak, *Shepherds*, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Although is designated a shepherd by God, no ruling king in Israel or Judah is known to have officially borne this title from the people. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 6: 487-8.

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<sup>7</sup> In many ancient kingdoms the shepherd metaphor also symbolized a ruler's relationship with his people. Rulers were described as demonstrating their legitimacy to rule by their ability to "pasture" their people. Hammurabi and many other rulers of ancient western Asia are called "shepherd" or described as "pasturing" their subjects. Cyrus of Persia is also depicted as God's shepherd who would drive the flock from their homeland (Isa. 44:28-45:1; cf. Jer. 23:8). This metaphor is also used with regard to armies and their commanders (1 Kings 22:17; Jer. 6:3). However, no ruling king in Israel or Judah is known to have directly borne this title. For information pertaining to the use of the shepherd metaphor in antiquity, see R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 853; Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds after My Own Heart*, 58-74; Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 6: 487-8.

the faithful “under shepherds” provided by God were unfaithful leaders (shepherds) who transgressed the law of God (Jer. 2:8), and influenced the people to do likewise (Jer. 10:21; 12:10; 22:22; 23:1–2; 25:34–38; 50:6–7). The most infamous recounting of their wicked rule over God’s flock is found in Ezekiel 34:1–10.

One of the reasons why God needed Ezekiel to serve as a watchman for His people was because the men who were supposed to be doing that job were negligent. The Lord addressed this issue by asking, “Should not shepherds feed the flock?” (Ezekiel 34:2) It was not because there was a shortage of food that the flock was not being feed. The shepherds of the flock were fat and clothed (v.3), and were feeding themselves (v.10). However, they were not true caretakers of the flock. As a result, the flock was scattered as sheep without a shepherd (v. 5; cf. Zech. 10:2).

The rulers behaved like owners rather than hired servants. They became hirelings and thieves. The shepherds of Israel were not concerned with strengthening the weak, ministering to the sick and broken, bringing back those who had been driven away, or seeking the lost (Ezek. 34:3–4). Instead of functioning as godly and faithful keepers of the flock, they drove away the flock by ruling them with force and harshness (Ezek. 34:4).

The health and multiplication of a community was a sign of good leader-

ship.<sup>12</sup> The condition and growth of a flock depends greatly on the care, attentiveness, and skill of the shepherd.<sup>13</sup> Responsible shepherds would know every member if their flocks in terms of their birth circumstances, history of health, eating habits, and other idiosyncrasies.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the result of this failed leadership was a people “scattered because there was no shepherd” (Ezek. 34:5).

The Lord said, “My sheep were scattered over the whole face of the earth, with no one to seek or search for them” (Ezek. 34:6). The shepherds of His people were negligent, irresponsible, and careless with the sacred work they had in overseeing God’s flock.

God unequivocally states: “I am against the shepherds” (Ezek. 34:10). Due to the negligence of the false shepherds of Israel, God would take the matter into His hands to seek and save the lost (Ezek. 34:11), to feed, water, and rest His flock (Ezek. 34:13 ff.), to bind the injured and strengthen the weak, and to destroy the wicked shepherds (Ezek. 34:16; cf. Zech. 11:7).

The Old Testament prophets look ahead to a time when God would rescue His flock from the nations to which they were scattered (Ezek. 34:11 ff.), returning them to their homeland from captivity (Isa. 11:11;

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<sup>12</sup> Laniak, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Laniak, 53.

<sup>14</sup> Laniak, 57.

Jer. 23:3; Mic. 5:3; Zech. 10:3 ff.). Israel was in need of spiritual transformation and God would pour out upon them the "Spirit of grace and supplication" (Zech. 12:10) corresponding to a fountain being opened for sin and impurity (Zech. 13:1).<sup>15</sup> Israel was in need of greater understanding and assurance of God's capacity for forgiveness, to which the prophets speak with unanimity (Isa. 55:6-9; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25; 37:23).

The Lord promised to establish one Shepherd over Israel (Mic. 5:4; Zech. 11:16). The Shepherd would be from the line of David (Isa. 11:1 ff.; Jer. 23:5; Ezek. 34:23; Ezek. 37:24; Zech. 12:1-13:1).

