

The **GOSPEL GLEANER**

Volume 26

January, 2014

Number One

The Gospel Gleaner Remembers Guy Hester



February 15, 1936 – December 5, 2013

Our brotherhood lost a beloved preacher this past December when we said "goodbye" to Guy Hester.

Guy was born February 15, 1936 in Vernon, Alabama. He preached for 64 years.

His father was S.F. Hester, a great gospel preacher. His brothers – Giles, Benny Wayne, and Johnny – each preached the gospel. Johnny is the last of these preaching brothers, and he preaches for the Shady Acres congregation in Sikeston, Missouri, where he has labored for over twenty years.

Guy and Shirley

Guy's beloved was Shirley. They would have been married for 61 years on December, 15. Wherever Guy went, Shirley was faithfully by his side. Whatever "stray preacher" Guy would adopt, Shirley did too.

Both Guy and Shirley knew the importance of preaching the gospel and trained their children to realize it as well. To their union four children were given. Ferrell and Tim are gospel preachers. Connie and Jalema are married to gospel preachers – Larry Montgomery and Jay Tidwell. His grandson, Guyton Montgomery is also a gospel preacher.

As a Preacher

Guy preached in Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. He even spent the coldest winter of his life preaching in Iowa, before he moved back to a warmer climate.

Guy did foreign and domestic mission work, and helped to found and direct the Vreed-en-Hoop School of the Bible in Guyana, South America.

He preached for such congregations as Garfield Heights in Indianapolis, Southaven in Southaven, MS, Ripley, TN, Ripley, MS, and Parsons, TN. While in Ripley, MS, Guy taught a "preacher training" class which helped to produce several gospel preachers, deacons, and elders. When moving from this place, he could not help his family

pack for the number of visitors requesting that Guy baptize them before he moved. That day, on six different occasions, someone came to his house requesting that he baptize them!

The two men who influenced Guy most as a gospel preacher were his father and Gus Nichols. Brother S.F. Hester and Gus Nichols were dear friends. Brother Nichols helped to teach and train brother Hester. As a result, Guy became acquainted with the Nichols' family at a young age. Guy was also taught by brother Nichols in his Friday night training classes. These classes helped to train hundreds of men over the course of forty years.

Back in those days, chart sermons were preached very effectively. The charts used by S.F. Hester and Gus Nichols would also be used by their sons. In fact, the first time I heard Guy preach, he used one of these chart sermons. He was conducting a gospel meeting for the Williams Chapel congregation west of Murray, KY, and the sermon he preached was titled "The Five States of Man." I continue to preach this sermon today.

As a Friend

The experience of hearing Guy preach led to a great friendship. He was actually more like a father than a friend to me.

When my father slipped from the surly bonds of this world, Guy was there to comfort me and helped to conduct his funeral. Guy could hardly speak for the tears he cried. Guy was a veteran of the Korean War, and my father was a veteran of the Vietnam War. Late in my father's life he began to struggle with his personal memories of that war, and Guy would call him, listen to him, and comfort him as one old soldier to another, and more importantly, as one brother in Christ to another.

Many times I would call Guy with questions, or to seek advice. Sometimes I would call him to bounce a sermon off

of him. He would usually say, "Not only do I like it, I want it!" That is not intended to be a self-serving compliment, I assure you. That's just the way Guy was. That is one example of how he encouraged young men to preach the word.

When I think about Guy Hester, I must also consider the kind providence of God. I believe God brings such people, as Guy was to me, into our lives for a very special reason. God knows our needs better than we can even imagine. God knew that this young preacher needed a man like Guy Hester in his life. He knew that Guy was the kind of man who would take a young preacher under his wing, encourage him, and love him. I am thankful to God for the men like Guy Hester that the Lord has brought into my life. Guy is not the only such man, but he is indeed missed and only a void remains where once he stood.

When Guy would close a gospel meeting, he would use Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus. These words seem fitting, as I reflect upon Guy's departure. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Andy Erwin



The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number One
January, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Michael Shank
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 EDITORIAL *Guy F. Hester*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Guy Hester Was a "Preacher's Preacher"*
John T. Polk II
- 5 *A Tribute to Guy Hester*
Ernest Underwood
- 6 *Remembering My Daddy*
Ferrell Hester
- 7 *Guy Hester, A Special Kind of Preacher*
Jay Tidwell
- 7 *Memories of My Daddy and Things He Taught Me*
Jalema Tidwell
- 8 *A Tribute to Guy Hester*
Robert R. Taylor, Jr.
- 8 *Remembering Guy F. Hester*
Johnny Hester
- 9 *"I Tell You One Thing, I'll Never Marry a Preacher!"*
Connie Jo Hester Montgomery
- 12 *Remembrances of My Dad - Guy Hester*
Tim Hester
- 13 *A Tribute to a Friend*
M.W. Kiser
- 14 *How Many Brethren Does It Take to Change a Light bulb?*
Guy Hester
- 14 *The Great Tragedy of Being Lost*
Guy Hester

Guy Hester Was a "Preacher's Preacher"

John T. Polk II

Guy Hester truly was a "preacher's preacher," for not only did he "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2), but he was an integral part of a preaching family. His Dad, brothers, sons, and sons-in-law are all Gospel Preachers. Like Isaac of old (Hebrews 11:20), Guy devoted his life to passing on God's Plan to save men through Jesus Christ to everyone who would hear.

Guy was like Onesimus, "a faithful and beloved brother" (Colossians 4:9), both physically and spiritually.

Guy was never at a loss for simple, effective and powerful preaching that edified churches of Christ everywhere. He, like a Solomon, "sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright-words of truth" (Ecclesiastes 12:10).

He was a "preacher's preacher," a model for generations to come because he was always prepared, properly dressed, pleasantly focused, and deeply appreciative of every opportunity he was given to "Preach the Word."

He was a "preacher's preacher" who knew that though this world is a temporary home (2 Corinthians 4:17-18), from his beginning preaching in 1950, taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the United States to Guyana, South America, he al-

ways knew his home was wherever his devoted wife, Shirley, was living. She was his wife, mother of his children, loving companion, friend, supporter, and nurse.

He was a "preacher's preacher" for 64 years, having been influenced by the best of the previous generation and respected by the present generation of Gospel Preachers. Like Abel's sacrifice of old through his sermons, Guy, "being dead still speaks" (Hebrews 11:4).

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10). "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

In the hand of God Almighty, rest on, Brother.

S.F. Hester and Guy Hester



"He Will be Missed"

The day I learned of the death of Guy Hester was a sad moment for me. But I am confident it was a day of rejoicing for him. Guy was an outstanding gospel preacher. I always considered it a privilege to be associated with him on many lectureships, especially at Garfield Heights in Indianapolis, IN and others in Mississippi. You could always expect a sound lesson from Guy.

While he had many years of questionable health he faithfully persisted in proclaiming the Word. He will be missed by those of us who had come to know him for the fine quality he demonstrated. While he would be the last to ever claim anything near perfection, he did his work so well that we all can and will continually profit from his labors.

May God bless and comfort his family and brethren everywhere.

James W. Boyd

A Tribute to Guy Hester

Ernest Underwood

Many years ago I met and became good friends with Guy Hester. I was older than he, but he had been preaching longer than I. I got a late start. Our friendship and fellowship lasted all of our lives until he went home to be with his Lord last week. Because of the circumstance of my being in the nation of India for a period of five months I was not able to be with the family in their time of sorrow. However, I know that Guy would have understood, and I know that all of his family also understands.

My parents got to know and appreciate Guy even before I did. Both of them loved and appreciated him and his family. When my dad died the family asked me, a son, to conduct the funeral services. I considered it an honor bestowed upon me by the family. However, knowing of Dad's love for Guy I asked him to be a part of the service, a thing which he did.

Through the experiences of life and associations I have learned that friends may sometimes say something that is offensive to each other. However, I can never remember a time when Guy and I ever had a cross word between us. He was that kind of a man, and I hope that I was, and still am, that kind.

The Bible does not tell us of all that goes on in Paradise. However, by using my imagination I can just use it to picture Guy as already having met Abraham, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Paul, Timothy, and a host of others who were all faithful servants of God. If this is the way it is in Paradise, don't you know that Guy is immensely enjoying his new relationships.

I sent an e-mail to the family by way of Tim. Because of the sometimes weakness of this system in India I do not know if they received it or not. But, as I told Tim in the e-mail, I do sorrow for myself and the family because we have lost from our physical view a loved one and a friend. However, as a Christian viewing the death of another faithful Christian I rejoice greatly, knowing that the times of pain and sorrow are over forevermore for him.

If I were called upon to choose the words on his tombstone they would be:

**"He fought the good fight;
He finished the course;
He kept the faith."**



The Hester Brothers
L-R Giles, Benny
Wayne, Johnny, Guy
(Seated)

Remembering My Daddy

Ferrell Hester

There are so many good and wonderful memories that I have of my daddy that bring joy and warmth to my heart. Words alone cannot express my thoughts and feelings well enough. Daddy was my first teacher of how life as a Christian young man should be lived. He was my first "trainer" in a young men's preacher's training class. In this class he taught six of us how to prepare and preach a sermon. Daddy was my encourager, as I grew physically old enough to preach on a regular basis. Daddy was a great encourager to me as I went to college. Mama drove me to the preaching appointments because Daddy was preaching every Sunday morning. They both encouraged me when I went to the Nashville School of Preaching. Daddy encouraged me each and every day as a father and a fellow preacher of the gospel of Christ.

In demonstrating to me how a young Christian man should live I often went with Daddy in the summer to gospel meetings. I often stood with him in the back of the building and shook hands with all of the members as they left. Daddy baptized me on Sunday morning, March 27, 1971, at Parsons, Tennessee. In traveling with Daddy, I also attended many lectureships where I observed him with other gospel preachers. I saw the respect he gave them and in return received from them. Another thing I learned from Daddy was the art of conducting a funeral service that left the family feeling comforted. Daddy has preached numerous funeral services, wedding ceremonies, and prayed many a prayer with and for others. Standing side by side with Daddy taught me so much more than a preachers' school could. For this I am and will always be eternally grateful.

Daddy performed my marriage ceremony to Lynne on July 20, 1985, in Osceola, Arkansas. Daddy and Mama were at the hospital when both of my daughters, Rebecca and Patricia, were born and as well as when our granddaughter Ella Cate was born. Daddy always cared about his children and their grandchildren. Because of Daddy's love for all of his children and grandchildren, they in turn loved him very much. This love causes all of us to try and follow his Christian example in everyday life.

What can I, as a son, say about Daddy? I believe that in the almost sixty-four years of preaching he strove to follow the charge that apostle Paul gave to his son in the faith

Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:1-8 "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Daddy, thank you for your example as a father and a gospel preacher. Thank you for instilling in me the deep desire to preach only the one true gospel of Christ. With my heartfelt love, your son, Ferrell.



L-R Jay Tidwell, Giles Hester, V.P. Black, Tom Lynch, Guy Hester, Lamar Hester, Benny Wayne Hester, David Hester, Ferrell Hester, Johnny Hester, Tim Hester

Guy Hester, A Special Kind of Preacher

Jay Tidwell

Guy Hester taught me the gospel, baptized me, and encouraged me to become a preacher. He was a significant influence on me while a student in preaching school and later in local work. It has been a blessing for me to be able to observe firsthand how an experienced and effective gospel preacher goes about his work. Here are a few things I observed that made him special.

He was patient with young preachers. When I was a younger preacher, he would listen intently to questions I had about Bible passages or how to handle certain matters in the work of the church. Even though they were usually subjects he was very familiar with, he did not appear frustrated. He offered insight and shared his thoughts and experiences, and stayed with the topic until I had a grasp of it.

He respected older preachers. He appreciated preachers who were devoted to the gospel and had paid their dues, and talked about the good work they had done. I was continually amazed at how many preachers he knew from decades ago. And he could recall many stories that made us laugh or made us think.

He read extensively. He had a large library, and almost always had a new book to discuss when we visited. He gave the preachers in the family books as gifts, and usually had a handwritten message inside the cover.

He enjoyed being around people. He and Mama Shirley were in touch with every member of the congregation where they were working. They went to countless weddings, funerals, family gatherings, and community events, and visited the hospitals and nursing homes. He made lots of phone calls to check on members and friends. None of this was a burden to him, because he liked getting to know people.

He placed a priority on delivering persuasive, Bible-based sermons. This included extensively quoting scripture, and extending an invitation at the conclusion. He was always preparing to deliver his next sermon and looking for ideas for new ones. We had many good conversations that got even better after an idea came to mind and he'd say, "That would make a good sermon."

And, he was committed to his wife and family. Every family has unique needs and problems, and preachers' families are no exception. He held a close bond with his family and was committed to every member being a Christian and faithful and active members of the church.

Memories of Daddy and Things He Taught Me

Jalema Tidwell

I have so many memories of Daddy, but thinking about Daddy what comes to mind are things he taught me. Things that I needed not only to live on this earth but to live in heaven when this life is over.

Daddy taught me about love. His true love for family was apparent in the way he adored Mama, loved his children, and each son-in-law and daughter-in-law like his own children. And he was the best "Papa" and the grandchildren adored him! He always taught us that God came first. He lived out Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." None of us are perfect, but it is a testament to Daddy's life for him to have four children and all of them and their spouses are faithful members of the Lord's church.

Daddy taught me forgiveness and unconditional love as in the story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15. Growing up I made mistakes, but there was never a question as to if Daddy would forgive me and still love me. Of course, he would discipline, but I still knew that he loved me.

Daddy taught me a love for music. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13). We sang in the car. I loved singing "duets" with Daddy, and singing with him in church. I can't wait to sing with him in heaven one day!

Daddy taught me to spread the Gospel. He took many mission trips to Guyana, and one thing I am thankful for is going with him on one of these trips. In 1992 my husband Jay and I went with Daddy to Guyana. It is a memory that I cherish and one that Daddy cherished as well. Not long ago I was spending time with Daddy alone and he talked to me about our trip to Guyana. The conditions we stayed in were primitive and again I saw Daddy's love and unselfishness the first night in trying to make my (his baby girl's) living conditions for the next two weeks as comfortable as possible. I was overwhelmed at the conditions and remember being so hot, and Daddy took several nonworking fans from the house we were staying in and took his pocket knife and a roll of tape and started cutting cords and piecing them together until he got one fan that worked just for me! That was a small thing, but the experiences that I experienced there were not small. I taught children in Bible class that were eager to learn God's word. I saw Daddy and Jay teach, preach, and baptize many souls in the muddy water. I was forever changed for that experience and I am thankful that Daddy heeded God's teaching in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 and included me in that work.

I miss Daddy so much!! I will miss being introduced by him as his baby and him answering the phone when I would call "hey baby" instead of the usual hello, I will never hear

that again, and that is heartbreaking! I will miss holidays with him. I will miss combing that beautiful, white, thick head of wavy hair! But I am thankful for memories!

I was there with Mama, my brothers, and sister when he took his last breath and it broke my heart! But he was peaceful and there is not a better way to go. And one thing I know for sure, he was ready to go. He had a better home waiting and my prayer is to live so that I can be with him again one day. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3).

A Tribute to Guy Hester

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Brother Hester and I shared some things together. We were not born in the same year, 1931 for me, and 1936 for him. However, we were married the same year – 1952, he to Shirley Dorrough in December of 1952, and I married Irene Crump in September of 1952. We both had a fondness for Ripley congregations. He preached at Ripley, Tennessee, in the late 60's. I began my work with the Ripley, Tennessee, congregation in 1974. I preached for the Ripley, Mississippi, congregation from 1968-1974. He followed me in Ripley, Mississippi, beginning in 1974. He also filled in for them a number of times when they were without a preacher.

Guy and I were on many lectureships together. No one ever had to wonder whether his messages would be sound. He had a long established reputation of preaching the Word of God – never the doctrines, commandments, or philosophies of men (1 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 15:9; Colossians 2:8). He loved the truth and spoke it in love (Ephesians 4:15). Compromise was never in his preaching vocabulary. The same was true relative to his writings.

He was always an encourager to me and, no doubt, to all others who were faithful in proclaiming the Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:2; Acts 20:26-27).

He, like the well-beloved Gaius, was a zealous helper to the truth (3 John 8).

My sympathy is extended to Shirley and the family. He was my esteemed friend and brother in the Lord.

Remembering Guy F. Hester

Johnny Hester

On December 5, 2013 I said goodbye to a dear man who was both my brother in Christ and brother in the flesh, Guy Hester. Through the years when people asked whether he and I were related Guy would typically respond: "We are distantly related. I am the oldest brother and Johnny is the youngest." Guy's sense of humor was such that he could brighten almost any conversation.

Guy was my "big brother" and my first real life hero. I remember with pride his honorable service as a soldier in the U.S. Army in Korea where, as I would boast to my boyhood friends, "He's whoopin' the North Koreans!"

As the years passed I grew to develop an even greater admiration for Guy's dedicated service as a soldier of the Cross. He took that commission to heart and for more than sixty years he served "in season and out of season." (2 Timothy 4:2). Guy found, in preaching the gospel, life's greatest delight. Yet, when circumstances called for it, he was faithfully able to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ...that he might please Him who enlisted him as a soldier." (2 Timothy 2:1-4).

By God's grace I was able to spend time with Guy during the last few days of his earthly trek. Those brief and physically struggled conversations with my big brother have helped to prepare me for when that day comes in my life.

During the course of my final conversation with Guy, he exuded a confidence that comes to God's soldier as he has faithfully followed the Captain of his salvation. (Hebrews 2:10). Among the things he said, perhaps the most assuring of all were these: "Johnny, I'm tired. I'm ready to go home." The inspired words of Paul served as a pillow upon which he was able to find rest as he set sail from this earthly harbor and arrived on a blissful shore. Packed safely away in his heart was the assurance:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).



This is the Preachers Training Class from Ripley, MS mid 1970's

Students: Sammy Moffett, Benny Wallace, Ricky Griffin, Leslie Chapman, Ferrell Hester, Mike Griffin
 Director: Guy Hester



Guy and Shirley Hester outside of Garfield Heights church building in Indianapolis, Indiana

Below: Johnny, Guy, and Benny Wayne Hester



“I Tell You One Thing, I’ll Never Marry a Preacher!”

Connie Jo Hester Montgomery

There are so many things I could share about Guy F. Hester, my Daddy, but I will strive to “keep it simple.” He was my favorite soldier. He was a soldier in two capacities in that; he served our country, in the Army, during the Korean era, but more importantly he was a soldier of the cross most of his entire life. I would like to share an article that I wrote as a tribute to Daddy that appears at the end of his book of sermons, “Keep It Simple, Son” *Fifty-five sermons from Fifty-five years of preaching.*

These words were uttered by me many, many times during the first twenty-two years of my life. Each time I helped pack to move, the times I felt treated differently by my parents and others because I was a P.K. (preachers’ kid, firstborn of Guy F. Hester), and any of the many other times I believed my life was hindered because of living in a preacher’s family I would resort to these words.

May 20, 1977, I married Larry E. Montgomery, “a preacher?” Now, for nearly thirty-seven years I have not only been a P.K. but a preachers’ wife, and would not desire it any other way. It is wonderful to be able to spend my life beside my husband raising our children with dedication and opportunity to serve the Lord daily.

As I was growing up, Daddy had one particular sermon which became my favorite, “Everyday Religion.” Not only, did I hear this sermon from the pulpit, I was taught this lesson on a daily basis by Mama and Daddy in our home. Due to this “raising” I have great appreciation for all the opportunities and lessons I have experience in life. The person I am now was greatly influenced by one particular lesson, “given to hospitality” (Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2). Though I could write volumes regarding this I want to share a couple of “my favorite things.”

Our home was always open to welcome, sleep, and feed family, friends, acquaintances, and sometimes strangers. My love for having guest, cooking, and entertaining today originates from these experiences. It was nothing for someone to call and say, “We’ll be

there by bedtime” and I would begin to help change the sheets and make ready.

Many times I would set the table for our six family members and would reset for sometimes twenty or more, before the food was put on the table. Mama always “cooked for Cox’s Army” so there was always enough. We always prepared for Sunday, so on Saturday I helped in the kitchen making salads, desert, and casseroles so we would be ready for Sunday dinner for our family and whoever happened to be invited.

Another favorite memory was the many times we kept gospel preachers in our home. This custom is pretty much a thing of the past and I believe families are missing out. These men would always share stories and bond with our family so that we would really get to know them. At night everyone would go to bed except for Daddy and the preacher, and they would talk for hours; mostly discussing the Bible. I remember leaving my bedroom door open and straining my ears to hear them in Biblical discussions. I was learning when they didn’t even know. There were too many of the preachers to name here, but two of my favorites were Pervie Nichols and Alan Highers.

Yes, I uttered the words, “I’ll never marry a preacher” but now realize how foolish they were. Now, each time I pack to move, I look forward to the new Christian family I will be part of. Now, I know I was treated differently by my parents and other, but not because I was a P.K.; but because my parents had convictions to raise me to be a Christian. Now, I know that, yes, sometimes my life was hindered (by others’ standards) because of living in a preacher’s family; but otherwise, I would have missed so many of “my favorite things.”

I am so thankful for my Mama and Daddy for “raising” me and teaching me how to “live my religion every day.”

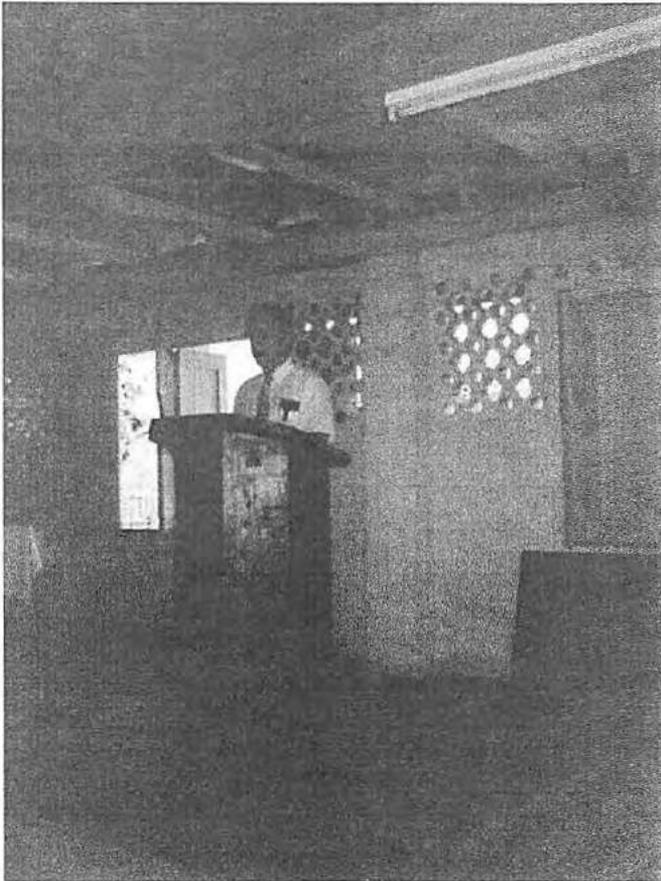
Thank you, Daddy, for being an “Old Time Preacher Man.” Oh, I would love to hear my Daddy preach those words one more time.



Guy Hester teaches a children’s Bible class in Guyana



S.F. Hester with his preaching sons – (L-R) Benny Wayne, Guy, S.F., Giles, and Johnny



Guy Hester preaching in Guyana where he helped found and directed the Vreed-en Hoop School of the Bible and baptizing (below)



Guy Hester speaking at a celebration honoring his 60 years of preaching the gospel



Gospel Gleaner Bundles

Bundle of 10 - \$10.00 per month

Bundle of 25 - \$20.00 per month

Bundle of 50 - \$30.00 per month

Bundle of 100 - \$40.00 per month

**Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645**

www.gospelgleaner.com

Remembrances of My Dad – Guy Hester

Tim Hester

As I sit here at my desk, across the room are two pictures of Mama and Daddy looking back at me. As I look at these pictures I am reminded of the times that I would be up and in my office around 5:00 in the morning. The house would be quiet and I would be drinking a cup of coffee while working on a sermon, article, or something else for church. The stillness of the morning would then be broken by the ringing of the telephone. On the other end would be Daddy. He and I would talk about whatever it was I was working on, Alabama football, the latest news, or maybe just the weather. He always said that he would call me since I was the only other person he knew for sure who would also be up, drinking coffee, and working at that time of morning.

The early morning phone calls are just a small portion of the memories which I have of Daddy. As with any family the remembrances are not always pleasant memories but the good memories far outnumber the bad. These recollections were put to use a few years ago when I was asked to speak to a group of preacher students on what it was like to grow up in a preacher's family. In preparing for that lesson, as well as many times since then, I have brought to mind the things, which being not just a preacher's kid, but being one of the four children of Guy and Shirley Hester has meant to me.

Daddy was not just my dad, he was my teacher, my editor, my preacher, my counselor, my confidant, my disciplinarian, my co-worker, my encourager, and at times he was also one of my elders.

It was Daddy who taught me to love and respect Christ and the church which He built (Matthew 16:18). I recall at the age of 10 when I was baptized by Daddy how that he explained to me the importance of what I was doing and how that God was adding me to that church which Christ built (Acts 2:47). He taught me what it meant to have my sins washed away and rise up out of the watery grave of baptism a new creature in Christ (Romans 6:4).

I learned respect and love of the brotherhood from Daddy. As children we were very fortunate to have visiting us in our home various preachers of the gospel of Christ. We had opportunities get to know them as not just proclaimers of God's message but as individuals. A love and respect for the eldership was also cultivated. Both in serving under elders at various congregations and seeing Daddy serve as an elder we could see the importance of having godly men who would desire this good work (2 Timothy 3:1).

He also taught me to love worshiping and serving God and that being a Christian meant a life of serving and not a life of being served. Not long after my baptism Daddy had me waiting on the Lord's Table, leading prayers, leading singing, making announcements, knocking doors, teaching, and preaching. He would tell me that I needed to be prepared at all times because you never knew when you would be called upon to serve.

Although deep down I know that he has always had a desire for me to be a preacher of the gospel, he never at one time pushed me to do that. As I studied to do other things and worked at other jobs he always supported me in those endeavors while encouraging me to stay active in doing what I could in serving Christ. He knew eventually through gentle encouragement that the desire to preach would always outweigh whatever else may have also been in the balance. That desire deep down to preach was partly put there by just watching and seeing him in and out of the pulpit. Just through closing my eyes I can see him standing in front of one of his chart sermons or hear him quote scripture.

Daddy encouraged me to search for a spouse who would support me not just as a Christian but also as a preacher. Due to this, nearly 25 years ago Amy and I stood before a small group of friends and family as Daddy pronounced us husband and wife. From that time on he did all he could to encourage us to love and support one another. I will never forget him telling me one time that if we were ever having a disagreement not to come running back to their house, but to stay and work it out among ourselves.

Neither time nor space here will permit for me to relay all the good memories which I have, but one memory which I think will stay with me until the end is the last good memory of Daddy. This memory is from the day before he was taken to the emergency room for the last time. It is just a few days before his death. I had the opportunity to visit with him by myself for just a little while. Although his voice and body were weak he and I sat and talked like many times before. Some of the last words he said to me at that time were about how proud he was of the work that I am doing with the church we are with now. He went on to tell me, "Take care of your work." This was not the first time I heard Daddy say these words. Often when faced with a decision his advice to me would be, "Take care of your work." Daddy knew and understood that if I, as well as anyone else, would put our work and service to God in its rightful priority, everything else would work out just fine.

A Tribute to a Friend

M.W. Kiser

One of the greatest blessings that one can have in life is the blessing of having a good friend. I am blessed with many friends, and some I must count as close and dear friends. I counted Guy Hester as one of my dearest friends.

I have had some friends along the way that when something happened that was or appeared to be negative in my life, or not in line with certain horses that some wanted to ride, left me in a lurch. They, as Job put it dealt with me "deceitfully as a brook and as the stream of brooks they pass away." They failed me, forgot me, counted me as stranger, and made me an alien as far as they were concerned. Guy also knew such friends (!) They ate his bread and then lifted up their heel against him. They took sweet council together with him and walked unto the house of God in company with him, and then delighted in repeating matters about him that were not so.

Through it all, Guy maintained a kind spirit toward them, and kept his focus on the work of his life, preaching the gospel of Christ. I can write "Guy Hester" in the margin of my Bible beside Proverbs 18:24. I know, by experience, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." As well, beside Proverbs 17:9: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."

Through the difficult times in my own life he helped me keep my focus on the Lord as well. I will miss him here the rest of my journey, and look forward to our reunion in the after-a-while.

I first met Guy Hester in 1968. I was preaching in Dyersburg, TN, and Guy had just moved to Ripley, TN. His beloved brother Benny and I were friends and students together at F.H.C.

Our first meeting was as if we had known each other all our lives. His congenial disposition was immediately displayed toward me, and as the years passed by we became closer and better friends. We worked together in gospel meetings and television work. We always enjoyed seeing each other as our paths would cross at lectureships and on other occasions. We enjoyed many a good laugh and bar-b-q together. Most of the time the laugh was on me and the bar-b-q on him! Guy would never fail to ask me about my family, and when my grandson was recently stationed in Afghanistan, he would always specifically ask about his well-being. He and his beloved wife, Shirley, always had

their door open and hospitality ready anytime I passed their way.

Everyone associated with Guy knew that he was a family man. He displayed openly his love for his wife and children; and his grandchildren. You knew being around Guy that his work was that of a "gospel preacher". He looked forward to every meeting he held; he served the brethren in his local work with diligence; he opined when he was not preaching; and did all he could to encourage men to preach and those who were preachers. I never was around him when I did not feel blessed by his friendship and encouraged in my work. I know, my life was blessed because our paths not only crossed, but followed along together for 45 years.

Henry David Thoreau put it like this a century and half ago, "Even the death of friends inspire us as much as their lives... Their memories will be encrusted over with sublime and pleasing thoughts, as monuments of other men are overgrown with moss; for our friends have no place in the graveyard."

Every thought I now have of Guy Hester, my departed friend, reminds me of the words of our beloved brother Paul, "Preach the Word." Guy Hester fought a good fight, he finished the course, and he kept the faith.



Preachers gathered for a Gospel Gleaner Lectureship in Mountain Home, AR.

Top Left: Ivie Powell, Tim Wilkes, Mike Kiser, Guy F. Hester, Alan Webster, Johnny Polk

Bottom Left: Stephen D Rook, Bill Dillion, Ronnie Whittemore

How Many Brethren Does It Take to Change a Light Bulb?

Guy Hester

How many church members does it take to change a light bulb? The answer to this question is not as simple as it might appear on the surface.

First, a business meeting must be called. This meeting must have of all the men of the congregation present, and it must be announced so that all will have the opportunity to be present.

In the business meeting someone must make a motion for the need of a light bulb to be changed. The motion must be seconded.

After considerable discussion on whether or not a light bulb is really necessary in that particular place, the motion is seconded. A committee is then appointed to check prices of light bulbs at the various places where light bulbs are sold to be sure the church is getting the best price available and report back at the next meeting.

At this meeting there is more discussion as to the prices and whether or not there is a warranty and for how long. After this decision is made, another member will have to be commissioned by the majority of the members present to go and make the purchase.

After the light bulb is finally purchased it is put away until the next meeting which is delayed two or three times (because certain ones were not present and experience tells us that no decisions can be made without their presence and approval).

Finally, the meeting takes place and the question of who will actually change the light bulb is discussed at length. One brother says that he believes it is the preacher's job to change the light bulb. He asks, "Is that not part of his job description?" He continues, "Is that not what we hired him for?" At last, someone volunteers to change the bulb, and again there is light where there was darkness.

I realize the above is over simplified, but is that not descriptive of the way the business of the church is carried out at times when souls are at stake?

Do we, at times, allow lost souls to enter eternity while we sit in business meetings and discuss how or whether we will let the blessed light of the soul saving gospel of Christ shine upon them. I realize full well that we must be absolutely scriptural in method and we must be good stewards of the finances of the church, but who can place a price upon the value of a soul (Matthew 13:43-46; 16:36; Mark 8:36-37). Brethren, let us work "while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The Great Tragedy of Being Lost

Guy Hester

Of all the tragedies that men and women face in this life, the greatest is the tragedy of living and dying in a lost condition. There is coming a day when all who are lost will come to realize this fact, but then it will be too late. This will be the day of judgment. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

If a person dies lost, having never been "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27), or if he dies as an unfaithful child of God, he will live in eternal regret. This is indeed a sobering thought that most certainly deserves our careful attention.

We want to notice a few reasons why, if you die lost, it will be the greatest tragedy, and why you will wish in eternity that you had obeyed the Lord.

FIRST, YOU WILL LIVE IN ETERNAL REGRET BECAUSE OF THE SEPARATION. You will be separated from God, eternally! We read in Isaiah 59:1-2, "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."

This separation from God is not only in this life but will continue on into eternity. Just think, you can never contact God. Doesn't that thought scare you?

Not only will you be separated from God but you will be separated from all good, moral, pure people. Hell is the habitation of the defiled. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

The ungodly of all ages will be there, they will be your neighbors; you will be in fellowship with them. Think about it! You will be separated from your friends, relatives, and loved ones, who "die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13).

You will be separated from the gospel "which is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). You will not have another chance to obey it.

"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" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

By coming to the Lord through obedience to the gospel, you will not have to be eternally separated from him. Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Again in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

IF YOU DIE LOST IT WILL BE THE GREATEST TRAGEDY BECAUSE OF THE PAIN. Pain from the torment of eternal hell fire! The rich man was in torment in the flames of hell. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:23-24).

Listen carefully to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:41, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Then, stressing the greatness of the pain of hell, there will be the pain of darkness and the gnashing of teeth. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Darkness drives people insane. Just think about the blackness of darkness forever. It is no wonder that people in hell will be continually gritting and grinding their teeth!

There will be the pain of no rest. It feels so good to rest when you are tired. But there will be no rest in hell. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Revelation 14:11).

Just think of never having the opportunity to rest! And there will be no end because the worm dies not and the fire will not be put out, "is not quenched" (Mark 9:44). This brings us to our next point.

TO LIVE AND DIE LOST WILL BE THE GREATEST TRAGEDY BECAUSE OF THE DURATION OF HELL. Hell is eternal. Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46).

It is impossible for the human mind to fully comprehend the meaning of eternity. Many illustrations could be given but they would all fall short.

Eternity is time without end. You will have time on your hands to reflect on past life and opportunities.

You will wish, as you are tortured forever, that you had obeyed the Gospel and lived the Christian life. We often talk about "spending eternity," but you can't "spend eternity." Eternity is, and always will be!

IT WILL BE THE GREATEST TRAGEDY BECAUSE OF THE LOSS. You will have lost your soul, your most priceless possession. Notice what Jesus says about the value of the soul, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

You will have lost your purpose for being born: to glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:20). To obey the Lord and live eternally with the redeemed, which is God's desire for you (2 Peter 3:9).

You will have lost heaven, that beautiful home of the soul. The place that Jesus has prepared for you (John 14:1-3).

Most of all you will have lost all hope. We are saved by our hope in Christ (Romans 8:24). We often say, "As long as there is life, there is hope." But this will not apply in hell. Over the door of hell is written – NO HOPE! We have noticed four major reasons why the greatest tragedy of time and eternity is for a person to die lost.

1. Because of the separation.
2. Because of the pain.
3. Because of the duration.
4. Because of the loss.

If you are wise you will obey the Gospel today. Eternity will be a time of praise, joy and happiness forevermore if you die a faithful child of God.

*Farewell, brother.
We'll Miss You!*

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Meriden, MS
Permit No. 5

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

February, 2014

Number Two

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

God Dishonored

Even with our best intentions and efforts, the world is much too much with us. Preoccupation with this present world steadily works to stifle faith in God and leads us to dishonor Him.

How many of us truly take God seriously? Some profess to “take God into account” yet their actions demonstrate that they have been trying for years to control Him and dictate to Him. They desire that God bow down to them; that He cater to them and honor their agenda.

Not a few view God as altogether benign; existing to validate and cooperate with them, even uphold their plans. Many view God as benevolent and kind, loving and merciful, but refuse to honor Him as Lord, let alone yield to Him. Some expect, even demand, that God give them health, prosperity, and success; and yet stand ready to reject Him, if He fails to give them what they want.

We are people of the marketplace. In the marketplace we are accustomed to evaluating

the merchandise and selecting what appeals to us. This works well in the marketplace of material things. However, what happens when we come to God, to His word, to His church with a “marketplace mentality?”

Predictably, when people come before God, viewing themselves as “consumers,” or “customers,” they cultivate the view that God is in the business of blessing, and therefore must cater to them.

Also, God’s “place of business” (the church) must function to meet their expectations, or as “dissatisfied customers” they will vote with their feet, and go to a religious business, that will do so. With such, God and His purpose are at their mercy. His will is reduced to mere religious suggestions and holy hints.

Immediate personal happiness and personal desire is of utmost importance to those who reign supreme as “religious customers.” In concert with this view, when it comes to spiritual concepts, many are ruled by a deep affinity for

what is relational and personally fulfilling, and have limited interest in what is moral and eternal.

They seem convinced that the great issues of life are emotional and relational rather than moral and spiritual, having primary concern for personal wants and needs, and focus on the immediate, not the eternal. Playing games with the spiritual, they ignore the eternal. They are offended readily with the “controversial,” and are absolutely negative about anything that is “negative.”

In fact, things contained in Scripture such as obedience, repentance, godliness, and devotion, have limited appeal, and are held to be negative and offensive. Nothing is more offensive to the religious consumers than the query, “What shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel?” (1 Peter 4:17).



A recent trend among a few of our colleges is the hiring of denominational seminary professors for special lectureships. Usually these men are hired to teach the Bible students in these schools, many of whom aspire to be preachers in the church.

Before proceeding, I would like to preface my statements by first acknowledging that such articles as this bring a fair share of criticism from brethren who do not like controversy. Secondly, I want you to know that I am willing to bear the criticism for the sake of our readers knowing what is happening, and more importantly, in the hope that this unnecessary practice will cease forever.

So that you know what is happening, here is a brief summary of what I know on the subject.

On several occasions **Lipscomb University** in Nashville has used denominational professors to lecture on biblical themes. Recently, Scott McKnight from the Northern Seminary in Lombard, IL, lectured on the annual Biblical Preaching Seminar.

Heritage Christian University in Florence, AL, has been hosting the annual Charles Coil lectureship in recent years. For the past several years the forum has been given to a denominational professor. Last year they hired Thomas Long of Emory University in Atlanta, to lecture on preaching. This April, they are hiring Ralph Klein of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

Harding School of Theology in Memphis has begun the W.B. West Lectures. In 2011 the featured speaker was a professor from Union University in Jackson, TN, George Guthrie. He also spoke in their chapel service.

Oklahoma Christian University will be hosting the McGaw Lecture with N.T. Wright, Anglican Bishop and professor at Saint Andrews in Scotland.

Freed-Hardeman University has also joined this group by hosting their own denominational professor, Craig L. Blomberg, who teaches at Denver Seminary in Denver. That event took place last October.

What Gives?

What gives? In the first place, hiring these men to speak to our students is a slap in the face to every qualified brother in our great brotherhood. The very idea that you believe we do not have men among us as qualified to lecture on these subjects is degrading and insulting. If it is true that we have not produced a man so qualified in nearly 200 years of Christian education, perhaps we need to close the doors and sell off every one of these campuses.

You have betrayed the trust we have placed in you, the colleges. How can we believe you are truly dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity when you hire denominational professors? Do you believe there is no

difference in us and them? Do you believe the churches of Christ represent one of the many manmade denominations?

You have also betrayed your founding purpose and the work that has been done by your predecessors. You are betraying the men and women who have built these schools by advocating a practice they never would have endorsed. And the very idea of naming these lectureships after men like West and Coil is the ultimate insult to their memory.

You are betraying the churches and individuals who financially support your schools. Do these brethren know you are taking their money and hiring denominational professors?

Furthermore, you have opened the door for someone at a future date to hire such a man permanently. After all, if it is in keeping with your founding purpose and mission statement to hire him for one day, why not two days, three days? Where will it end?

What gives? Your word has given way and crumbled beneath your feet. Personally, I cannot believe or seriously consider one word spoken by these schools as long as such a practice continues.

What gives? Any consistent application of 2 John 9-11 has given way. What will you now be able to tell your students about bidding Godspeed to those in doctrinal error? What have you already taught them by your example?

I hope the perceived worldly acclaim you believe you are receiving from such events is worth what they are costing you – the trust of your brethren.

Trust is often hard to earn. Many of your schools have had faithful men working overtime to assure the brethren that you are to be trusted.

Trust is also easier to lose than it is to gain. Such practices will cause you to lose the trust that your predecessors have worked so hard to earn.

Trust can be redeemed. Our great brotherhood is filled with forgiving souls. Give them something to forgive.

If you pompously act as if you are doing no wrong and are justified by this practice, you will lose support. More importantly, you will lose trust. And as long as you are arrogant about it, the brethren will continue to distrust you. But if you repent, and return to the founding principles which we have supported these many years, trust can be redeemed.

Let us leave one last message to our brethren operating these schools – you are not bigger than the brotherhood. Your schools are not essential to the cause of Christ. The church can live without you. If you believe that you are above the law, the law of Christ, indeed it is He who ultimately will rebuke you.