While being the Lord's Servant (Ezek. 34:23), the Shepherd would also be "prince among them" (Ezek. 34:24). Israel would be one nation again, with one king (Jer. 23:5; Ezek. 37:22-24). The "Ruler" would be born in Bethlehem, although He has existed from eternity (Mic. 5:2).

The Spirit of the Lord would be upon Him and He would Shepherd with wisdom and understanding, counsel and strength, knowledge and the fear of the Lord, while judging in righteousness (Isa. 11:1-5; cf. Ezek. 34:17).

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Alan Fuhr, Jr., and Gary E. Yates, *The Message of the Twelve* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 292.

The Shepherd Servant would establish a new covenant between God and Israel, ensuring the ultimate forgiveness of sin (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 34:25; Ezek. 37:26), and establishing peace between God and man (Mic. 5:5; Isa. 9:6 ff.). The Shepherd would eventually become King over all the earth (Zech. 14:9), after first being stricken by the people (Zech. 13:7), and for the people (Isa. 53:4 ff.).

The writers of the New Testament make clear that the Shepherd to whom the prophets pointed was Jesus Christ. Not only does Jesus check all the boxes pertaining to the fulfillment of these prophecies,<sup>16</sup> He also exhibits the most admirable traits of a shepherd leader in the image of the Father (see Heb. 1:3).

Jesus was a constant companion to the flock, especially the twelve disciples.<sup>17</sup> He sought to find the lost sheep that had been scattered (Matt. 10:6; Matt. 15:24; Luke 19:10; cf. Jer. 23:4, 5; Ezek. 34:5; Zech. 10:2 ff.). He was a shepherd to sheep who had none (Matt. 2:6; Mark 6:34). He shepherded out of compassion (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34; cf. Ex. 15:13). He was a friend to His flock (John 15:13-15),

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<sup>16</sup> For further reading about the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies see J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 645-650.

<sup>17</sup> So much was Jesus the constant companion to His flock that Matthew gives special notice of when He was not among them (cf. Matt. 14:13, 23).

which consisted also of publicans and sinners (Matt. 11:19). His goal as Shepherd is to lead the flock to springs of the water of life where God will wipe every tear from their eyes (Rev. 7:7), realizing that He would have to be stricken (cf. Zech. 13:7; Isa. 53:5, 8), and lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:17), that they might live (John 10:27-28).

Pursuant to the shepherd imagery of Christ over the flock is the imagery of under-shepherds to follow His example in caring for the church. Just as the Father did not want Israel to be left as sheep without a shepherd upon the death of Moses (Num. 27:17), Christ did not want the church to be left without pastoral care upon His ascension to His throne in heaven (Acts 20:28-29; cf. Jer. 23:4).

The first example to consider is Peter and the entrusted responsibility to feed the sheep (John 21:15-17). Peter's work of feeding centered upon teaching and preaching, or "the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). While tasked with feeding the flock and granted a measure of authority, the apostles continued to view Christ as the Chief Shepherd and supreme Overseer of the church (1 Pet. 2:25; 1 Pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:20). The apostles recognized their work was to serve as humble stewards of the flock and the work entrusted to their care (1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Cor. 4:1, 6). Sometimes the apostles were even required to shepherd one another, as was the case with Paul and Peter regarding fellowship

between Jewish and Gentile brethren (Gal. 2:11-14).

Just as Jesus received the work of shepherding from His Father, He handed over the task to Peter and the rest of the apostles. Peter then passed along the function of shepherd leader to elders in the churches. To ensure faithful nurturing, guidance, and protection for the flock, the Lord gave qualifications and stipulations for shepherd leaders in every congregation (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Just as Jesus was a constant companion to the twelve, elders are to remain among the flock (1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Pet. 5:2), caring for, encouraging, and guiding the church. Yet, the shepherd's ongoing challenge was teaching the flock to obey the Lord's commands.

A shepherd leader directs the flock and helps the flock to navigate a faithful course in the world, determining direction for the flock, while following the lead of the Good Shepherd. As shepherd leaders follow the example of Christ, the church follows them (1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). But, just as Christ did not lead by example *only* (cf. John 14:15; John 15:10), elders are not to lead *only* by example. The flock is commanded to obey and submit to those who are watching over their souls (Heb. 13:17). The elders have been entrusted with "charge" over the flock (1 Thess. 5:12). If the shepherd leaders are faithful in communicating the word of God, the flock must obedient-

ly follow them as they follow Christ (cf. Phil. 4:9).