Andy Erwin

The

GOSPEL



GLENER

Volume 26 / Number Two
February, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and His
Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Michael Shank
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 THE PRESENT TRUTH *God Dishonored*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *What Gives?*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Are You Hungry*
Ernest Underwood
- 5 *A Curious Context*
Andy Robison
- 6 *Characteristics of False Teachers (2 Corinthians 10-13)*
Ron Thomas
- 7 BOOK REVIEW *Rethinking How We Walk Down the Isle*
Stephen R. Bradd
- 8 *GPS – God’s Plan of Salvation*
Raymond Elliott
- 9 *Why Does God Allow Christians to Suffer?*
James R. Lewis
- 10 *I Am Blessed to be a Preacher’s Wife*
Melanie Erwin
- 11 *The Significance of Creation for Soul-Winning*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 13 *Is the New Testament a Pattern for Us Today?*
James Meadows
- 14 *Preach the Word*
E. Claude Gardner
- 15 News & Notes
James R. McGill
- 16 Reader Replies

Are You Hungry?

Ernest Underwood

Growing up in the 1930's and 1940's had some advantages. Those were years when some families didn't have a telephone. Something that was then referred to as television was pretty much a matter of disbelief or a dream. However, most folks had a radio that was powered by a long and heavy battery. Memory fails me of a particular program, but I do remember a saying on one of them that dealt with some kind of western cowboy theme and hero. The camp cook would bang on his metal "dinner bell" to let the cowboys know that the meal was ready. He then would cry out, "Come and get it before I throw it out." Of course, the hungry cowboys would come riding in. These are good memories that some readers may also have.

In His Sermon of the Mount Jesus had something to say about hunger as He taught what is called "The Beatitudes." In Matthew 5:6 He declared, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

I remember in those growing up days that the preacher students at Freed-Hardeman College would come to our small church at Antioch, about five miles west of Halls, Tennessee to preach for us one Sunday a month. I remember a particular Sunday morning that the young man who came began his sermon by asking, "Are you hungry?" He then proceeded to preach on the above text. I have no idea of what points he used. I was probably more interested at the time in what we might be having for dinner, but I do believe there are some lessons to be learned from the Lord's statement, lessons that I have gleaned through the years of reading and listening to other preachers/teachers.

"Blessed are those..."

The Scriptures are clear and plain in letting the reader know that there are some who are not, and will not be blessed. Those who love the world will not be blessed. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

Those who seek to please men, themselves included, will not be blessed. "For do I now persuade men, or God. Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

Those who prefer their way or opinion over God's word will not be blessed. Naaman is a classic example of this.

This man became furious when told what God said he must do to have his leprosy cured (See 2 Kings 5).

Those who have pleasure in unrighteousness will not be blessed. "And for this reason God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Indeed there are millions, perhaps billions today who subscribe to one or more of these attitudes – those who are idolaters; those whose minds have been deluded and blinded by Catholicism; those who prefer their denominational doctrines over God's inspired word, and cults such as Mormonism and the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses.

"Who hunger and thirst..."

These are the ones who have a strong desire for something. Peter admonished, "...as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). As one learns and digests this 'pure milk' he must put what he learns into practice.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God, a worker who does need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). In doing this he will be blessed.

The writer of the book of Hebrews rebukes some who evidently had no interest in learning God's word. There it is stated: "For though by this time you ought to be teachers. You need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe" (Hebrews 5:12-13).

Concerning thirsting, Jesus told the woman of Samaria whom He met at Jacob's well, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14).

As each of us examines our own life we need to ask the question: "Do I, or am I truly hungering and thirsting for God's word?" How much time each day do we spend with that word either teaching it or studying it? Then, compare the answer we give with how much time we spend with the television or Facebook, etc.

"For righteousness..."

According to the Bible program I have on my computer this word is found 306 times in the Scriptures – 207 in the Old Testament and 99 in the New Testament. Let us notice just a few of them.

The source of righteousness is clearly stated. Observe, "My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all of Your commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:172). And again, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16-17).

One's righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees: "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Righteousness must be sought. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Righteousness must be worked or applied. "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35). One might notice here that this passage simply destroys the doctrine of salvation by "faith only."

One is an enemy of righteousness if he perverts it. Paul said to Elymas, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10).

The world will be judged in righteousness "...because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Righteousness does not come by the Law of Moses. "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

If we do not practice righteousness, we are not of God. "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10).

"They shall be filled."

The ones who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall have that which they have sought. We are filled with righteousness only as we obey the righteousness found in

the Gospel. The Scriptures completely furnish us as we are instructed in righteousness. For, "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).

Friend, are you hungry? If so, feast upon the inspired Word of God and be filled. Obey it to be saved. Live faithfully by it. As on the great day of Judgment you will be judged by it.

A Curious Context

Andy Robison

1 Timothy 5:23 is a powerful passage negating arguments for social drinking. "No longer drink only water," Paul instructs young preacher Timothy, "but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities." Timothy was apparently so vehemently against the use of alcohol that it took inspired Paul to convince him of the validity of medicinal use. (To be sure, other considerations might still militate against the use of beverages associated with such evil [cf. 1 Thess. 5:22]).

Careful Bible students, taught to consider the context of any statement, might be puzzled by this admonition's surroundings. Curiously, this paragraph concerns the rule of the elders over the flock of God. Double honor, including pay, is due the good ones (5:17-18). But then, there are provisions for elders caught in sin. The biblical precedent of two or three witnesses is demanded (v. 19). Then, we should rebuke him in the presence of "all" that the "rest" may fear is enjoined. Whether the "all" and "rest" represent the other elders or the whole congregation is debatable, but the point is clear. Elders sinning must be confronted without partiality (v. 21), cautiously (v. 22a), but certainly (v. 22b). Then, if rebuke temporally fails, final judgment is still in view (vv. 24-25; cf. Rom. 2:16).

Tucked there in between those tightly packed instructions is this seemingly out of place admonition about wine. Why? Maybe, just maybe, Timothy had discovered that the experience of dealing with elders persistent in sin was one of the most physically sickening things he had encountered. After all, they are the shepherds who have authority over the flock (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17). They have a loving, steadfast following. To challenge them is generally anathema, but, if sin is present and witnesses are in place, it is absolutely required of those knowledgeable of the iniquity!

What a nauseating predicament! To pronounce these sins before "all" (whether the eldership or the church) is

going to cause, inevitably, a stir, and possibly a division. Families and other beloved will be forced to choose between human loyalty and divine writ. The devil might tempt the rightful accusers via self-doubt. Who would not be sickened by such prospects?

Perhaps Timothy was succumbing psychosomatically to the trauma. Perhaps this anti-nausea prescription comes in this context for this purpose. Once, having just endured a confrontation of this sort, a conscientious member arrived at a minister's home immediately asking for some tablets designed for stomach relief. Was he experiencing the same emotions as young Timothy?

The oft overlooked contextual consideration might be just this. Elders, like any other group, can fall down into sin and be lifted up in prideful error. Mercifully (for how would one otherwise know how to act), the Scriptures have set forth a clear course of action. Clarity of instruction, though, does not guarantee ease of carrying it out. "Frequent infirmities" may plague the conscientious. And yet, the conscientious must press ahead with their duties in the sight of the Lord.

Gospel Gleaner Bundles

Bundle of 10 - \$10.00 per month

Bundle of 25 - \$20.00 per month

Bundle of 50 - \$30.00 per month

Bundle of 100 - \$40.00 per month

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

www.gospelgleaner.com

Characteristics of False Teachers in 2 Corinthians 10-13

Ron Thomas

In 2 Corinthians we find a radical change in tone between the first nine chapters and the last four. People have offered various explanations for this change in tone; such as Jude did when he wrote his epistle (cf. Jude 3). Whatever the reason for Paul's change in the tone of his letter, in the end, it was Paul's attempt to thwart what he clearly understood to be a problem. He was concerned the Corinthian church was much too willing to allow themselves to be deceived by men who were self-promoters. Corinth was influenced by men who called themselves apostles, but in fact were not. In truth, they were false apostles!

As we reflect on the manner (or method) of false teachers it is not always easy to delineate exactly what distinguishes them from teachers who are faithful to the Lord. So, let us ask: what are the characteristics of a false apostle (or prophet)? And as we study 2 Corinthians 10-13, let us note the characteristics of a false teacher as given by Paul, so that we can make an application for today.

To begin, a false teacher will "wage war" according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 10:3). They do not engage in battle armed with the sword of the Lord (Hebrews 4:12), but the

desires of the flesh. Such was done in Isaiah's day, and it is done today. It was on the last night that Jesus walked this earth that he gave his disciples warning concerning such things as this. He said that many will do what they think pleases the Lord, but their actions are as far from the Lord's approval as one might get (John 16:2).

Secondly, a false teacher will make comparisons (2 Corinthians 10:12). When one is on the verge of teaching something contrary to the Lord's revealed will, that person generally makes a comparison along the lines of, "I am only teaching what _____ taught!" We can see that this is a method used in order to gain acceptance.

Third, a false teacher is apt to brag (2 Corinthians 10:13). In one's desire to be received by others, not only will there be a comparison, but there can be a strengthening of one's position by promoting one's ability. This occurred in a discussion I was having with a preacher from New Mexico some years ago. He wanted me to know how well he knew Greek so he promoted himself in this regard.

Fourth, a false teacher preaches a message that is different than what is revealed (2 Corinthians 11:4). Paul

was not merely stating the fact of this occurrence, but he was aggravated that many of the Corinthians were accepting such! In this there is something worthy of notice: a novel teaching gains attention with many ears. For instance, it is God desire and demand that those who worship him do so in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Some will take that phrase and tell us we can do what Scripture does not expressly forbid. Thus, an innovative practice is engaged in, and it is justified because God did not forbid it.

Fifth, a false teacher is a hireling (2 Corinthians 11:7). The emphasis for the false teacher is not necessarily on the gospel, but on one's opportunity to be paid. During the days of Plato and Socrates there were teachers who were known as sophists. These were professional teachers who worked for a fee. Many false teachers, Paul warned, adopted a similar approach.

Sixth, false teachers promoted themselves as if they were speaking by the same authority. The emphasis here is not on the self-promoting, but on the authority by which they presumed to speak. An authoritative speaker gains an audience. However, for a false teacher such is merely a façade. False teachers are empty of substance and as soon as another puts forth a challenge, bellowing smoke comes from the stack (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The only way to measure the substance of one's preaching is to compare it to the Lord's revealed will (2 Peter 1:3). It is a challenge to each Christian to put loyalty to the Lord above any loyalty to man.

Seventh, false teachers believe they are superior (2 Corinthians 12:11). This is often associated with one's academic accomplishments, even without earning a degree. When Paul spoke of the "eminent apostles" he was not including the true apostles of the Lord. He was speaking only of those who were self-appointed apostles. Paul was "behind them" in no way at all. In fact, he was more than willing to put forth his credentials in comparison to theirs. Paul did this not to promote himself, but to warn the brethren of the trap Satan had laid for them with regard to such an approach.

Eighth, false teachers try to take advantage of people and situations (2 Corinthians 12:17). It has been well-said by the many who have gone before that Satan will not make a frontal attack through the "door" of a church, but he will operate with much cunning, seeking to gain entry any way he can. In Luke 4:13, Satan left the Lord for a more opportune time, and he accomplished what he desired by using man to do his bidding.

In conclusion let us note that a false teacher may not have all these characteristics, but you can be sure that some of them will exist. In order for us to be on our guard with regard to those who are guilty of such, let us do two things: let us search the Scriptures daily and measure everything said by any preacher with that which the Lord has revealed (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). With such an approach, we will better serve not only the Lord, but ourselves, and the church.

BOOK REVIEW

Engage: Rethinking How We Walk Down the Aisle by Brad Harrub & Rob L. Whitacre
Focus Press, 2013, paperback, 134 pages

The status quo in society is comfortable because it's what we're used to. Though it hasn't always been this way, dating is the current norm in our culture, even among Christians. But should it be? Is dating wise for children of God who yearn to remain pure and devoted to Him? Is there a better way?

Brad Harrub and Rob L. Whitacre challenge the status quo on dating in their new book, *Engage: Rethinking How We Walk Down the Aisle*. The

book's introduction paints a sad but realistic picture of modern dating and how it often leads to lust, some level of sexual activity, and broken hearts. What parents would desire that for their child? Why has it become the norm for Christians to invest so much time and love in their children only to step back, become uninvolved, and merely hope for the best when their children begin dating? Harrub and Whitacre suggest a better way: courtship.

The authors make it clear that courtship is not about semantics or arranging marriages but about Christian parents being fully engaged in the second-most-important decision of their child's life. They are not advocating reforming the dating process but rather completely abandoning it for courtship. What

noble purpose is served when young people date before they are mature enough for marriage? Dangers abound with dating, where the focus is upon pleasing self. The purpose of courtship, on the other hand, is to find a suitable mate that would please God, all the while remaining holy. Clearly, there is a great need for wise parents to be involved in this process to help protect and direct their children. Where possible, a single man should approach a single woman by going through her father. That's the way it used to be, and that's where a courting relationship should begin.

Harrub and Whitacre admit that there is no precise formula for "how to court," but they offer practical advice on the role of the father, mother, daughter, and even grandparents. Much time in the book is devoted to

Genesis 24, where the authors glean some helpful principles from Abraham as he sought a non-Canaanite wife for Isaac. Some pertinent lessons are also drawn from the Song of Solomon as well as the book of Ruth. Prayer and providence are properly stressed as vitally important in courtship.

One of my favorite parts of the book is Chapter 12 where two, real-life, modern cases of courtship are recounted. This chapter proves that courtship is not an impractical, archaic idea; it really can work today!

The appendices of the book are quite helpful as they provide discussion questions for each chapter, some questions courting couples can use to get to know each other, as well as some valuable Scriptural guidelines for forming relationships.

In my opinion, the authors have made a strong case for courtship. They, while not binding their conclusions on others, have offered a reasonable, Biblical alternative to dating and have provided much food for thought. Christian parents would be wise to read this book (particularly those with young children), though

undoubtedly *Engage* could benefit any reader from the teenage years on up. Locally, I'll be teaching some classes from this book soon and would encourage others to consider doing likewise. The ideas in this book deserve wide circulation.

Reviewed by Stephen R. Bradd

Clinton, Illinois

Stephen@AudioEvangelism.com

More information on the book & how to order it is available at: www.EngageToday.org

GPS - GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Raymond Elliott

I had thought that I might enjoy having one, but I never dreamed that someone would give me a GPS! Much to my surprise, some of my children gave me a GPS for a Christmas present.

A son took charge of getting the thing ready for me to use in my car. He put the address of a local business into the GPS and this lady's voice instructed me when and where to turn in order to get to my destination as I looked at a map where I was to travel.

In case you might not be familiar with this gadget, here is a brief definition: "The Global Positioning System (GPS) is a satellite-based navigation system made up of a network of 24 satellites placed into orbit by the U.S. Department of Defense. GPS was originally intended for military applications, but in the 1980s, the government made the system available for civilian use. GPS works in any weather conditions, anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day." Theoretically I should never get lost while traveling using my GPS.

In the beginning of man's existence on earth he was in a safe place and in a

perfect relationship with God. In a sense man was not saved because he had never been in a lost condition. But he became estranged from his God and in a lost condition because of his disobedience to the commands given to him from God (Genesis 2:15-17; Isaiah 59:1, 2; Romans 5:12).

However, in the darkest day of man's existence in the beautiful Garden of Eden, God's plan for man's salvation is found in Genesis 3:15 when the "seed of woman" was mentioned. The "seed" is also referred to as being the "seed" of Abraham. The apostle Paul defined that "seed" as being Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19, 16).

The fact is, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was referred to by John in Revelation 13:8 as being "slain from the foundation of the world." The Lord God, in His infinite wisdom, foreknowledge and marvelous grace and love, planned aforetime to provide salvation for mankind through the death of His beloved Son (Hebrews 2:9; Ephesians 2:5, 8; John 3:16).

Throughout the Old Testament there is the theme that 'someone is coming'

and that being the promised Messiah who would bring salvation to the human race.

Isaiah, the messianic prophet, prophesied hundreds of years before the coming of the Savior: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14); and His name was to be called Jesus "for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus, in answering Thomas who asked Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:5, 6).

The road map that leads to salvation and to the Father is found in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the only way (Acts 4:12)!

So He says to all who would be His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew

16:24). The way that Jesus leads us is "narrow" and "difficult" but the reward is eternal life (NKJV, Matthew 7:13, 14).

God has given us the perfect and complete directions in His Holy Word that will lead us to Jesus Christ and salvation (Psalms 119:105; John 6:44, 45; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:2-4). God's plan of salvation certainly involves man's response.

In God's scheme of redemption for the human family there must a response by the individual in order to be saved. A person must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24); repent of sins (Acts 17:30) and based upon a confession of faith in Christ, be immersed in His name for the remission of sins (Romans 10:9, 10; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Following in the steps of the Savior (1 Peter 2:20) we will never stray from the way that is infallibly safe and secure and that leads to "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10, 11). May our attitude always be as found in the song, "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow."

Why Does God Allow Christians to Suffer?

James R. Lewis

Two automobiles traveling at a combined speed of 100 miles per hour collide head on. A faithful Christian mother and her infant son are killed instantly, leaving a grieving husband, other children, many friends and relatives to grieve. A drunk driver of the other car is ushered to the local hospital, examined, and released to go home, with little or no injury. How can such things be? Why does God allow such to happen?

This question, in all its many forms, has been asked many times. The answer is somewhat involved as it

relates to the *nature* and *power* of God and to the *nature* and *need* of man. If God is all-powerful, and all loving, and all benevolent, and if He could prevent such from happening, why doesn't He do so?

The introduction of sin and suffering into the world is identified by Paul in Romans 5:12: "Wherefore by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin: so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death entered the world as a result of man's sin. Death certainly is the ultimate level of suffering in this world. I say this realizing that many people do indeed suffer in some degrees wherein death itself may be favored to a present distress, but none the less, it is death that we ultimately disdain.

Three significant things are associated with this passage: Sin, Suffering, and Salvation. It is because of sin that much of the suffering in the world does exist. I say, "much of the suffering" because it is evident that much suffering also exists where no sin is involved. The head-on collision could have taken place if both drivers had been faithful Christians, and there simply had been the misfortune of a mechanical failure, or a distraction.

This brings us to the consideration of God's watchfulness over mankind. Should God so control the affairs in the lives of men that they could never make a mistake or that they could never drive a car that is mechanically unsound? Such a thought certainly sounds good on the surface, but the implications are rather far reaching.

If God did so control the affairs in the lives of men, then, necessarily, in so doing, God would at the same time be removing the free moral agency of man. In other words, for God to remove all possible harm and suffering from man also removes all possibility of man making choices in life, some of which by their very nature will result in harm and suffering.

Without the ability to make choices, man no longer is man. His nature would be so changed that it could not be said, for example, that he *loved* God because love necessarily is an action of the will, or a choosing to do so. Without the element of free moral agency, the ability to choose in any matter is completely removed from the nature of man. Without the ability to choose, the elements such as love, hate, faithfulness, unfaithfulness, good, evil, and the like would no longer exist. Without these elements man would no longer exist!

Our salvation is a victory over both sin and suffering. Faithful Christians have learned to live in this world, and accept the consequences of suffering if necessary, because we know our lives are not bound to the confines of this earth.

We know and understand that we live in this world, but we are not of this world. We know our Lord suffered, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21).

Paul, the other apostles, and many of our Christian brothers and sisters suffered at the hands of evil. Furthermore, Christians understand the trials of this life are essential to our well-being. It is necessary that our faith be tried that it may be made pure. Herein is our will to love God exercised, knowing that following God may bring persecutions, but our love of God will also bring strength to endure.

Why does God allow Christians to suffer? Any alternative which would eradicate the possibility of suffering would also eradicate the very qualities of man which distinguishes man as man.

If we suffer hardships because of circumstances in life, we become stronger. If we suffer persecution because we are Christians we glorify God is so doing (1 Peter 4:16).

I am Blessed to be a Preacher's Wife

Melanie Erwin

I am blessed to be a preacher's wife. As with most blessings in our lives, there have been times I have temporarily forgotten how blessed the life of a preacher's wife truly is. During times that I have been extremely frustrated or disheartened by the actions or words of others I have stated to my husband, "If I would have known you would have become a preacher after we were married, I probably wouldn't have married you."

Many would say, "What a horrible, mean thing to say!" But I have had conversations with other preacher's wives who absolutely understood and have said, "I have been at that point at times as well." I am, however, blessed to be a preacher's wife.

I have been a preacher's wife for 14 years. There was no training given. Recently I saw an ad for a school of preaching that said, "Preacher's aren't born. They are trained." And I thought how true that is of their wives too!

Everything I have learned has been by personal experience or by the wisdom of faithful Christian preacher's wives. I have never made an observation or had an experience that has not been felt by another preacher's wife. There is nothing special about us; we just happened to marry ministers of the Gospel.

The preacher's wife must smile when her husband is criticized for

preaching the truth. However, she is blessed because this will make her a stronger defender of the Gospel.

Her husband is often gone for gospel meetings, hospital visits, or member's homes to offer prayers and encouragement – while she is home alone with their children. Yet, she is blessed because she knows that he is needed by God, and being his helpmeet allows him the opportunity to do the Lord's will.

Her children are often watched microscopically and their conduct inspected. Yet, she is blessed to have so many Christians in her church family that love her children and care for the future of their souls.

Many preachers do not make the same money as others with the same level of college education. They do not typically have insurance benefits or retirement plans as most companies offer employees. Yet, she is blessed when she has a church family that generously pays their minister what they can afford.

She may never stay in her hometown surrounded by her family as possibly assumed growing up. She may have to leave her family behind, sometimes states away. She may not be able to stop by and visit her family or have them over for dinner throughout the week. Yet, she is blessed that her

church family will give her children hugs, kisses, prayers, and even include them in their family events such as birthdays and holidays. I do not know of many secular jobs that would do the same for their employees.

Her friendships are unlike any other in the world. She must be very careful who she confides in and hold dear to her those she learns to trust. She is surrounded by women at church and work, but few will cross the boundary into friendship simply because they have not come to understand that she is simply human.

She laughs when happy, she cries when sad, she has hobbies, she eats, and she sleeps . . . there is nothing "different" about her. She is like any other woman who needs friendships with other women. She has come to learn that even though her friends may be few, it's not the quantity but the quality of friends that matter. She is blessed because the Lord's hand has delivered the highest quality friends she could ever think to pray for!

I am blessed to be a preacher's wife, and I am not going to forget – for long – how blessed the life of a preacher's wife truly is. There will be times of extreme frustration and I know that I will at some point be disheartened again by the actions or words of others. Yet, I remain blessed to be a preacher's wife.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATION FOR SOUL-WINNING

Robert L. Waggoner

Whether or not people are inclined to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ often depends upon their prior belief regarding the origin of the universe. The biblical record insists that all things began with a literal creation by the eternal God. A contrary perspective is that all things began by progressive evolutionary activity within a self-existing universe. Whenever people accept the anti-creational perspective, they are generally not disposed to accept the truthfulness of the gospel. To understand why they need to believe in creation in order to obey the gospel, these two perspectives need to be contrasted. (See table of contrasting beliefs at end of article)

Creation Account

According to the biblical account, the creation of the heavens and the earth marked "the beginning" (Genesis 1:1) of time. Universal time designations of days, months, and years are derived from physical movements of earth and the heavenly bodies. However, the weekly designation of time is derived, not from physical movements of any heavenly bodies, but from the creation event itself. In six days God created the heavens and the earth from nothing (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 42:5; 45:12; Revelation 10:6), but on the seventh day God rested and sanctified that day (Genesis 2:3, Exodus 20:11, 31:17; Hebrews 4:4).

Since God's purpose for creating the earth was for it to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18) he created man and woman (Genesis 1:27; 5:2; Mark 10:6) and all other living things (Genesis 1:21). He created woman for man's benefit (Genesis 1:18, 20-23; 1 Corinthians 11:9). God created all things through the pre-incarnate person of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Revelation 4:11).

Natural Hypothesis

However, according to the progressive natural evolutionary perspective, the universe and life within it are thought to have emerged from nonlife through natural means. Evolutionists generally claim that the universe is now about four billion years old and that humanity is about four million years old. The evolutionary concept is that all current forms of life emerged from simpler earlier kinds, so

that one or more single celled organisms evolved by chance in an upward progression into invertebrates, then vertebrates, then amphibians, then reptiles, then mammals, then primates (including man). Supposedly this means that the universe and life within it will differ in the distant future as much it now differs from the distant past.

The natural evolutionary perspective was popularized in 1859 by Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species*. This evolutionary hypothesis has been tremendously influential. One result is that all disciplines of academic and scientific study have been restructured by the concept of natural evolutionary thought, to the extent that now all public educational systems in the intellectual Western world are philosophically and psychologically founded on this belief. Another result is that whereas civil authorities formerly based their governmental policies on Christian beliefs about God, creation, etc., they have now changed to basing policies on evolutionary thought. These factors have produced apathy toward God, a denial of the biblical account of creation, a rejection of the inspiration and authority of the Bible, a dismissal of the historicity of Adam and Eve, a nonchalant attitude toward sin, etc. All this has culminated in a world of secularism which is quickly becoming more atheistic.

Significance of Creation

If people are to believe and obey the gospel, then they must first believe in creation. Without creation, the existence of the universe must be explained by natural factors, which eliminates the need for God. Without God, man must be considered only physical, material, and temporal because without God man has no everlasting soul. Without God, there is no universal moral standard for humanity, hence there is no sin. Without sin, there is no need for redemption. Without God, human reconciliation to God via human worship and divine activities are not essential. If nature is all that exists, then supernatural miracles or prophecies cannot exist. Without sin, there is no need for Christ or for his sacrificial death to atone for human sin. Without sin, there is no need for salvation from consequences of sin. If man is considered only physical, material, and temporal, then there is no need for eternal destiny to either heaven or hell. If nature is all that exists,

then God does not exist and there is no divine word of God to provide knowledge of human origins, guidance for life, or human destiny. Without God, truth is not universal, absolute, consistent, nor objective. Without God, reality is not universally definable. The biblical doctrines of God and creation are significant because they provide not only an understanding of the origin and nature of humanity, but also serve as the foundation for comprehending all other biblical teachings.

Arguments against Natural Evolution

Many educated people believe in the natural evolutionary hypothesis, not because they have examined arguments to support it, but simply because "they have been told that most educated people believe in evolution" (Henry M. Morris, *The Twilight of Evolution*: Baker Publishing House, 1963, p.26). Since many people have no deep conviction about natural evolution, then they can be dissuaded away from it if good arguments are given against it.

Briefly stated, five arguments can be used effectively against the natural evolutionary hypothesis.

- The fossil record indicates no evolutionary development in the complex forms of life.
- The second law of thermodynamics indicates that the amount of energy to do useful work is always getting smaller, not larger. Anything left to itself always run down. It does not get better or quicker. This suggests

that the universe originated with a highly ordered system, not a naturally progressive or upward development.

- The genetic code (DNA – deoxyribonucleic acid) demonstrates the inability of the evolutionary theory to explain the origin of life because DNA is a product of intelligence. It is comparable to human languages, which without exception, are products of intelligent minds.
- Spontaneous generation is thought to be the ability of something to come from nothing, which is required for the natural evolutionary hypothesis to be valid but which is scientifically impossible.
- A design must have a designer. No one will argue that design is not evident within the natural universe. Hence, for magnificent designs to exist within the universe there must have been a very intelligent designer. This is sometimes referred to as the teleological argument.

Whenever one or more of these arguments are considered valid against the natural evolution perspective of origins, then minds are usually open toward acceptance of creation. Whenever people believe in creation they are much more likely to be willing to hear the good news about Jesus Christ.



Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies



Evening Classes – Seven Locations

College Grove, Culleoka, Goodlettsville, Lebanon,
McMinnville, Murfreesboro, Nashville

mtsp@clearwire.net
mtsop.net

WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF PREACHING



Two-year Program – Tuition Free

Housing Available
wvsop.com

Is the New Testament a Pattern for Us Today?

James Meadows

In 1957, at the Lipscomb Spring Lectures, Reuel Lemmons presented a lecture entitled: "The Scriptures – Our Pattern." He presented some of the following thoughts:

"God has given us a pattern for obedience, a pattern for the church, a pattern for worship, and a pattern for work. Strict compliance with that pattern produces Christians only, the church of Christ only, and scriptural worship and scriptural work."

"Either God's word is that pattern or there is no pattern... If God's word is intended to be a pattern, it is a perfect pattern, for God cannot be charged with imperfection, and following it is important – yes, absolutely essential. If God's word is not intended to be a pattern, then it doesn't matter what we are, or what we do, in religion, nor does it matter whether we are anything or do anything."

At the time Reuel Lemmons spoke the above words, most members of the church would have agreed with his teaching. But there are those today who would ridicule the idea of "pattern theology." Do White, editor of *The Exegete*, openly doubts "that primitive Christianity is the normative pattern for all ages."

He further declares, "Nowhere does the New Testament provide explicit scriptural basis for a restoration principle – no text explicitly states that later generations should follow the primitive church or restore it... Pattern theology is not supported linguistically by the New Testament."

Is the Bible a Pattern?

Who says there is no pattern? Does the Bible teach that there is no pattern? (A) If so, does the Bible's teaching

that there is no pattern constitute a pattern for us to accept? (B) If there is no pattern, am I "free" to reject the teaching (pattern) that says there is no pattern? (C) Am I bound, legally, to believe there is no pattern?

Are there any perversions for worship and service since there is no pattern? Paul told the Corinthians that they were corrupting the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). He told them some changes they needed to make. Were they obligated to obey what Paul said, or were they free to ignore him?

Paul urged the Galatians to "walk by this rule" (Galatians 6:16; cf. Philippians 3:16). Thayer defines *kanon*, the word translated "rule," as "a definitely bound or fixed space... the province assigned to one... any rule or standard."

Moses was instructed by God, in constructing the tabernacle, to "make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5). Thayer defines *typos*, "pattern," as "the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made" (see Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5; Exodus 25:40). Wayne Jackson has asked, "Do we, as recipients of the better covenant (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6), have a lesser responsibility as we minister to God in His church, of which the tabernacle was but a type?" (cf. Hebrews 9:1-10)

The Romans had been made "free from sin" by "obeying from the heart that form (pattern) of doctrine" (Romans 6:17-18). The word here is *typos*, or "pattern," or "mold." W.E. Vine states, "The gospel is the mold." Arndt and Gingrich define *typos* as "form, figure, pattern... pattern of teaching."

Paul admonished the saints at Rome to "...mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Again, Wayne Jackson states, "If there is no set pattern of New Testament doctrine, how could one ever be required to 'turn away from' those who do not practice it?"

The Bible teaches a pattern of moral behavior as well (see Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:13-19). If there is no pattern for moral behavior then there can be no immoral behavior. If there is no immoral behavior, how does man differ from an animal? May I kill a man who says there is no pattern of moral behavior? Would I be immoral if I did?

Paul admonished Timothy to "...hold fast the form (pattern) of sound words" (2 Timothy 1:13). He has to teach these same truths to faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2). They were not to teach a "different doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:13). He was to "...continue in the things he had learned" (2 Timothy 3:14). How could he "hold fast" to sound words, teach the same truths, and abide in the same truths, if there was no pattern and if these truths were constantly changing?

Conclusion

The New Testament is a pattern for us to follow. It furnishes us unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is not obsolete. The principles are not "free" to change with the times and adapt to the various cultures. It may not be altered to meet the whims of new generations. It was delivered "once for all time" (Jude 3) and it lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:22-25).

Preach the Word

E. Claude Gardner

Fifty or more years ago, it was generally understood that preachers should not preach with comments about themselves. Neither should a preacher discuss his wife, children, and mother-in-law. A preacher believed when relating personal experience he should announce it before he told it. Commonly the preacher might say, "Pardon me for giving this personal story." Writers for gospel papers that are of an earlier generation find it difficult to write in the first person.

It is not argued that preachers and Bible teachers should never involve themselves in a sermon or Bible class. Today's audiences may expect casual and personalized teaching. However, this can be carried to an extreme which is not the manner of a gospel proclaimer.

Once when two prominent preachers were compared, a Christian said, "When one preaches we remember his beautiful oratory, but after hearing the other one, we remember the message of the Bible."

Preachers should not constantly say, "I believe;" "This is my opinion;" or "I had this experience." It may benefit the preacher in public relations to call a person's name that affirms his message, but even this procedure is wrought with flaws. It would be wise to ask what Peter, Paul, and others affirm.

Preachers and teachers should be students of the Bible without practicing personal involvement. It may be out of date to think it is essential to "preach the word." But, this is what Paul charged (2 Timothy 4:2). When one follows this directive, the proclaimer will know that this much of the lesson will be right and correct.

What did the writers of the New Testament do about preaching "self"? Peter could have told about his cowardice in denying Christ and he could have used the story of healing his mother-in-law, but he did not in the two recorded sermons in Acts.

On Pentecost, he preached Christ and not self, which resulted in the conversion of about three thousand souls (Acts 2:36, 38, 41).

When Peter preached to the Gentiles, he did not succumb to exalting himself. Rather, he stated the plan of salvation (Acts 10:43, 48).

The apostle Paul could have told about his temporary blindness. He could have recited incidents of sea voyages. Yet, in his sermons recorded in Acts, he did not do this. He preached the word. He explained that he was "...determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

In the record of Paul's two sermons in Acts, he preached the word. After a perusal of his sermons, one is impressed that he preached Christ crucified and risen (Acts 13 and 16). He did not diminish gospel preaching with personal experiences, emotional fluff, and stale jokes.

Peter and Paul are proper examples for preachers today. They did not exemplify the folly of preaching and did not think of preaching as "fun and games."

All gospel teachers must subscribe to Paul's strong declaration: "For 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).



Visit Us Online
www.gospelgleaner.com

News & Notes

James R. McGill

Gleanings from the Mission Field

Ronald Gilbert (Cookeville, TN) reports: December was a busy month.

- We sent out a large shipment of 34 boxes of books, over 800 pounds, to several locations in Africa.
- We sent 1,467 books, 132 booklets, 34 song books, 73 Bibles, 600 tracts, 60 Bible correspondence lessons and 10 New Testaments.

Results of 2013:

- We saw 511 baptisms, 1,546 restorations, 13 new congregations established.
- Two new preacher schools were established
- 67 graduated from preacher schools
- 5,235 new Bible correspondence students enrolled.
- 26 new Bible correspondence teachers volunteered.
- 88 new students enrolled in the International College of the Bible, and 7 graduated from ICOTB.
- 13 Bible correspondence students were baptized, and 3 mission trips were conducted.
- We also shipped 800 Bibles, 3,500 New Testaments, 5,082 song books, 138,645 tracts, 2,370 booklets, 24 audio lessons, and 320 pounds of Bible class literature.
- We provided \$10,000.00 for preacher school support, 32 bikes and 62 suits for preachers, 6 lap top computers for preacher schools and instructors.
- We spent \$12,215 for special projects such as building a church building in Zambia, helping with the down payment for land to

build a new school of preaching in Uganda, and providing the rent and school supplies so that a school in Tanzania can teach faithful men to preach for the next year.

- We also established several new "Mobile Libraries" in different African nations where our students can go to them, check out good study books and keep them for 30 days to learn more of God's Word.

We are very thankful to have been a part of this good work, and want you brethren to know that without your help these things would not have been accomplished.

January is the time that we start our fund raising efforts for our August mission trip to Zambia each year. If you would like to help us in 2014, please contact us at:

International Bible Teaching Ministries

PO BOX 49494

Cookeville, TN 38506

We encourage you to visit us on the web at www.ibtministries.org to learn more about this great work.

Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies Lectureship

The Karns church of Christ in Knoxville, TN, will be conducting their 40th annual lectureship. The lectures will begin Sunday, February 23 at 9:00 a.m. and close with the 7:30 p.m. lecture Wednesday, February 26. This year's theme is *Lost: Needing Jesus*.

Obituaries

Walter W. Pigg Jr., 88, of Murray, KY, died Sunday, January 26, 2014 at the Murray Calloway County Hospital.

Born September 19, 1925 in Wayne County, TN, he was a member of the Green Plain church of Christ in Hazel, KY. He preached at various congregations for more than 60 years

and did mission work in India, Taiwan, Ukraine and the Philippines.

Brother Pigg was also the editor of *Banner of Truth*.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Naomi Wilson Pigg of Murray; four children, Larry Pigg, wife Carol of Milan, Tenn., Susan Adams, husband Alan of Manchester, Tenn., James Pigg, wife Jan of Murray and Cathy Pigg of Murray; nine grandchildren; 27 great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.

Edmore Moyo, faithful evangelist in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, died December 24.

He was a graduate of the Nashville School of Preaching and missed only one night of classes in two years, taking four classes each night, three nights a week. Edmore supported himself by working days at Shoney's, riding the city buses to and from work.

In the twelve years since he returned home to Zimbabwe, he was successful in baptizing many World Bible School students when they completed their correspondence course and requested further study. He was constantly teaching, baptizing, and nurturing the new converts, as the Lord blessed his efforts.

More on Guy Hester....

"Guy Hester was such an encourager to me. I'm not even sure where our paths first crossed, however, I saw him at several lecture programs where either he or I were participants. There are so many problems faced by the Lord's people today (Satan is really busy), but Guy steered clear of those things for the most part. He loved preachers and preaching, and he was a firm supporter of both! I loved my brother, and will miss him."

Dick Sztanyo



Reader Replies

I absolutely am blown away with emotion over the proposed January issue of the GG. It is superb... Guy Hester was one of the best preachers of his generation that I have ever known. You are doing a good job with the *Gleaner*. Best wishes... I have just read every word of the January issue again and studied every picture. I even read what I wrote again! Through the years in paging through old *Gospel Advocates* I read the tributes of some of the beloved brothers we never knew to some we also never knew. I do not recall ever seeing a paper paying tribute to a fallen soldier of the cross as eloquent and touching as this issue of the *Gleaner*. You have put together a masterpiece. I will be glad to have it in my possession as a reminder of my dear friend. Thank you for making me kick against the pricks and join in the tribute. Now, you go forth and continue to "Preach the word" young man.

Mike Kiser
Sylacauga, AL

Thank you for remembering Daddy.
May God continue to bless you in all you do.

Ferrell Hester
Corinth, MS

I have read much of the issue about brother Hester. I think it is wonderful to honor such a servant of the Lord. You did a fine job in getting others to write about this good man, along with your article. I am sorry that I did not know him personally. I hope you and yours are doing well.

Raymond Elliott
Prattville, AL

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Netelton, MS
Permit No. 5

The GOSPEL CLEANER

Volume 26

March, 2014

Number Three

The Preacher Is Not God

James R. Lewis

Whoever thought that he was? Why would anyone think such a thing? Obviously, few, if any, really think that a preacher, any preacher, is God. Nonetheless, let us consider for a few moments the work of the preacher and his relationship to others.

It is not an unusual thing for the preacher to be present when a family is blessed with a newborn entering into this world. At times of illness, especially hospitalizations, the preacher often visits to offer comfort or encouragement. Weddings are great and wonderful events, and the preacher usually joys in sharing the joyous and solemn occasion.

The preacher's influence is strong in the lives of our children, and our family in general. He preaches and teaches thousands of lessons which impact our lives. He counsels and advises when asked to do so. He visits in our homes and teaches us right and wrong. He baptizes our youth, wives, husbands, moms, dads, brothers, sisters, and friends into the Lord Jesus Christ. Precious friendships are made, and much time is spent together, not only in worship services, but also in other church functions and social activities. Death comes to all; often the preacher is present at the passing from this life, and then is honored to conduct a funeral service to help honor the life of a loved one no longer present and to console and comfort those who are present.

The Preacher is Greatly Trusted

The purpose for noting these relationships is simply to point out two truths. Number one, the preacher is indeed greatly honored and blessed to be entrusted to share in a very special way the lives of so many precious people. These are the people who support him and encourage him in his life. They trust him and share with him many of the most significant events in their lives. This is a trust which the preacher must never violate or dishonor.

The Preacher is Highly Esteemed

Number two, it is manifestly evident that the preacher, providing he has not dishonored or violated the trust given unto him, is usually held in high esteem by those who have made him an important part of their lives. A mutual high esteem and love for the members of the church by the preacher provides an abundantly joyful and effective relationship in working together in the Christian life.

The Preacher is Human

However, there is a danger which, at all costs, must be avoided. The preacher is just a man, an uninspired earthen vessel.

His first responsibility is to teach and preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully. What he says concerning matters of faith must always be weighed in the balance of Scripture. His word is not authoritative, and what he says is true only if God's word says it is true.

If he preaches contrary to God's word, he has violated the gospel which has been entrusted unto him. If he advises those whom he loves contrary to God's word, he also violates the trust they have placed in him.

In all matters of faith we must be exceedingly diligent to demand a "Thus saith the Lord." While it is good and appropriate to trust a faithful preacher we must not determine our faith by a "Thus saith the preacher." The danger is inherent in exalting the preacher above what the Lord says. Our trust must not be put in man, any man, to be the final word concerning God's will. The preacher is just a servant of the Lord. The preacher is not God!