The shepherd leader is a servant leader who oversees the flock as a voluntary service to the flock (1 Pet. 5:2), hoping to protect the sheep from harm. His interest is not in lording over the flock (1 Pet. 5:3), like the wicked shepherds from the prophets or from the ministry of Christ. He *serves* because it is his desire to serve and to teach those whom he leads to be servants as well. By serving the flock, the shepherd is imitating the shepherd leadership of Christ (cf. Mark 10:43-45).

Shepherd leaders are active participants in the ministry serving as models of proper behavior and desires.<sup>18</sup> Such leaders are desirous to see their flock involved in the ministry and mission of Christ and to use their talents and abilities to fulfill their respective ministries and thereby bring glory to God.

The desire to see the spiritual maturity and health of the flock realized prompts the development of relationship, discipleship, and biblical education. Sheep become transformed as they come to mimic the faith of the shepherd. Through ongoing discipleship and a constant state of spiritual mindedness, the sheep are transformed and develop the mind of

Christ. Shepherds must lead the flock to an environment conducive to encouragement and edification, both individually and collectively. In such an environment spiritual growth will be achieved and numerical growth will occur (Eph. 4:11). The flock will be safe and multiply.

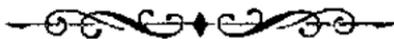
From Father to Son, Son to apostles, apostles to elders, elders must also encourage shepherd leadership among the flock. There is a point to which every Christian is called to provide pastoral care to one another, which is borne out in the numerous one another passages of the New Testament.

The mutual edification of the body of Christ consists of love, encouragement, forgiveness, fellowship, teaching, and care. Each of these actions should be considered aspects of healthy shepherd leadership. Various relationships within the flock will also require direction and guidance to come from one another (see Titus 2:1-8).

Each Christian should desire to be a shepherd leader when the situation calls for it, looking unto the example of the elders of the congregation, and ultimately Christ as the "Chief Shepherd and Overseer of our souls."

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<sup>18</sup> Gregory E. Lamb, "Saint Peter as 'Sympresbyteros': Mimetic Desire, Discipleship, and Education," *Christian Education Journal* 15, no. 2 (2018): 203.



# Remembering Al Franks

Andy Erwin



(1939-2019)

Alfred L. "Al" Franks passed away on Wednesday, October 16, 2019. He was born January 3, 1939 in Louisiana. He will likely be remembered by brethren at large as the fine editor of the *Magnolia Messenger*. He will be remembered by his surviving family as a loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. At the time of his death, he and June had three Bible studies ongoing. One study was with his granddaughter and her husband.

## A Preacher

"Brother Al," as I called him, made his first "Bible talk" when he was nine years old at his home congregation of Boxwood in Merryville, LA. The congregation gave weekly opportunities for the young boys and men to speak. Al took advantage of the opportunities that were provided and began making talks almost every week. His school's principal would

even allow Al out of school every Thursday to study Bible.

By the time he was 16, he was preaching regularly for the Bilbo & Roberts St. congregation in DeRidder, LA. The fulltime work enabled him to rent a house and marry his sweetheart, June Pearson of Tupelo, MS. He was 17 and she was 16. They were married 63 years! As a young lady, June dreamed of marrying a preacher, and being useful in the church. Anyone who knows her will say that she fulfilled this dream.

Brother Al went on to preach for 70 years. He preached fulltime at such places as Mayfield in Saltillo, MS, where he was the congregation's first fulltime preacher, beginning in January 1957. He preached at Skyline in Tupelo, MS, Yazoo City (twice); Rolling Fork, Poplar Springs in Clarksburg, TN, and South Huntington St. Church of Christ, Kosciusko MS.

Brother Al left Yazoo city to focus on his education at Harding's Graduate School of Religion. He and Kelby Smith drove to Memphis for classes in 1960-61. Brother Al then enrolled at Freed Hardeman College in 1964-65. His education is extremely unique as he took classes in graduate school first.