Beginning with this editorial, I would like to run a series of articles featuring the comments, attitudes, and advice a few great preachers have shared with us on the subject of preaching. Let us begin with **Benjamin Franklin**, a gospel preacher who was a great, great-nephew of the famous statesman for whom he was possibly named.

About Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin (1712-1789) is considered by many to be the finest editor in Christian journalism of his day. His two books of sermons *The Gospel Preacher* volumes 1&2 are classics.

H. Leo Boles writes of him: "Benjamin Franklin entered into the service of the Lord with all of the fervor and zeal that he had. He soon began to speak in public, and in less than a year after his baptism he was known as a very acceptable preacher. He soon became a very successful evangelist and did much work in Kentucky and Indiana. The latter part of his life was given to evangelistic work entirely. Benjamin Franklin, while living in Cincinnati, became editor of the *American Christian Review*. In fact, he started this paper in 1856 and continued to write for it until his death" (*Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers*, p.161).

Through the *American Christian Review*, Franklin had a tremendous influence over the churches in the North, especially after the Civil War. He was a very sound, conservative editor who helped to check some of the more liberal ideas emerging in the brotherhood at that time. A good comparison to Franklin,

south of the Ohio River, would be David Lipscomb, or even Tolbert Fanning.

Because he was true to the restoration plea of speaking where the Bible speaks, he was regarded by some as being old fashioned (even then) and out of step with the times. Nevertheless, he was a great gospel preacher.

Characteristics of Franklin's Preaching

Otis Castleberry's work, *They Heard Him Gladly*, has provided the material which we now consider.

Castleberry writes:

"Franklin's interest in his audience was always evident. He was seldom sarcastic, seldom humorous; grave, with strong convictions he exposed false doctrine, false teaching and wrong doing" (p.70).

"As he spoke he moved about with natural grace and ease from one side of the rostrum to the other, speaking in the meantime in a manner perfectly understood" (p.69).

David Lipscomb said his speaking was characterized "by earnestness, clearness, and simplicity" (p.69).

"To Benjamin Franklin, audience response to a speech was of more than passing importance, it involved eternity. He was not an orator in the stereotyped sense. His voice is described as being clear and full...He spoke in a conversational tone, which he varied from time to time. His great force appeared to be in the authority and sincerity with which he spoke" (p.69).

Concerning his morals, it is said that "The Christian character of Benjamin Franklin was without blemish and was unimpeachable" (pp. 33-34).

Franklin on Preaching

We shall let Franklin's comments stand on their own merit.

On sound doctrine and living: "All we have to do to stand right before the people, is to be sound in heart, in the faith, in the life; true to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; honest and faithful in the whole matter; maintaining, defend-

ing, advocating it as the only divine and gracious system for the salvation of a lost world; enforcing it on men for its own sake, and for the sake of humanity"

"May we all maintain soundness in the faith, in the gospel, integrity to it, faithfulness to it in all things, soundness in character, purity and holiness. May we strive to live nearer and still nearer to God" (p.35).

"It is not inventive genius we need in the church, nor explorers to invent something new, or to make new discoveries; but we need humble and honest men, who know and love the truth and will press it on the world" (p.39).

On training preachers: "The proper place to make a preacher is by the side of an old, a well-trying man, who is a preacher, in the field, where the work is to be done" (p.41).

On the work of an evangelist: "If we intend to save the cause, we as evangelists of Christ have something more to do than to seek good places, ease and worldly comfort. The Lord did not intend evangelists to open an office, and sit down in it and wait for sinners to come to them to be converted" (p.50).

"A little preaching on the Lord's day will not do the work. The Word should be preached every day and every night, as far as possible. We cannot confine our labors to cities, towns, and villages, expecting preaching to be brought to us, as work to a tailor, hatter or shoemaker, but we must go out into the country" (p.49).

"He must be a man of perseverance. A man who cannot preach a week without any success, and not become discouraged, had better go home. He is not the man. It is nothing strange to preach a dozen or fifteen discourses without any success. Let him preach again. Remember Noah, who preached one hundred and twenty years, without an addition, and preach on and pray on. Trust in the Lord, and work on" (p.43).



The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Three
March, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Michael Shank
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *The Preacher is Not God*
James R. Lewis
- 2 EDITORIAL *Great Preachers on Great Preaching:
The Views of Benjamin Franklin*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Diamond-Headed Preaching*
Ernest Underwood
- 6 *A Capella*
Gerald Cowan
- 8 *Converted: When and How?*
Owen D. Olbricht
- 9 *Holy Spirit Baptism?*
Raymond Elliott
- 10 *Truth Is Narrow*
Stephen R. Bradd
- 11 *Salvation by Grace through Faith*
Travis L. Quertermous
- 12 *Getting to Know God*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 14 *Jeremiah, The Lord's Prophet*
Ron Thomas
- 15 News & Notes
James R. McGill
- 16 Reader Replies

Diamond-Headed Preaching

Ernest Underwood

In 640 BC, Josiah ascended to the throne of Judah. Sometime during his reign he began a tremendous religious reform. It was during this time that we learn that "Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord'" (2 Kings 22:8). This very fact tells us of the religious stagnation of the people of God at that time.

In 609 BC, Josiah was killed when he attempted to prevent Pharaoh Necho from passing through Israel on his way to Carchemish to meet Nebuchadnezzar in battle, a battle in which the king of Babylon was the victor. After his victory over Necho, Nebuchadnezzar swept into Palestine and conquered it.

In 606 BC, he took captives from Jerusalem among whom were Daniel and his three friends. In 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar came back to Judah and took more of the people into captivity. Among this group was Ezekiel. It was while in Babylon on the river Chebar that Ezekiel received his call to the prophetic office.

In this article we shall take note of four aspects of the call and work of this Old Testament prophet, making some applications to us today, especially to those who would preach and teach the gospel.

The Call of Ezekiel

First, we shall notice the call and commission of this prophet. In Ezekiel 1:1-3 the prophet states "that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" and that "the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest" and "the hand of the Lord was upon him there."

These visions impressed upon him the glorious attributes of God - His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. He was then told to speak "My words." He was not to speak what may or may not have pleased his hearers. He was to speak the words of God.

To open the BOOK without faith in, and respect for the Author is useless and blasphemous. One who would propose to preach today must first recognize the majesty and power of God. He, like the prophet, must "eat the roll," that is, he must be filled with it. He must know it, love it, desire it, and he must preach it and it alone. He must realize that, according to the apostle Paul, the gospel is still today the power that God uses to convict and correct those lost in sin (Romans 1:16). It is in this powerful gospel that the "righteousness of God is revealed" (Romans 1:17).

Men cannot be made righteousness by following the doctrines of men. A casual reading of Jesus' statement in Matthew 15:8-14, and 2 Peter 2:1-3 should convince the reader of this salient fact.

To Whom Was He Sent

Second, we notice the people to whom the prophet was sent. These were God's people whom He had sent into captivity. Ezekiel was not sent to Babylon to convert Babylonians. He was sent to those who were not of a different language, namely, Jews.

God warned Ezekiel of the attitude he should expect from them. Nine times in chapters two and three God told him that these people were rebellious. They had no shame for doing their wicked deeds. Their lives were open cesspools of sin and disobedience, and they didn't care.

God further described them as being stiff-hearted - stubborn, unbending and hard-hearted, and having foreheads like flint. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah aptly described these people: "That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits'" (Isaiah 30:9-10). And, "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and my people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?" (Jeremiah 5:30-31)

We should observe that attitudes of some people have not changed much when it comes to hearing and heeding God's word. From the time of the apostles to preachers of the word of God today it has been true that some of those to whom they have preached have not always been loving and dedicated to, and have had little appreciation for the great work of preaching and teaching.

In the days of Amos the prophet, there were those who were wed to their idols. Today, millions are wed to their creed books and denominational doctrines. Yes, even in the Lord's church there are some who are just as impudent, rebellious, and stiff-hearted as those in Isaiah's and Jeremiah's day. Such members must be warned and rebuked.

The Responsibilities of the Prophet

Third, in these two chapters God assigns to the prophet his responsibilities, both to Him and to the people. The false prophets were telling the people that they would soon

be released from their captivity. Ezekiel was to let the people know that such promises were simply delusions. They would remain in captivity the full seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 25:10-14). He was to expose their apostasy and as a watchman he was to give them warning.

God promised him that as the foreheads of the people were as hard a flint, He would give Ezekiel a head as hard as a diamond. In his preaching, he was to convict them of their sins for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. He was to let them know that there was hope if they would turn back to God, yet, in all things he was to speak only as the Lord directed him. However, God told him that the people would not hear him.

Again, times have changed very little if any. If they have changed at all it would probably be for the worse. There are still multitudes which have many delusions about salvation, church membership, proper worship, authority, and what really constitutes success. Success is gauged by such things as popularity, numbers, and one's feeling good about himself. In the Lord's church these same attitudes are found in many places and by many leaders. Some elderships and some preachers do not want what they call "hard preaching." They don't want truth that will cause members to feel guilty about their life-styles and their sins.

This writer has been told on occasions, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Every time this statement has been made to him he has simply replied, "I am not interested in catching flies, I am interested in converting souls to Christ." When one "catches" flies he catches that which produces maggots, which might well describe the spiritual corruption one finds in a group of people who espouse such a view. One who preaches does not have to be harsh, cruel, or overbearing. However, if a preacher or teacher is not willing to expose and condemn sin wherever he finds it, he should either repent and start doing so, or he should look for another line of work and do the church a favor by the doing of it, whether a first year student in college or a preacher training school, or a PhD!

The Response He Should Expect

Fourth, and last, the prophet is told the kind of response he should expect from his work. This is summed up in four ways.

1. He could expect the people to turn a deaf ear to what he was saying. "You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious" (Ezekiel 2:7).

The prophet Jeremiah encountered the same problem with those in Jerusalem. "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Indeed their ear

is uncircumcised, and they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it" (Jeremiah 6:10-11).

2. He could expect their hard looks, and to be persecuted by them. The Lord warns, "And you, son of man, do not be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions..." (Ezekiel 2:6).
3. He could expect them to rebel against God's word, and, as has already been noticed, they did.
4. He could expect very few, if any, to heed the warnings from the Lord that he was giving them, and turn back to God. God simply told him what he could expect: "But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted" (Ezekiel 2:7).

The sad fact is that today in our nation, in religion, and in morals these same corrupt, ungodly attitudes and practices are prevalent. In the leadership of our nation there is a no-holds-barred attitude toward that which God has called an abomination. The homosexual agenda, the so-called "same sex marriages," which are nothing more than an extension of homosexuality, dishonesty, lying, covetousness, idolatry, and multitudes of false religious organizations are living proof of this statement.

Again, as sad as it may be, we also must recognize the spiritual corruption of those in the church who are touting the attitude of those that are mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:2. Here Paul warned. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). To borrow a phrase, it seems to this writer that there are a "heap" of churches that seem to be doing this very thing.

Let us be of the mind that we will always teach, preach, and practice only those things that God has commanded and/or authorized. May those who preach be determined to be "diamond-headed" in their commitment to the truth!

Hester Publications

165 Gibson Dr.

Henderson, TN 38340

Orders@samsbookfactory.com

(731) 989-5872

A Capella

Gerald Cowan

Ask anyone about the meaning of *a capella* and the answer will probably be something like this: “*A capella* means singing without instrumental music.” It may surprise some to know that *a capella* does not mean unaccompanied or without instruments and that it is not necessarily about singing.

However, when properly understood it does apply to singing and the most common application is to singing. The present essay is not to be a treatise on instrumental music, how it was used in the Old Testament dispensation and whether or not it is authorized for use under the New Testament. That of course is a relevant and important study on its own, one frequently addressed in sermons and in print. But that is not the point here. This study will be simple and direct, focusing upon the meaning and application of *a capella*.

LITERAL MEANING

Incidentally, it may appear in several different forms – *a capella*, *acapella*, or *accappella* – but the meaning is the same. The principal word is *capel* or *capella*, referring to a chapel or church. So a *capella* means “as in chapel, as in church,” that is to say, in a way that is appropriate and suitable for use in the church. Some view the building or meeting place of Christians as the chapel or church, so for them *a capella* would mean suitable for use in the “church building.” This is not correct. The church is the people, the Christians who are mem-

bers of the spiritual body of Christ. This concept leads some to think *a capella* means suitable for use in a congregation or assembly of Christians in a “worship service.” But Christians are the church even when not meeting, congregating or assembling in one place, even when not worshiping together. So we may see *a capella* as meaning suitable for the church, suitable for Christians as members of the church, proper for members of the church both individually and collectively, both privately and publicly.

SOME VALID APPLICATIONS

Singing of hymns and spiritual songs should be *a capella* – as in chapel/church, once universally understood as unaccompanied vocal music. But now it is has almost universally lost its meaning of as in church and is used only to mean unaccompanied.

There are two purposes for singing of religious or church-related songs. First, as meaningful expressions directed to God. Songs can be an activity of worship to God, to offer praise to God, to thank God or express gratitude and devotion to Him, or otherwise declare His glory and praise-worthiness. Worship is a contraction of worth-ship, indicating and acknowledging that the Lord is worthy of praise and devotion and service.

The second purpose of Christian singing is to teach and admonish one another (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). Only songs that can

be directed to God or used to edify each other can be *a capella*, suitable for use in and by the church. Songs that are not directed to God or not for edifying others but instead are for entertainment, mood control, or merely for expressing personal feelings cannot be *a capella*, suitable for the church – not even when they are unaccompanied, when no instruments of music are used.

The fact that most people assume *a capella* means without instrumental accompaniment reflects the truth that for several hundred years after Christ, people understood that singing *a capella*, as one would in the church, required using the voice only. Church music was only vocal. When did that change, and by what authority was it changed? It may have been authorized by a corrupt church and may be widely accepted by corrupt churches, but it has never been authorized by God and cannot be *a capella*, suitable for use in the church of the Lord.

MORE APPLICATIONS

Let us go further with the application. Preaching should always be *a capella* – suitable for the church of the Lord, and for any others who may hear it. False doctrine or anything “contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:10) could never be *a capella*.

Platitudes and words that give false hope, invalid approval, permission, or even implied tolerance of something God does not author-

ize and accept could never be considered *a capella*. But words that inform, instruct, edify, and encourage in righteousness are *a capella*. Words that rebuke, warn and correct those in error can be *a capella* too, suitable for use in and by the church (2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17, and 4:1-4).

The partaking of the Lord's Supper should be *a capella* – done properly for the church. The use of bread and fruit of the vine as a memorial to the sacrifice of Jesus, a proclamation of the participants as members of his body in fellowship with each other and with him is proper for the church (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and 11:23-29). Replacing bread and fruit of the vine with elements that seem more relevant to modern minds is not *a capella*. Re-sacrificing or offering up Jesus as some claim to do is impossible. He was offered in sacrifice once for all, not repeatedly (Hebrews 9:27-28). Using some alchemy to transform apparent bread and wine into the same or similar substance as the literal flesh and blood of Jesus – called transubstantiation by Catholics and consubstantiation by their episcopal cousins in several denominations – can never be *a capella*.

It is a travesty of spiritual things and can never be suitable for the

church. We should note that conjoining the communion of the Lord's Supper with simultaneous singing, preaching, praying, a visual depiction of crucifixion, or other such activities may not be *a capella* either.

Honest prayers of Christians would be *a capella*, suitable for church. Insincere prayers, dramatic performance prayers, rote or ritualized prayers are never appropriate, either in an assembly of people or in private expression. There are certain prayers God will not accept or respond to positively, nor will He accept and bless those who pray them (1 Peter 3:10-12, James 4:3). Just like singing, and perhaps even more to the point, prayer must be "with the spirit and with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

It should be added that our giving should be *a capella*, an indication of our appreciation for the Lord as participating members of his church. Giving to support a church budget, giving to support a preacher or ministry, benevolent gifts to meet unscheduled or unbudgeted needs as they arise, and many similar things may or may not be done *a capella* but they certainly should be. *A capella* giving will be purposeful and planned, according to one's ability (prosperity

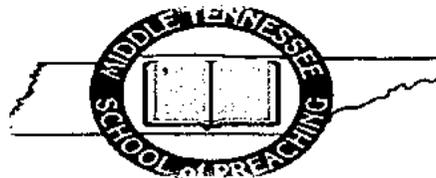
means what one has, and not merely what one has received recently), freely and not of constraint. Our giving should be to God; our gifts to God are part of our worship of God. We may give to the church and to other persons or works, but it is still first to God and then to others according to our understanding of the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:5).

All our activities of worship – singing, praying, communion, giving, sharing of God's word, and everything else that can properly be called worship – must be *a capella*. If they are not *a capella*, they will not be accepted by God, not pleasing to God.

Things done to entertain or patronize or please the people can never be *a capella* – suitable for church. We are instructed how to conduct ourselves in the house of God, not only when assembled in a meeting place but everywhere, as members of the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15). One's behavior at all times and in all places – one's entire life and way of life (Philippians 1:27) – should be *a capella*, suitable for and becoming to Christians in the church of the Lord.

Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies

mtsp@clearwire.net



mtsop.net

Evening Classes – Seven Locations

College Grove, Culleoka, Goodlettsville, Lebanon, McMinnville, Murfreesboro, Nashville

Converted: When and How?

Owen D. Olbricht

The word "convert" means "to change," as from one form to another, like water to ice or steam, or from one belief to another and from allegiance to one person or teaching to that of another. Convert is translated from *epistrepho*, which is most often translated in the KJV, "return," "turn," but is also translated "convert, converted" (Matthew 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 22:32; John 12:40; Acts 3:19; 28:27; James 5:19, 10), or "conversion" (Acts 15:3).

The main thought of *epistrepho* in a religious sense of *convert* in the NT is that of leaving sinful or wrong practices in order to follow Jesus by living a new life for Him (Matthew 13:15; Acts 3:19). When translated "turn," it is used of a change of direction, either physical (Matthew 9:22; 24:18) or spiritual (Matthew 10:13; Luke 1:17).

Repent and Turn

"Repent" – *metanoeo* – includes the idea of a change or resolve of heart that should be followed by a changed way of living, thus an inner change that is to be followed by an outward change as the result of the inner change. Repentance can take place but not be followed by a changed life. Turning must follow repentance before a conversion is complete.

- John told the Pharisees and Sadducees, "...bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8).
- Peter told the Jews, "Repent therefore and turn [NASB, "be converted," KJV, NKJV]" (Acts 3:19). Thus they were to "repent" *metanoeo* and then "turn" *epistrepho* (Acts 3:19; 26:20). Since repent is an active verb, not a passive verb, the Jews were told to turn, not to be turned, to be converted.
- Paul told King Agrippa that he declared to people that they were to "repent and turn" (Acts 26:20).
- Jesus' message to the Ephesian church was that they were to "...repent and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5).

The inner change of repentance must bring about an outward change in order for a complete conversion to take place. If no outward change as the expression of an inner resolve to change takes place, a full conversion has not taken place.

Conversion and Forgiveness

Repentance, an inner change or inner conversion, requires an outer change, an outer conversion before forgiveness of sins. Paul is a good example. When he left Jerusalem to go to Damascus, his goal was to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus, to bind Christians, imprison them, and put them to death (Acts 9:2; 22:4; 26:9-11). His life was changed on the road to Damascus. He was inwardly and outwardly converted, totally changed, before he entered the city. Instead of seeking to bind Christians, he wanted to be one of them, so he neither ate nor drank for three days (Acts 9:9) and spent his time in prayer (Acts 9:10). After Jesus' appearance to him, Paul repented of his sins and was totally converted, a fully changed man on the road to Damascus, but his sins were not yet forgiven.

Two Were Sent

Jesus sent Paul to Damascus and sent Ananias to meet Paul so that Ananias could give Paul a message. When Paul asked Jesus what He wanted him to do, Jesus told him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6). Ananias was the man with the message.

When Ananias came to Paul, as he was down praying, he told Paul that he had been chosen to be a witness of what he had seen and heard (Acts 22:15), reinforcing what Jesus had told Paul (Acts 26:16-18). He would be doing the work of an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:1). He also told Paul that Jesus had sent him so that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). Neither of these statements included what Paul must do.

Converted Before Forgiven

When Ananias arrived, Paul was fully converted to Christ. He had crucified his past life (Galatians 2:20) and was ready to obey Jesus and to do all he could to convert people to follow Jesus.

Ananias told Paul, who was down praying, what he must do, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

An inner change, a conversion, had already taken place in Paul's life which had been followed by an outer change, but his sins were not yet washed away. He had learned about Jesus, believed in Jesus, repented of his sins, and

changed his life, but was not yet forgiven. His sins were not washed away until he was baptized (Acts 22:16).

Calling on His Name

Ananias' instruction that Paul was to be baptized, "calling on Jesus' name," (Acts 22:16) did not mean that Paul was to pray while he was being baptized. The Greek *epikaléo* "call" means to be given a surname or be called by a name (Luke 22:3; Acts 4:36; James 3:7) and also means to invoke or make an appeal (Acts 25:11, 12; 2 Cor. 1:23; Heb. 11:16).