## **At South Huntington**

Brother Al will forever be linked with the South Huntington Street congregation in Kosciusko. He and June moved their family to Kosciusko in 1971. He preached for the congregation until 1978 and served as elder twice. At the time of his death, he was serving as an elder.

Brother Al left fulltime work at South Huntington Street to help start churches in Forest, MS, Crystal Springs, MS, and Meridian, MS. His goal was to be a missionary in Mississippi and to begin churches in counties without a church of Christ.

A historic merger happened in January of 2018 as the black and white congregations came together in Kosciusko. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless this union.

## **Magnolia Bible College and Magnolia Bible Institute**

Al was a supporter of Magnolia Bible College (1976-2009). He served on the Board of Directors at the time of its closing. The property was deeded to the South Huntington church and one of brother Al's greatest concerns was their stewardship of these facilities. He was bothered by seeing these buildings not being used.

As a result, Al was instrumental in beginning the Magnolia Bible Institute in 2018. Evening classes meet throughout the year and the possibilities for good are very exciting. MBI, like MBC, started with a dream.

## **The Magnolia Messenger**

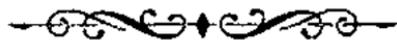
In 1978, Al started the *Magnolia Messenger*. He thanked God every day that he was able to do this work. This paper currently has a circulation of over 31,000 readers. It is freely given to those who request it. Al paid for the paper by sending one request letter each year at year's end.

The paper will continue to be printed. Those who love and support it should continue to do so now more than ever.

## **Some Personal Observations**

To know Al Franks is to love him. He was a great encourager to his brethren and to all men. He encouraged others to love and serve the Lord. He inspired humility in others by his humble nature. He was not one who liked to criticize. He looked for good in others and sought to help others realize their potential for good by serving God. One never had to question whether or not Al's heart was in the right place. He was sincere and genuine.

It saddens us when good men are removed from us. But, let us take comfort to know that God remains to strengthen and to bless His people.



# What Held Jesus to the Cross?

Matthew 27: 39-44

## *Introduction:*

1. "If..." sounds like the Devil talking to Jesus. Matthew 4:3, 6
2. Jesus could have called in the angels. Matthew 26:53, 54
3. Why did Jesus not save himself? What held him to the cross?

## **I. His Resignation to the Father's Will.**

- A. "But how shall the scripture be fulfilled." Isaiah 53:7
- B. His desire was to please the Father. Philippians 2:6-9
- C. Let God's will be our will as well. Matthew 7:21-23

## **II. His Matchless Love for Mankind.**

- A. Love, the nature of God. 1 John 4:8; Romans 5:8
- B. Jesus, God in the Flesh. John 1:1, 14; Romans 8:35-39
- C. Love was His nature as well. Galatians 2:20

## **III. His Divine Hatred for Sin.**

- A. God hates all sin. Proverbs 6:16-19
- B. Every accountable person has the sin problem. Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8; 5:19
- C. The cross is the only answer for justification.

## **IV. His Anticipation of Reunion with the Father.**

- A. Jesus had a desire to go home. John 17:3-5
- B. The joy enabled endurance. Hebrews 12:1, 2
- C. Heaven is a place of rejoicing. Luke 15:5-7

## **V. Our Sins—Yours and Mine.**

- A. He was sinless. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15
- B. Without the cross is to be without hope. Ephesians 2:12-16
- C. The cross shows us how ugly our sins really are.

## *Conclusion:*

1. Jesus could not save himself and be our savior as well!
2. We need to die as well to be raised with Him. Romans 6:1-6

-Mike Kiser

# 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 de-

voted 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.

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## **The Gospel Gleaner**

The *Gospel Gleaner* is being printed and mailed free of charge to over 2,000 subscribers. We believe this number will exceed 3,000 in 2020 with God's blessings. We would not be able to do this work without you. We would like to thank brethren who write for the paper, churches and individuals who support the paper financially, and everyone who faithfully prays for this work. We would also like to thank Jimmy Bates and his family for printing and mailing the paper.

Our desire is for the *Gospel Gleaner* to be a paper you support, recommend, and spiritually prosper from reading. We want the *Gleaner* to continue to serve as a trustworthy source for edification in our brotherhood.

Thank you again for your support in 2019 and thank you in advance for your support in 2020!

*Andy Erwin*

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