After quoting Joel's statement, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21; see Joel 2:32), Peter did not tell the people to pray to be forgiven, but rather told them be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. They were to realize that through the name of Jesus, as the basis of the authority to be baptized (Acts 2:38), their sins would be washed away through His blood (Revelations 1:5). Jesus' name is the only name through which we can be saved (Acts 4:12), which means that the person being baptized is to rely on Jesus' name, thus on Jesus to wash away his sins.

In order to bring healing to a man who was crippled from birth Peter called on the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6). The same name Peter called on to heal the lame man is the same name that is called on when sinners are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38). In like manner as the lame man was healed through the name of Jesus, sins are forgiven by an appeal made in the same name.

Conclusion

Convert means "turn" and "change." The change that is to take place in the life of a person who is to be baptized is an inner change and an outer change. This happened in Paul's life and is what he described in this letter to the Romans. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Paul further explained, "God be thanked that you were the slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17, 18). Their inner response from the heart resulted in an outward change of life.

Conversion includes an inner change and an outer change in a person's relationship with Jesus in the process of being baptized. Even though these changes may take place before baptism, as in the case of Paul, sins are not washed away until a person obeys from the heart Jesus' form of teaching when he is baptized.

Holy Spirit Baptism?

Raymond Elliott

So many people in our present age persist in propagating the need for the Holy Spirit baptism. In practically every religious organization individuals seek for such an experience. Everywhere you turn, religionists are advocating instant spiritual maturity by receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Seemingly, if one has not received such a sensational occurrence, he is not in the mainstream of things. What the majority fails to understand is that the Holy Spirit baptism was/is not a command to be obeyed but was a promise to be received by a relatively few people, namely the apostles of Jesus Christ and the household of Cornelius, as recorded in Acts chapters two and ten.

By the time Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, he declared (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) there was but one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). Which baptism? The one required by the Lord and preached and practiced by the apostles and that is, water baptism. Jesus commissioned the original preachers of the gospel in Matthew 28:19,20, "Go you therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

But, let us suppose for a moment that all these people are correct in their claim that they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Please observe the logical conclusion of such assertion, and that is that the Holy Spirit would be guilty of contradicting Himself in matters pertaining to doctrine.

Notice the following:

1. One person who claims the baptism of the Holy Spirit teaches that there is one person in the Godhead.
2. Another individual who claims the Holy Spirit baptism teaches that there are three persons in the Godhead.
3. Yet, another person, a recipient of the baptism of the Holy Spirit states that baptism can be administered by sprinkling as well as by immersion.
4. While another individual who believes he has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit teaches that baptism is by immersion only.
5. Then, there is the person, claiming the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who declares that one should be baptized in the name of Jesus only.

6. But, another individual who says that he has been baptized by the Holy Spirit, teaches that baptism is in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These are but a few examples of the diversity of doctrines preached by people who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Who are we to believe? Can all these doctrines be scripturally correct? Would the Holy Spirit inform one person in one way and another person in a different way, doctrinally speaking? Are we to blame the Holy Spirit for the divisive doctrines? If we do, would this not mean that the Holy Spirit is guilty of contradicting Himself?

The truth of the matter is that the Holy Spirit has revealed the complete will of God as found in the Holy Scriptures. The apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16,17, "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" (NKJV). We must not be misguided by the emotions and subjective feelings and experiences of uninspired men today. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

WEST VIRGINIA
SCHOOL OF PREACHING



Two-year Program – Tuition Free

Housing Available

wvsop.com

**Training Gospel Preachers
for 20 Years**

Truth is Narrow

Stephen R. Bradd

I used to teach some college math classes. Many problems can be approached from more than one perspective and will all lead to the correct solution. There are potentially many ways to solve a particular math problem, but such is not the case when it comes to the problem of sin.

In religion, God desires each person to learn His truth, believe it, and obey it (cf. John 8:24, 31-32; Hebrews 5:9). Those who do such faithfully will be saved by the grace of God and reside in heaven for all eternity after the judgment. The Bible teaches there is only one way to solve man's problem with sin. There is only one way to eternal life—through the Son of God!

Jesus affirmed in John 14:6 – "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Notice His use of the word "the." Jesus wasn't just one way among many ways. He is the way, meaning the one and only way! It is through the Son of God, and only through Him, that one can find truth and the way to eternal life.

Consider what Luke wrote in Acts 4:12 on this subject – "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Salvation cannot be found outside the Lord Jesus Christ. The way to everlasting life is not found in Buddhism, Islam, or any other world religion.

But Stephen, that's some awfully close-minded thinking! That's exactly right. There are certain things we need to be close-minded about. Let me elaborate. I believe the Bible is the truth and that it can be logically defended as the inspired word of God. If the Scriptures affirm that one cannot be saved without Jesus, then I believe it. Unless one can show me where my understanding of God's word is wrong, I will continue to be close-minded on this matter. There is only one way to heaven!

Yes, truth is narrow. Jesus, in Matthew 7:13-14, contrasts two gates (wide and narrow), two ways (broad and difficult), two destinations (destruction and life), and two groups of people (many and few). Jesus vividly states that the way to eternal life is narrow and difficult. The path is not easy, and consequently, relatively few will find it (and remain on it until the end). He depicts the way to eternal destruction in just the opposite fashion. Getting to that destination is simple, and tragically, that is why many will make it.

Truth in religion is narrow, and many are bothered by that fact. Many prefer a message that is not so exclusive or absolute or demanding, but that's not the kind of message Jesus preached. It should be noted, however, that those who are offended by the narrowness of truth in religion demand narrowness in other areas.

For instance, if one takes offense to the truth that he can only get to heaven through submission to Christ, is he also offended when I affirm that $2 + 2$ only equals 4? I doubt that such would offend anyone. People are close-minded when it comes to simple addition, and rightfully so. There is only one correct answer, but there are an infinite number of incorrect (or false) answers. $2 + 2$ does not equal 3, 5, 10, 697, etc. It only equals 4, period. Truth is narrow.

Let's carry the analogy further. If someone wants to believe that $2 + 2 = 3$, then they are free to believe such, but they are wrong. It doesn't matter if they believe with all their heart that $2 + 2 = 3$, they're mistaken. It doesn't matter if they were raised believing that $2 + 2 = 3$. It doesn't matter if a math teacher taught them that $2 + 2 = 3$. It's simply not true, and it never will be.

Likewise, if someone believes they can be saved without Jesus, they are free to believe such, but they are wrong. It doesn't matter if they believe with all their heart that they can be saved without Jesus, they're still wrong. It doesn't matter if they were raised believing they could be saved without Jesus. It doesn't matter if a religious leader taught them they can be saved without Jesus. It's simply not true, and it never will be because the Bible says otherwise.

Friends, truth is narrow, and not just in religion. There are many different religions one could practice, but Christianity is the only true religion. There are many different denominations or churches one could attend, but Jesus is the founder and foundation of only one true church—His church (cf. Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). Truth is objective, and the Bible is to be our guide (not man-made religions, denominations, or traditions). God wants you to be saved (cf. II Pet. 3:9). He wants you to be on the narrow path that leads to life. He wants you to believe and obey the truth of His word.

Visit Us Online
www.gospelgleaner.com

Free Bible Study Helps
audioevangelism.com

Salvation by Grace through Faith

Travis L. Quertermous

In one of the most well-known statements in the Bible on salvation, the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." This wonderful and remarkable statement has been sadly been misunderstood by many, in particular what it says about works and salvation. Let us take a closer look at this passage.

Paul first affirms we are saved by grace. The second chapter of Ephesians emphasizes this fact. Earlier in this chapter he wrote, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Grace is often defined as God's unmerited favor and so it is. God's grace is centered in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 2:9, we read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."

At the cross, Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves, namely, atone for our own sins. With no amount of good works could we save ourselves from the eternal punishment which is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Jesus paid those wages for us at Calvary even though He Himself was absolutely sinless. Because of our sins against God, we could never be worthy of such a marvelous gift from our Maker. Imagine a murderer trying to make up for his terrible crime by good deeds. Can he ever undo what he has done by such or make it up to the family of his victim? Certainly not! This is why it was essential for Jesus to die in our place and atone for our sins. Thank God for His amazing grace!

This is why Paul reminds us all that salvation is "not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." In light of our sins and the grace of God in providing Jesus to die for us to provide salvation from those sins, how dare any of us boast before God about how we deserve to go to heaven! Again, imagine the guilty murderer telling the judge he does not deserve any punishment because of the good life he has lived up to that point! Such is pride at its worst. And yet, so many people think they are

going to heaven just because they have lived a good life. If that were the case, why did Jesus have to die? The truth is no one will be saved apart from God's grace.

But at the same time, let no one think that Paul is denying the necessity of obeying God's word when he says we are not saved by works. Too many good folks jump to this unwarranted conclusion. Remember that the works of which he speaks in Ephesians 2:9 are those of which a man might boast, those which he thinks might earn him a trip to heaven without obedience to the gospel of Christ. Paul categorically denied that such could ever be case for anyone.

Paul also reminds us that the salvation God provides through His grace, like any gift, must be received. The Lord does not force salvation on any man or coerce anyone into receiving it. Paul tells us that we receive the gift of salvation through faith (Ephesians 2:8).

What is faith? It is the firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God combined with unwavering trust in Him as my Lord and Savior manifested by unquestioning obedience to His will. Faith, then, is the happy combination of belief, trust, and obedience. James made this clear when he wrote, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?" (James 2:14). The works of which he speaks consist of humble, loving obedience to the Savior's commandments. While such works do not earn salvation for us, we cannot have salvation without an obedient faith which grants us access to God's grace (Romans 4:16).

Scripture makes this abundantly clear throughout its sacred pages. While Ephesians 2:8-9 is often quoted when referring to salvation, verse 10 is often left out, but it is just as crucial: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Hebrews 5:9 tells us that Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." The Savior Himself said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Thus we learn that the faith that saves is the faith that works (or obeys) the word of God. Such a one will be saved by the grace of God.

What then does faith require of me that I might be saved by grace? The New Testament teaches that one must repent of one's sins (Acts 17:30), confess one's faith that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9-10), and be immersed in water (baptized) for the remission of one's sins through the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-4). One must then live a faithful Christian life so that heaven will be our eternal home (Revelation 2:10). Have you been saved by grace through faith?

GETTING TO KNOW GOD

Robert L. Waggoner

A baby's first knowledge of parents comes not from formal introduction, instruction, or reflection but from associations and experiences. By parental initiative, babies receive food, clothing, and other provisions without realizing parental motivations. Only as babies grow do meanings become attached to associations and activities.

In like manner, God initiated revelations about himself to humanity. Adam and Eve learned that God was their creator and provider through associations and experiences with God. God brought them into existence, established their place of habitation, and the conditions of their livelihood (Genesis 1:27-30; 2:15-23). He gave them food (Genesis 1:29) and clothing (Genesis 3:21). God gave Adam a companion (Genesis 2:23, 3:12). He designated laws – what they could and could not eat – and designated consequences if they failed to obey (Genesis 2:16-17). God gave them responsibility, i.e., that they should be fruitful and have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28). They learned that God is a judge (Genesis 3:16-19) and that he executes his judgments (Genesis 3:22-24). They experienced God's speaking with them (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:16-18; 3:9-10). They learned that God is their superior. They surely must have realized that God wanted associations with them and their posterity.

In all this, Adam and Eve did not learn why God acted toward them as he did. The Bible indicates that God chose not to disclose his plans for humanity until later generations. Inasmuch as God had given them opportunity to eat of the tree of life (Genesis 2:9) they might have assumed that God wanted them to live forever. However, to live forever required that they refrain from eating fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. To eat that fruit meant that they would die (Genesis 3:3).

From the creation account, several factors about the nature and character of God seem obvious. First, God is eternal. He existed before "the beginning." Although "the beginning" refers to the beginning of creation, it also indicates that before creation, time did not exist.

Second, God is a personality. He had personal associations with Adam and Eve and many others. He is the major person described not only in the beginning but also throughout the Bible.

Third, God is all powerful. When the size and intricacies of the heavens and the earth are considered, then the realization that God created them indicates the greatness of his "eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). God's pow-

erful nature is also indicated by his authority in giving a law to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2-3) and executing judgment against them when they disobeyed (Genesis 3:16-19).

Fourth, God is all wise. By his creation, he demonstrated that he had the wisdom to produce light, land and seas, sun, moon and stars, innumerable plants and animals, and mankind, etc. (Genesis 1 & 2; Jeremiah 10:12). His wisdom and knowledge is also demonstrated in his evaluation of actions and motives of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel and other biblical characters (Genesis 3 & 4).

Fifth, God is the personification of love (1 John 4:8, 16). He wanted to create humanity (Genesis 1:26-27) after his own likeness. He wanted mankind to have dominion of the earth (Genesis 1:28). He seems to have wanted to associate with people (Genesis 3:9). He provided for all their needs. And when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, he could have caused them to die immediately but he allowed them to live for several hundred years afterward (Genesis 5:3). He allowed them to reproduce (Genesis 4:1-2).

With the passing of time, peoples' knowledge about God and his desire to associate with humanity slowly accumulated as God chose to reveal himself and his desires to certain individuals at different times and in various ways – through direct communication, through angels, through dreams and visions, through prophets, through miracles, through his Son, and through his written word (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Eventually, God revealed that he wanted everyone to spend eternity with him, if they would believe and obey him (Mark 16:16; John 1:11; 3:16, 36; 11:26; 20:31; Acts 5:31-32; 16:31; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 1:9-10; 1 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 5:9; 1 John 5:13).

However, when people have little experience or associations with God, they may not recognize that God exists or that he is relevant to their lives. Some people even deny his existence and his relevancy. Sometimes people need to consider evidences, other than what is revealed in Scripture, that God exists and that he is relevant.

Basic arguments for the existence of God that come from human reasoning may be convincing for some but not for others. These arguments consist of reasoning from cause to effect, from design to designer, from the concept that the idea of God requires the existence of God, from recognition that the moral nature of humanity infers a supreme moral being, etc. However, the best understandings about God come not primarily from reasoning, intuition or the natural sciences (although these factors may lend support to belief in the existence of God) but from God's word.

Also helpful to an understanding of God and his associations with humanity are historical records and archeological data that certify the truthfulness of biblical claims about God.

Although you may realize that God exists, you may not understand or appreciate his character unless or until you've had associations with him. That's the way we come to know and appreciate the characteristics of others, isn't it?

You can know some things about God by reading about other peoples' experiences with God. Reading the Bible will furnish that information. However, your best knowledge of God does not come to you until you learn to trust and obey God. You can learn what God wants you to know and do by reading his word. Then, when you obey what he commands, you can see the results of whether or not what he says is true. You may not see those results for nearly a lifetime, like Joseph (Genesis 45:5; 50:20), or perhaps not even within your lifetime. But when your earthly life is over, if you have done what God wants, you'll realize that it was to your advantage to believe and obey God. He is truly a Savior (Isaiah 43:3; 49:26; 60:16, Luke 1:47; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 25).

Gospel Gleaner Bundles

Bundle of 10 - \$10.00 per month

Bundle of 25 - \$20.00 per month

Bundle of 50 - \$30.00 per month

Bundle of 100 - \$40.00 per month

Gospel Gleaner Publications

3778 CR 33

Killen, AL 35645

www.gospelgleaner.com

Jeremiah, the Lord's Prophet

Ron Thomas

"See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10; NKJV).

During the time of Jeremiah's life, in fact, in the early portion of the life of Jeremiah, the nation Judah was experiencing the blessings of their last great king; his name was Josiah. He was a young man when he became king, and he was the great-grandson of a king of renown named Hezekiah. Unfortunately, between Hezekiah and Josiah were two evil kings, Josiah's grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon (2 Kings 21).

Manasseh reigned the longest of all the kings of Judah (55 years), and it was during his time that the Lord said Judah would be wiped clean "as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:13). It is remarkable that in all this, Manasseh's grandson, Josiah, did not grow up to be a similar type of king.

Instead, the Lord said of the young king, "he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings 22:2).

The prophet Jeremiah was but a young man when the Lord called upon him to preach to the people, and it was during the "high" time of religious reforms by Josiah that Jeremiah began to preach; during

this time Josiah, the nation's leader, king, and shepherd, was engaging the nation in a religious awakening wherein also during this time the book of the law was found (2 Kings 22:8).

With all the excitement surrounding this occasion, before it occurred, Jeremiah was called by the Lord to a task that he really did not understand – and who could have! Jeremiah looked upon himself as inadequate for the task (Jeremiah 1:6). The Lord, however, did not accept such self-imposed limitations. Yet, imagine the angst of the young prophet's heart when the Lord told him what had to be done. This was no easy task the Lord called Jeremiah to complete, but He who knows man best called upon a man who could "do the job."

Jeremiah had a three-fold task set before him by the Lord. He was to:

1.) To root out and to pull down. Think about the imagery in this phrase. Jeremiah was to take his "spade shovel" and begin the process of digging deep, even to the root of the plants and pulling it out of its well-entrenched location. The picture is easy to understand: Jeremiah was to get at the root of the problem and make it plain to those to whom he spoke exactly what the problem was and its solution.

2.) To destroy and to throw down. Not only was Jeremiah to root out the problem weeds of the field, he was to take those weeds, pile them up, and destroy (burn) them. The

"destroying" (or burning) was in the exposure of the lies that the people accepted (Jeremiah 7:8). The image is clear in our minds when we think of a gardener tending to the garden. If the weeds are not removed, the garden would be overtaken by that which would choke the crop.

3.) To build and to plant. The ground is prepared, the roots are out and thrown into a pile to be burned, and with that effort, a gardener plants the corn, beans, strawberries, squash, etc. Jeremiah's preaching was to do the same thing. He was to clear the ground (cf. 2 Kings 22:13) and plant it with the word of repentance and hope.

As Jeremiah preached, it is not easy to see whether or not he accomplished his third task – but, in fact, he did very much accomplish his third task. This, too, was no easy task, even though it might have had a more pleasant tone associated with it.

The Lord called him and He would not accept the excuse of youth as reason for escape; the Lord gave him one final word: "Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them. For behold, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar, and bronze walls against the whole land—Against the kings of Judah, against its princes, against its priests, and against the people of the land. They will fight

against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,' says the LORD, 'to deliver you'" (1:17-19).

Jeremiah couldn't possibly appreciate what the Lord told him on this occasion, but he sure did come to understand and experience it.

LESSONS

There are some lessons to be learned in all this. First, with Josiah's devotion to the Lord, it may be that the church's leadership does not spark within us a desire to follow. Be that as it may, let the faithful Christian continue down the path the Lord already walked, not being turned away (cf. John 14:6).

Second, the Lord is not far from any of those who seek him; Paul even stated words to this effect in his letter to the church in Rome (Romans 10:8-13). If one wants to know and learn from the Lord, what needs to be done is to read what the Lord said in the pages of the New Testament; there the Lord's education can be received.

Third, the Lord's preachers have a similar task to that which Jeremiah had. While there is no similar covenant relationship between countries and the Lord today like there was in Jeremiah's time, we can still learn a powerful lesson.

The Lord's preachers must get at the root of the problem, understanding what the problem is, seek to destroy it with the proper use of God's word (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15), and then replant what had been torn up with God's message of hope (Matthew 11:28-30).

We need men like Jeremiah.

News & Notes

James R. McGill

Gleanings from the Mission Field

We are happy to report that **Ernest and Shirley Underwood** are on their way home (at the time of publication) after several months of mission work in India. Ernest and Shirley have been working with the students at the Northeast Bible Institute. Ernest celebrated his 80th birthday while there!

Owen Olbricht returned home to Little Rock from South America February 20, where he visited churches that he established in Colombia and Venezuela.

Southwest Lectureship

AUSTIN, TX – The Southwest church of Christ is pleased to announce the 33rd Annual Southwest Lectureship, April 12-15, 2014.

MTSOP Graduation

COLLEGE GROVE, TN – The 12th **annual graduation** of the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching will be at the College Grove, TN, church of Christ, Friday, April 4, at 7 p.m. All are invited to stay for the graduation dinner at 8 o'clock, as guests of the College Grove church.

New Books

HENDERSON, TN – Brother E. Claude Gardner has recently published two new books. One is a collection of articles and others items of interest pertaining to N.B. Harde-man. The other is a study of the Godhead titled *True Deity and the Church of Christ*.

These books may be ordered from Hester Publications in Henderson, TN. (731) 989-5872.

EDMOND, OK – Mac Lyon, featured speaker on *In Search of the Lord's Way* for many years has recently published his autobiography. The book is titled: *My Ebenezer*. It is bound in a beautiful hardback binding, and was published by Publishing Designs, Inc. It can be ordered from most brotherhood bookstores.

LAWRENCEBURG, TN – Glann Lee, gospel preacher for more than 60 years and a former president of the Freed-Hardeman alumni association, is publishing a new book, *The Chief Shepherd and the Chosen Sheep*. A previous book is now in its 6th printing.

Fundamental Truths Seminar

BOWLING GREEN, KY – The Lehman Avenue congregation will hosting its annual Fundamental Truths Seminar on March 22. This year's theme is: "Going Back to First Century Christianity: Seeking Pre-Denominational Christianity." For information call (270) 843-8435.

Youth Rally

HOHENWALD, TN – The Lomax church of Christ will be hosting a youth rally March 14-15. For details call (931) 796-5381.

Order a Bound Volume of the 2013 Gospel Gleaner

We have bound the 25th edition of the *Gospel Gleaner*. The price is \$20.00 for those who are interested. It will make a nice addition to your library.

Reader Replies

It is refreshing to see the *Gospel Gleaner*, for each issue is varied both in subject matter and writing styles. I appreciate the fine job the Editor, Andrew Erwin, is doing to maintain the quality and depth of the Bible studies which go out each month. It is my privilege to be included on the writing staff.

The February Editorial was right on target in pointing out the lack of emphasis upon the Bible among "our" Bible universities. Jesus Christ said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets" (Luke 6:26). Worldly accreditation, acclaim, or prominence should be on a dangerous list of characteristics for Christians. Christians in places of "higher learning" should be diligent to heed Jesus' warning instead of what the world has to offer. Brother Erwin has eruditely emphasized what responsibility Christians should expect from all those to whom we entrust our dearest investment for the future. Truly, Brother Erwin's Editorial recalls the "voice in the wilderness" who said: "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).

"Preach the word."

John T. Polk II

Hey Andy,

I just want to express my appreciation for the good work you are doing with the *Gospel Gleaner*. I have received the January and February issues back to back and enjoyed them both. I especially appreciate the issue given to the memory of Guy Hester. I want to commend your timely editorial "What Gives?" in the February issue. You hit the nail on the head when it comes to the Christian colleges and universities using denominational lecturers. The founders of such schools would be shocked and dismayed if they knew this was going on. It is a betrayal of the trust of many sacrificial donors through the years, the Christian educators of the past who sacrificed so much for the schools, and the parents who have struggled to send their children to these schools. I have been so dismayed with Lipscomb's direction for several years that I am embarrassed to tell people I attended there without making some sort of a disclaimer that the David Lipscomb College I graduated from 50 years ago is not the same as the Lipscomb University of today. I am pleased to see you have added some good men to your staff such as Michael Shank, Travis Quartermous and Bill Brandstatter. It is time for me to renew my subscription so I will be sending a check in the next couple of days.

May God bless you and your family as you continue in His work.

in Christ,

Rod Rutherford

The
GOSPEL
GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications

3778 CR 33

Killen, AL 35645

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nantitico, MS
Permit No. 5

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

April, 2014

Number Four

Living for God in a Hostile World

Ronald D. Bryant

Living in this world, if we are the people of God, we have a responsibility to God. Our values are to be rooted in Him. The things of this world pull at us and do so to destroy our faith. Among the things that pull at us are the purchase power and the on-demand entertainment at our disposal. In many ways we are being influenced by this present world. Lamentably, the church is being greatly influenced by the world.

As a people we are numerically small. In most places we are not even a significant minority. Many congregations are small in number. However, this fact is neither a blessing nor a curse. The troubling factor is in the way many tend to view small congregations.

Small congregations are often viewed as one-dimensional and lacking in appeal. Yet, is the quality of spiritual life determined by the size of the congregation? Yes, we are in the midst of a populace that has at its disposal a powerful array of entertainment and diversionary options, and many want these same options in "their church." Additionally, we must face the fact that many people are accustomed to living and working in large corporate structures, and only occasionally give attention to emotional and spiritual needs; and predictably large impersonal congregations are more attractive to them than are congregations that are small and personal.

Succinctly stated, social experiences are serving to create expectations that a small congregation cannot meet. Yet, are social demands and expectations a basis for abandoning the will of God? Are they justification for compromising the truth of God? Are we His creation, His people, or do we exist to please ourselves, and the people of this world? If we are the people of God, do we not exist to serve Him, to function as salt and light, to plant the seed of the kingdom and trust Him to give the harvest? Are we here at this point of time working to convert or to court the lost? Are we endeavoring to know and fulfill God's purpose, or do we have a different program and purpose?

While we need to understand our world, we are not to let it determine our worth nor define our purpose. What will happen

if we choose to allow our work and worth to be shaped by the sovereignty of social needs and cultural expectations? Some leaders have apparently come to regard the "felt needs" of certain age groups as sovereign. The wants and preferences of people; usually those that are the most vocal and demanding, is being allowed to determine even the "spiritual" agenda, for some congregations.

What is my purpose; and what is our purpose, as the people of God? Is there anything more important than our individual and collective spiritual health and strength? Upon what does the growth of the church depend? It should be apparent that the strength and growth of the church depends upon its devotion to the Lord, and its faithful adherence to and proclamation of the gospel.

Regarding this, it is to be insisted that, "Growth at any price," is too high a price to pay!! This is illustrated in a timely news article. Writing about "mega churches," researchers provided some interesting details that mega churches share in common. Observe:

"In the 'mega churches' the numbers are impressive... but from week to week, seldom are the same people in the pews... The people in the pews are an ever-changing audience... They see themselves as religious customers and conduct themselves as consumers... Typical of consumers, they are fickle, perpetually shopping, looking for a bigger, brighter, and better store or product... The mega church must ever sharpen its operation and its programs in order to appeal to, and retain its customers... There is a price to be paid... The church that has committed itself to an operation that is rooted in the demands of the customers, must be willing to pay a high price. It must be willing to accommodate the demands and expectations of the customers. They must provide what their customers want, and perpetually compete for new customers, all the while knowing they can lose-out to a newer or bigger operation."

Continued on page 10

Continuing with our series of articles featuring the comments, attitudes, and advice a few great preachers have shared with us on the subject of preaching, we turn our attention to the words of the lamentable T.B. Larimore.

About T. B. Larimore

T.B. Larimore (1843-1929) is remembered as one of the great evangelists of his era. Larimore was educated by Tolbert Fanning at Franklin College. He would go on to establish his own school in Florence, Alabama, titled Mars Hill Academy (January 1, 1871). Later the school grew to be Mars Hill College. This school continued from 1871 to 1887 when Larimore decided to devote himself fully to preaching. E. A. Elam taught for a while with him there. It is believed that this college did more for young people in that section of the country than all the other schools that were there.

Larimore's evangelistic work took him from Maine to Mexico and from Canada to Cuba. He preached in all of the (then) forty-eight states. His greatest meeting was held in Sherman, Texas. Larimore preached at Sherman for 22 weeks and one day. He preached 333 sermons, and there were 254 additions, including a young Batsell Baxter.

Brother Larimore died on March 18, 1929, in Santa Ana, California, due to complications derived from a broken hip he suffered from a fall.

H. Leo Boles said of him: "Brother Larimore began preaching soon after he was baptized, and his preaching attracted much attention from the first. His humble manner and pious behavior gave him ready and easy access to the hearts of the people... Brother Larimore was kind and gentle in his manner and very pleasing in his address. It was not his style or disposition to engage in controversy or to be offensive in his preaching. He chose his subject and presented it in a simple, straightforward way without turning aside to notice any religious error. He preached the truth with earnest-

ness and clearness and said little or nothing about any of the popular religious errors of the day. He was an eloquent speaker, with music and charm in the well-chosen phraseology with which he clothed the thoughts which he gleaned from the Book of God. All who heard him loved him and felt that it was good to hear him" (*Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers*, p.334-335).



Larimore on Preaching and Preachers

The following has been taken from *Life, Letters, and Sermons of T.B. Larimore*, pp.134 ff.

"Study everything that may be helpful to you in your work; but study above all else, the sacred scriptures, the Book of books, as long as you labor in the vineyard of the Lord."

"Be a *student*. Never imagine you know enough because you can deliver a dozen discourses or preach a hundred sermons, or even a thousand. Dive down into the depths of the ocean of truth after more."

"Regardless of how frequently you may preach on any subject or theme, do your very best every time to preach better than you have ever preached before."

"Rely on truth, *ever*: on bare assertion *never*. Prove the points you preach."

"Avoid bragging, boasting and ostentation. Say little - *very* little - about yourself..."

"Be earnest, plain and simple. Avoid all affectation. Be modest, humble, respectful...be grateful for all good, appreciative of all praise, but never *proud* of anything."

"Never forget the superlative, infinite, peerless importance of your calling. Remember, 'woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.' 'Keep thyself pure.'"

"Preach the word. Like Jehovah, it never changes..."

"Both reason and revelation demand that preachers be pure - be models for men in Christ Jesus our Lord. Moreover, churches of Christ - congregations of Christians - should demand purity of preachers, certainly of those whom they encourage to preach."

"The influence of every gospel preacher should be good and only good, and that continually."

"No man who desires to preach instead of the plow, because he presumes preaching is easier than plowing and probably pays better, is spiritually prepared to preach."

"It is human to stand with the crowd; divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; God-like to follow a principle, to stem the tide...multitudes now, both in the church and in the world, applaud the courage of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs; but condemn, as stubbornness, ignorance or foolishness, like-minded faithfulness and duty today."

"Wanted today: Men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fame, fortune, friends and life itself."

As we reflect upon brother Larimore's admonitions, we can summarize his thoughts thusly: Preach the word, practice what you preach, be a man of courage, integrity, and unquestioned fidelity. What Great advice from a great preacher!

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Four
April, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Michael Shank
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *Living for God in a Hostile World*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *T.B. Larimore on Great Preaching*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Restoring the Restored*
Joshua Dement
- 5 *Do You Need to Die?*
Ernest Underwood
- 7 *Blaming Jesus*
Bill Brandstatter
- 8 *God's Answer vs. Man's Answer*
James R. Lewis
- 9 *Are You Sure You Want to Forsake the Lord?*
Ron Thomas
- 11 *Jesus, the Law, and the Righteousness of the Christian*
Gerald Cowan
- 13 *"God Will Be There Too, Right Mama?"*
Melanie Erwin
- 14 News & Notes
James R. McGill
- 16 Reader Replies

Restoring the Restored

Joshua Dement

In the early 1800s, a group of men became frustrated with the false teachings and practices they witnessed occurring in the religious bodies of which they were a part. These men slowly developed an approach to the Scriptures that would renounce all denominational creeds, affiliations, and titles, and become Christians only. They sought to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent. They called Bible things by Bible names, and did Bible things in Bible ways. Their desire was to restore the bride of Christ to the state of purity which she demands and deserves.

In recent years, some of our Brotherhood has lost the true essence of the church. We once prided ourselves on being the New Testament church, now at least three generations of Christians have not consistently heard lessons on the first principles of the faith and on the restoration plea to go back to the Bible.

Are we following the Lord's command found in Jeremiah 6:16? Thus saith the LORD, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein." For many, worship has become either a highly choreographed production, or a stuffy boring setting of condemnation. Seldom do you find a congregation today who worships both in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Sermons have digressed to the point of being story time or watered-down pick me up talks. Too many so-called preachers today are ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16) and as a result do not preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Christ expects His church to be one body (Romans 12:4), but true brotherly fellowship is sadly a thing of the past. We have at least 13 major divisions in the Lord's church today, and each one has established their own fellowship separate from the others.

Many of the divisions which have occurred are the result of the opinions or attitudes of men. Until the 1950s and 1960s the church was fairly united. We were at one time the fastest growing religious group in the country. Then the issues of number of cups used in communion, cooperation, colleges, located preachers, benevolence, children's homes, and eating in the church building tore apart our brotherhood and we now are about number 12 on the list of fastest growing religious bodies.

In many communities, the fighting which has occurred between brethren has been seen as a joke to outsiders. They do not see the church as the strong center of religious and moral influence it should be due to the constant drama.

Likewise, many sister congregations do not support each other anymore. Why do we expect everyone to fellowship us and support our events, but we do not feel we have to return the favor? There was a time when gospel meetings drew packed houses from Christians and community members alike, but now we are lucky if we have half of the local church membership attend much less the lost from the community or visiting brethren! WHY?

We have removed our focus from the spiritual and fixed it on the physical side of life. If the kids have ballgames or homework you can forget about church activities. If we have to work and come home tired, more than likely Wednesday night Bible study will get axed. If we do not like singing and it is singing night, we will just stay home. But, if there is pot-luck we will be first in line. We encourage our children to be a part of every extracurricular function possible, and then wonder why they delay in becoming a Christian.

Also, we have weak leadership in the church today. Too many men who are qualified to serve as elders refuse to serve out of fear. It should be the greatest honor that can be bestowed on a Christian man to serve a congregation as an elder. However, when these men have not prepared themselves adequately by studying God's word and living the Christian life then they are not fit to serve.

Older Christian men MUST start grooming young men as early as possible to serve as elders. This is the way God desires the church to be led. Yes, some congregations simply do not have qualified men. In that case they need to be working to prepare men to serve.

Let's face it, most of the time "business meetings" are a nightmare. You have a large number of men all expressing their opinions, or sitting on their coattails wanting the preacher to make all the decisions. This is not going to lead to a successful congregation. Men must be willing to serve.

On that same subject, elders are to be spiritual guides not a board of directors. They are not to position themselves as lords over the congregations demanding the members' respect and obedience.

I attended Bible study at a congregation several weeks back and heard a 45 minute lesson on the eldership and never once was it mentioned that elders are to be spiritual guides. The teacher continually stressed that the members MUST submit to the elders and to ALL their decisions if they are going to be members there. This same congregation has an elder who seldom if ever attends a worship service. He walks around like he is supervising everything and then sits in the office count-

ing the contribution while everyone else worships. That is not the kind of Christian example that an elder is supposed to set.

Many congregations are also becoming too introverted. They only want to be a part of those things which they are either in charge of, or that are occurring at their building. When Peter, through inspiration, commands us to love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17) he did not mean just the congregation which you worship with. The brotherhood is the body of Christ, the Lord's church. All faithful congregations of the church of Christ are a part of our brotherhood. We are not showing them the love of God if we exclude ourselves and our support from them.

I created a group on Facebook a little over a year ago for the express purpose of advertising events taking place in the brotherhood in our part of the country. As a result, I have witnessed greater support on the part of smaller, often overlooked, congregations. Many larger congregations want to focus only on themselves and their works and ministries.

All of this has led us to the point where we are today. The church needs to be restored! We have again stained the bride of Christ through our divisiveness, opinions, watered-down preaching, speaking where the Bible is silent, and especially by promoting false teachers and their teachings. We are commanded not to bid Godspeed to a false teacher (2 John 11). In fact, we are told that if we do this, then we become guilty of the same sins they are committing through their teachings.

Paul wrote twice in Galatians 1:8-9, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Even though the Bible is very clear on this subject, we still have congregations who claim to be sound who allow their teenagers to attend "Winterfest" or to the "Tulsa Workshop" where they give their support and bid Godspeed to promoters or such false teachings as instruments in worship, women leading worship, salvation by grace alone, etc.?

We need men today like Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, Walter Scott, Raccoon John Smith and others who are not ashamed to take up their pen, or step into the pulpit and call a sin a sin! The church of today in many places is a far cry from what God wants it to be. We must take the Bible as our one and only guide.

Throw the Rick Warren and Bill Hybels books in the trash and follow God's inspired plan for church growth: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Do You Need to Die?

Ernest Underwood

Recently a dear friend and fellow gospel preacher and I were discussing different situations in the church of which we were aware. One such situation involved a certain contentious brother who, because of stubbornness and divisiveness, had been in the forefront in causing a split in a local church.

This split was caused because of this one man drawing others to his opinions and then trying to force these opinions on the rest of the members. To my knowledge, no false doctrine was being taught or practiced in the church. They split because of the pressing of one's opinion.

As we discussed this problem which is all too often found among some brethren,

my friend stated, "You know, in order for some churches to grow spiritually as they ought to, and could, some folks just need to die." The point of his statement was that as long as some brethren lived, the church of which he or she was member would always be torn by strife and division. As I pondered my friend's statement I began to think of some things in which it would be good for us all to die, thus, the title of this article.

Die to Self

One way in which one needs to die is to self. Jesus stated, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). How many times

have we heard preachers take this passage and make a sermon on the different things that we must deny ourselves - such things as material possessions, some of the good and innocent pleasures of life, a new car, a new house, etc.?

I must admit that I was guilty of this as a younger man. It certainly is not wrong to take the principles laid down by Jesus and apply them to such things. He commanded in Matthew 6:34 that we should "seek first the kingdom of God, and all of these things will be added unto you."

However, in Matthew 16:24 He was emphasizing that fact we must deny SELF if we expect to see the portals of heaven. We must take SELF down from

our self-made throne, and we must place HIM in that position in our lives.

The apostle Paul wrote, "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.)

One who has not died to SELF cannot possibly be "raised to walk in newness of life," a newness which only can come as one follows Paul's command in Romans 6:3-4 - "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Do you need to die to SELF?

Die to the Love of the World

Another way in which many need to die is to the love of the world. Perhaps this writer sometimes lives in the past, but I am old enough to remember when most members of the Lord's church did their best to put Christ and His church first in their lives.

Our members faithfully attended the worship and Bible Study periods. They did not let things of the world, even those things which were innocent within themselves hinder them from being in attendance at all services, including gospel meetings.

Times have changed. Parents are so obsessed with their boys and girls getting the very best in recreation, drama, dancing, and other things that the world offers, that they let no cost hinder them from getting such. Yet, these same parents show a great deal of indifference to the child's spiritual education and life, even less interest to the spiritual health of the local congregation to which they belong.

It has been evident that in the last twenty or so years of preaching and teaching, a great percentage of the young people could not even name the

books of the Bible, and they and their parents could care less.

A dear departed friend and fellow gospel preacher used to say quite frequently that such parents didn't know whether Jesus was crucified on Calvary or shot in Okinawa. The love of the world with all of its enticements has drawn far too many back into its ungodliness. If such church members ever hope to view the glory of heaven and God's bright image they must die to the love of the world, and like the prodigal son, they must come back home to the Father.

Die to Sin

One must die to sin. The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." (Romans 6:12.)

Sin separates one from God, so says the prophet Isaiah. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2).

When one is separated from God he is dead in his sins. Paul wrote, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).

In this same chapter the apostle continued, "...that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (v.12).

As we compare these passages we learn:

- In sin, one is separated from God.

➤ Being separated from God, one is spiritually dead.

➤ Being in such a condition one is without God and without hope.

Surely, anyone who is in this condition should want to die to it and be made alive in Christ. Consider the following passages of Scripture:

"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)..." (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Have you been made dead to sin by being washed in the blood of the crucified Christ?

Die to Grudges

Those who are guilty need to die to the practice of holding grudges with an accompanying refusal to forgive. Jesus taught, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

Yet, how many well-meaning Christians have never really forgiven themselves of those sins that they committed in the past, although, if they were sincere when they obeyed the gospel, God forgave them?

Read again and apply Romans 6:17-18 - "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

When God sets one free from sin, He forgives. We must learn to do the same.

Yet another area of dying in this respect is that of dying to the failure to forgive others and continuing to hold a grudge against them. The statement "I'll forgive, but I will never forget" is totally

out of place in a Christian's thoughts and actions.

Die to False Doctrine

Those who are held captive by the doctrines of the denominations of men need to die to that captivity and embrace the Word of God and it alone, as their rule of faith and practice in all spiritual, moral, and ethical matters.

Jesus said about the doctrines of men, "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).

It is hoped that no church of the Lord would be better served if and when some member dies. If so, that member needs to die to his opinions and subsequent actions which are disturbing the Lord's church, and he or she should repent of such actions.

Do you need to die to any of the points of this discussion?

Blaming Jesus

Bill Brandstatter

America has become a nation of victims, so stated Charles Sykes in his book, *A Nation of Victims*. Mr. Sykes stated that the national anthem has turned into the national whine. Many blame suffering, problems, heartaches, and disappointment on others.

In John 11, we find two sisters, Mary and Martha both blaming Jesus for the death of their brother Lazarus. In this text, we find a few of the reasons people today often play the blame game.

First, some blame others because of an *unexpected delay*.

Mary and Martha did not expect Jesus to delay coming to help their brother. He didn't arrive at Bethany until verse 30. He may have still been where He was in John 10:40. The delay was unexpected to the sisters (John 11:3; 21,

32). What Mary and Martha did not know was that His delay had a purpose (John 11:4).

Sometimes God delays blessings. In the case of Joseph, it was over twenty years after he was sold into slavery before he saw his brothers again. Then he stated, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Joseph knew that God had a purpose, but His purpose was delayed. So often, people blame others or blame God, because the purpose of something happening is not immediately known.

The children of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years before they went across the Jordan to the Promised Land.

David had a problem with an unexpected delay. He asked, "How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? (Psalm 13:1 2). Later, David again had a delay problem. He stated, "I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God (Psalm 69:3).

The Lord is one who waits and delays. But, sometimes His delay could be our blessing (2 Peter 3:9). Such was the case with Mary and Martha.

Second, some may blame others because of an *unrealized expectation*.

We often expect something to be a certain way. When it is not as we perceived, we may blame others.

Some people expect marriage to be a certain way. Then after married, they find out it is different than what was expected. So, they blame their spouse.

Others may start a new job expecting it to be one way. It turns out the job is not what they anticipated. So, they blame the employer or co-workers.

Perhaps some would start attending worship services, and have certain expectations. After a while, something happens and the worship was not what was expected. So, blame goes to the

church, the elders, the preacher, or the members.

Unrealized expectation is a reason for playing the blame game today. After the unexpected delay, the disciples hear an unrealized expectation. The Lord stated, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up" (John 11:11).

The disciples did not understand that Jesus was referring to death as merely sleep. They stated, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get well" (John 11:12). They had an unrealized expectation based on their limited knowledge. Jesus stated plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). What the disciples didn't realize is that Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead.

Third, some blame others because of an *unfair conclusion* that has been reached.

Martha stated "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Mary made the same statement in John 11:22. Both were jumping to a conclusion they did not know. The outcome was not yet apparent.

Many times people jump to conclusions. Some go to the doctor and assume the doctor is going to do something. They don't know the outcome. When the doctor prescribes a different course of action, and it doesn't work, the patient blames the doctor.

We often jump to conclusions in our marriages. We think that a certain action from us will cause a certain reaction from our spouse. When that doesn't happen, we blame our spouse. This usually happens through emotion and feelings we have developed. We often blame others when we are upset with the outcome.

Fourth, we often blame others because of an *unfulfilled anticipation*.

We often anticipate what is going to happen based on our experience or lack of it. In our text in John 11:37, some of the Jews asked, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

Surely, Jesus could have. But that was not the Lord's purpose. In response, Jesus told them to take the stone away from the cave where Lazarus was entombed. Every case and situation is different. Sometimes we blame others because something didn't happen the way we anticipated.

Fifth, we blame others *because we don't know the result.*

Things may get worse and we expected better. In our text things got better. We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future.

Jesus said with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). One preacher many years ago stated that if Jesus had not specifically named Lazarus all those who were buried would have been raised.

James says we shouldn't assume anything about tomorrow, but trust the Lord's will (James 4:15).

What can we learn about blaming others from the account of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus?

First, God may take a problem and use it for his honor and glory. This happened in John chapter nine to the man who was born blind. What seems like trouble and problems to us may actually turn out good to God in His long range plans (Romans 8:28).

Next, God's delay may be for our benefit. Testing and problems can make us better. James wrote, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

Isaiah reminds us: "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary; They shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Finally, God's ways are best. If Jesus had been present and Lazarus had not died, look what would have been lost to Mary and Martha, the disciples, and us.

Because of this event, we have this promise: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25). I am thankful to Jesus for this assurance. I look forward to the life on the other side of eternity.

God's Answer vs. Man's Answer

James R. Lewis

Christ, the Bible, the church, and righteous living are hated by the world because they illuminate the darkness of the evil world of unrighteousness. Our Lord, the light of the world, describes it this way, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds be reprov'd" (John 3:19-20). Consider man's answers to the following unrighteousness.

Liquor by the Drink

Liquor by the drink is man's cure for almost all ills, including our growing tax burden. One can drown his miseries in the bottle and at the same make a tax contribution to the good of the community. The more we drink, the better schools we will have and the better people we will become. At least this seems to be the logical reasoning offered to support such unrighteousness.

A preaching student in Ukraine who had family at Chernobyl said the doctors recommended those suffering from the radiation fallout consume twenty ounces of vodka daily. The student was dismissed from school because he had concluded that liquor by the drink must be good for society, otherwise the doctors would not have so ordered.

We are also told, by implication, that alcoholic drink is necessary in order for man to have social interchange, hence, so-called social drinking. Even in the most elite elements of society, one is

surely expected to provide liquor by the drink to guests. This is seen by many as an indicator of our superior cultural upbringing.

God's answer to liquor by the drink is to repent of this sin which will keep one from entering the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Man seems to be smart enough not to allow people drinking alcohol to drive automobiles, and we prohibit by law our youth from purchasing alcoholic drink. In other words, man, by his own laws, admits the evil of alcoholic drinks; he is just not smart enough not to do it!

The Bible illuminates the evil and becomes the object of hatred when it says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). This passage, without doubt, prohibits partaking of alcoholic drink, which even man admits is evil.

Abortion

Abortion is man's answer to sexual impurity, over-population, and burgeoning welfare. Thousands of helpless babies die daily, at the hands of medical professionals who are trained (supposedly) to save lives. What irony! When innocent lives are being wilfully put to death, there is no difference in principle between the professionals who operated the gas chambers of WWII and the professionals who operate with clinical precision in our hospitals of today. The result is the same, except society approves the abortion of babies and abhors the abortion of adults. Why! A basic idea of "to abort" is a premature termination.

Man's answer seems to be that in adults it is murder to intentionally abort (prematurely terminate) a life, but in unborn and being born babies it is a help to our society. As the Proverbs writer says, "The legs of the lame are not equal" (26:7).

God's answer is repentance for the sins of fornication and murder (see Proverbs 6:16-19; Revelation 21:8). The major cause of abortion is two-fold.

One, it should seem obvious that the sin of fornication very often results in

pregnancy. Not all, but most abortions are procured by unwed mothers.

Two, the sin of parental failure to teach and train children to be morally righteous has resulted in a surrender of our children to standards of immorality. This is open admission of our incompetence and unwillingness to do right for our children.

Homosexuality

Homosexual and gay relationships receive man's stamp of approval as an alternate and acceptable life style. Some high officials now openly boast their so-called gay lifestyle, and our lawmakers are legislating to endorse and support such immoral perversion.

Animal behavior is superior to gay and lesbian relationships. Unlike homosexual and lesbian advocates, the animals in the forests never have any gender problems. A male donkey doesn't court or mate with another male donkey; and yet we are told it is natural for a male human to court and mate with another male human, or a woman with a woman. Even the false theory of organic evolution will not endorse such conduct.

God's answer to such conduct is to repent and turn away from such a reprobate mind set (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:24-27).

God's answer to drinking alcoholic beverage, to abortion, and to homosexual/lesbian relationships is clear – don't do it. Unrighteousness is to be avoided.

If one has or is partaking of such conduct, then stop doing so. Repent of your sins, lest you perish in the eternal torments of hell. Every sin committed can and will be forgiven by the Lord when the believer in Christ repents of sin, confesses faith in Christ as the Son of God and is baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10).

The Christian who participates in such unrighteousness must repent of sins, confess their sins, and pray to God for forgiveness (1 John 1:7-10).

This is God's answer. Who will hear it?

Are You Sure You Want to Forsake the Lord?

Ron Thomas

Thus says the LORD: "What injustice have your fathers found in Me, That they have gone far from Me, Have followed idols, And have become idolaters?" (Jeremiah 2:5).

History is a great teacher. It has been said untold numbers of time that one who fails to learn from history is bound (doomed) to repeat it, and this was certainly the case with those of Judah and Israel.

The Lord always kept their history before them in order to remind them from where they came. From history, if one were to pay particular attention to his past, much could be learned. Israel/Judah, on the other hand, did not learn, and so the Lord asked what substantive fault was to be found with Him that they would choose to no longer serve (Jeremiah 2:2-8).

Jeremiah was called upon to preach plainly to a people that did not want plain preaching. He begins by calling each thoughtful person to reflect on their history and their motivation. Isaiah did the same when he preached a good many years earlier (cf. Isaiah 1:18).

The key to Judah's problem was their motivation. Throughout the book of Jeremiah we get glimpses of what that motivational problem was, but later in the book, it becomes very clear (44:11-19). One's economic situation plays a powerful role in life; it is very important and not to be cast to the side, but when one's economic status becomes god (priority), salvation is lost.

This powerful motivation moved them into the area of political alliance, and this had disastrous consequences. "Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the LORD your God, and the fear of Me is not in you," Says the Lord GOD of hosts" (Jeremiah 2:19, NKJV).

Jeremiah also expressed the Lord's sentiment when he said to the people, because they had chosen a path that was contrary to the Lord's way, that they needed to be "horribly afraid" (2:12)! Unfortunately, a great many of them were not afraid and, in fact, they failed to see why the Lord was even upset (2:33-35).

When a man has so long walked with a limp, he becomes accustomed to that limp and considers nothing to be any more wrong; normalcy is now a limp. The Lord illustrated this problem with the imagery of pottery jars carrying water. They have so long walked with pottery jars that were cracked (even broken) that they failed to see any abnormality associated with what they carried. The Lord provided a perfect jar for the carrying of water, but the people's norm did not allow them to see the need for a change (2:13).

When political alliances and motivations along that line hold sway in a person's life, the likelihood of seeing any need to change is minimized. The leaders (and people) of Judah carried water in broken jars of pottery, a figure that was indicative of the strength of their political alliances in comparison with the Lord.

Let us make some pointed applications to these words. First, the nations surrounding Judah were unstable because they chose a foundation that refused the Lord (cf. Exodus 5:2), and God's people (those of Israel/Judah) chose the same foundation.

Any choice made by one who calls himself a Christian that is other than the foundation of Jesus has built his home on a foundation that is as fluid as the water coming onto the shore and washing away the sand-castle.

Paul said, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If

anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

This foundation is not simply going to church, or calling oneself a Christian. It is more than that. It is a life lived that reflects the glory of Christ in thought, word, and deed.

Second, they refused the Lord's foundation because that which was to reign in the heart was not even being carried under the arm! It is a lot like a ball carrier in a football game. The defensive team is coming hard to shed the blocker, tackle the ball carrier, and even strip the ball away. If the player has not secured the ball, the ball will come out.

Way too many times this is exactly the way Christians live today. The ball is carried in such a way that it is sure to be stripped! On the other hand, when the ball is properly secured it will not come out.

Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Peter said, "But 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 Peter 3:15).

My brethren, let us be sure we have secured in the heart that which will judge us on the last day (cf. John 12:48).

Third, unfortunately that which did reside in the heart was an economic god by which many people were consumed. "For according to the number of your cities Are your gods, O Judah.... Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number" (2:28, 32).

We might have difficulty understanding how anyone can be an idol worshiper in today's sophisticated world, but we ought not to be. Our idolatry in today's world is merely different from those who lived in the past.

Today, we worship at the feet of the football stadium on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; we worship at the feet of the family; we worship at the feet of alcohol, ungodly music, and things associated with party; we also worship at the clay feet of men who render their service in politics.

The only partisanship that any Christian ought to be engaged in is with regard to the Lord's way. All other interests wane in comparison.

The message Jeremiah preached was a hard message for the people to hear, but it was a necessary message. It was a call to repentance as a nation. When the Lord called upon them to identify what was wrong, the people were unable to say (2:5). Thus, the Lord helped them to see the problem (2:23-25).

They were corrupted and delusional because, in part, they did not think they actually abandoned the Lord. They did what many do today: they only incorporated their idol gods alongside and still presented themselves as the Lord's faithful. This is known as syncretism (a melding of ideologies into one). This is a hell-bound ideology!

Continued from page 1 - **"Living for God in a Hostile World"**

Several questions seem appropriate. Is "accommodation" to cultural demands essential to church growth? Is it even possible? How far can truth be stretched? What are the options? God designed the gospel to destroy strongholds and to bring every thought and imagination captive to do His will (2 Corinthians 10:4-6). How is the church to proceed in upholding the gospel of Christ? How are the people of God to live in a world that is hostile toward God?

While some prove to underestimate the necessity of biblical truth, loyalty to God demands that biblical truth be viewed as essential to life and godliness.

The restoration of truth to its rightful place is an ongoing obligation. The restoration of truth to its rightful place in our lives demands that we resist the preferences and demands of the world (Romans 12:1 ff.). God demands that we love Him supremely and serve Him acceptably. Loyalty to Him is essential in the transformation of our hearts, minds, and lives, even as it is central to being the true people of God.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE SCHOOL OF PREACHING & BIBLICAL STUDIES



Evening Classes - Seven Locations

College Grove, Culleoka, Goodlettsville, Lebanon, McMinnville, Murfreesboro, Nashville

mtsp@clearwire.net
mtsop.net

Jesus, the Law, and the Righteousness of the Christian

Gerald Cowan

Our major concern should be how to be declared righteous by God, accepted and approved by Him so that we have a firm hope of His heaven. That would include conditions, restrictions, or limitations placed upon those who seek righteousness in Christ.

This essay has to do with five important and frequently-asked questions, based upon the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20. The first is about the relationship of Jesus and Christians to the Old Testament and the Law of Moses. Next, if the old law was done away, are we left without any law under the New Testament and gospel of Christ? How did Jesus fulfill the law without destroying it? Does the old law have any current ongoing purpose? Finally, how can our righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, especially if we have no law?

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JESUS AND CHRISTIANS TO THE LAW OF MOSES

Many professing Christians insist upon the continuation of the Law of Moses (contained in Exodus 20 through Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) as the extension of the Abrahamic covenant. Usually they have in mind the Ten Commandments. Most do not want to submit to the ceremonial or sacrificial system (animal sacrifices and various other sacrifices and offerings).

But such special pleading for a part of the law is inappropriate and invalid. F. F. Bruce suggests that Jesus merely corrected the mistakes of the scribes and Pharisees and then re-imposed the Ten Commandments and the rest of his corrected Law upon all the people of God, now and forever (*The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, pp. 42-45).

That could be valid only if the Lord intended that the Jewish nation, law, and covenant were to continue forever. The fact is, if the old law has not been fulfilled and set aside every jot and tittle of it must remain in place, enforced according to the Old Testament instructions (Matthew 5:17-18). Furthermore, there is no place for a new covenant and law, no place for Jesus Christ or his sacrifice, no new plan for redemption and salvation, and no place for the church of God in Christ if the old law is still in effect.

Here are some other important considerations about covenants and to whom they apply. All parts of the covenant and law in force at any time must be obeyed. Whenever a new covenant or law is started all parts of the old one end (Romans 7:1 and 4; 10:4; Hebrews 10:9). Two or more separate and contradictory Covenants, Testaments, or Laws cannot be effective for the same people at the same time. We cannot pick

and choose the parts we like or want from different Testaments or Covenants. It is no more appropriate to bring selected parts of Judaism into Christianity than it would be to being in selected bits of Islam, Mormonism, or any other non-Christian religion.

So then, focusing on the problem: is the Old Law (as corrected by Jesus) still in effect or is it not? If it is not, are we then left without any law of God at all? If the old law is still in effect, everyone who does not keep every part of it perfectly is under a curse (Galatians 3:10). If the old law is not in effect then everyone who keeps any part of it as the law, whether perfectly or not, is cut off from Christ, fallen out of and away from the grace that is only in Christ (Galatians 5:3-4).

Keeping the old law in part or in whole would require us to give up Paul's letter to the Galatians and, to be consistent, give up all of Paul's writings. By extension we would also have to discard all other New Testament writers and their writings. Following that principle we would keep only "the red-letter words" which are supposedly the words of Jesus Christ. But they too were written down by others, not by Jesus Christ Himself. We would end up with no words of Christ and no Christ. There was no Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. There were messianic predictions and promises, but no fulfillment. If we are to be Jews, or if we are to live by the Old Testament and the Law of Moses, we will have no Christ.

IF JESUS ENDED THE OLD LAW, HOW AND WHEN DID HE DO IT, AND HOW DID HE FULFILL IT WITHOUT DESTROYING IT?

"I have not come to destroy the law and the prophets" (5:17a). Destroy is the antithesis of fulfill -- in this context destroy is opposite to fulfill in meaning and application. Many want to equate destroy with abrogate, abolish, nullify, or bring to an end and then insist that Jesus said he was not doing that to the Law. Therefore he must have been reaffirming, strengthening, clarifying, and perpetuating it.

Was Jesus mistaken? Did He do what He said He would not do, end the Law? This would have scripture contradicting either itself or Christ. Paul says Christ abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances, blotting it out and effectively nailing it to His cross (Ephesians 2:15, Colossians 2:14). Was Paul mistaken? Did the Law really not come to an end? Was it really not replaced by the new law of the gospel of Christ?

Obviously the intention and work of Jesus, accomplished according to plan, was to bring the old law to an end and replace it with a new law. He promised to fulfill the old law, but

not to destroy it. To destroy the law would be to prevent it from achieving what it was designed to do, that is, from carrying out its God-given purposes, and to repudiate or reject it while it was still valid, still in effect and binding upon those to whom it had been given. This is what the Jews thought Jesus was doing. Of course they included as law the traditions and concepts of various rabbis and scribes, which made them guilty of the very thing they accused Jesus of doing (see Matthew 15:9). Jesus actually taught the people to keep the Law and to understand and apply it correctly (5:19). Read on in Matthew chapter five and you will see that it is so.

"I have not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill" (5:17b). As already noted, it cannot pass away until all of it has been fulfilled (5:18). The meaning cannot be "until someone keeps it perfectly" (in every jot and tittle). Jesus did keep it perfectly. But He did not fulfill it simply by obeying it. That would only be fulfilling man's obligation to it. He did not change His own or anyone else's duty to the law as long as it remained in effect. It was the standard for human conduct (5:19). To fulfill the (whole) law means it must be allowed to run its course, accomplish all its purposes, and discharge all its obligations. It must complete what God designed and intended it to do.

Its purpose was to bring Christ to us, to verify Him as Messiah and prove that He was from God (Acts 2:22), to provide in Him a sinless substitute, a vicarious sacrifice which could effectively remove our sin (Romans 3:24-26 and 31). But there is neither sin nor sinlessness if there is no law (Romans 4:15 and 5:13). There is a sense in which the purpose of the old law was to bring the Jews to Christ until there was a way to bring all others to Christ (Galatians 3:24). It was an interim covenant and law, given until the Messiah came and was verified (Galatians 3:19). The law and prophets predicted the end of the law, when the Messiah arrived to usher in the final covenant (Deuteronomy 18:15 and Acts 3:22; John 5:39-46). The priesthood was also to change (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:10). All this made necessary a change in the law itself (Hebrews 7:12).

What ongoing purpose does the law serve now? It cannot serve as a law to be obeyed. If it has not been taken away, we must keep it all - every jot and tittle (as corrected, interpreted and applied by Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere). We must keep all of it: the animal sacrifices (Leviticus 8), the dietary laws about meats/foods (Leviticus 11:2-13), the execution of blasphemers (Leviticus 24:16) and adulterers (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22), keeping of the Passover (Deuteronomy 16), ritual and covenant circumcision (Joshua 5:2-3), and all the other rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses. To neglect, disobey, or offend in any point would make one guilty of all (James 2:10, Galatians 3:10 and 5:2-3).

Keeping the Law of Moses would negate and exclude as not valid or effective the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It would make Christ of no effective benefit to anyone (Gala-

tians 5:2-4). Christ would have died in vain, died for nothing (Galatians 2:21). The law provides the historical basis for Christ and the gospel, and serves to explain and justify faith in Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's perfect plan of salvation and redemption (Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The meaning of Matthew 5:17-19 should now be evident. Jesus did not destroy the law. He did not prevent it from doing what God designed and intended it to do. He fulfilled it. It fulfilled its purpose in and through Him. Compare Jesus's statement that, "All things written about me (the Messiah/Christ) in the law, the Psalms, and the prophets must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). This amounts to a claim that these things were in fact fulfilled in and by him. But notice that once the law had brought the people, the Christ, and the final covenant of God together, it ceased to exist any longer as law. It had discharged its obligation, achieved its purpose, completed its design, and run its course. It then stood aside for the new law which replaced it. The Old Testament is important as inspired history, inspired truth, but not as inspired law for our time.

HOW CAN OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES?

Righteousness would seem to be something that admits of no degrees. Like truth, either it is or it is not. Does Jesus really say that one can be more righteous or less righteous than other persons? Are there really degrees of righteousness, right-ness? Read Matthew 5:20 carefully.

Perhaps Jesus is saying here that one's righteousness must be genuine, not assumed or pretended. Taking 5:20 by itself we might see that as His meaning. The scribes and Pharisees claimed to be righteous. They were self-righteous and considered others unrighteous sinners (Luke 18:9-11). But they determined the standard by which to judge themselves to be righteous.

Traditions were of equal weight with Scripture. The words of the fathers (rabbis) were accepted as law to be obeyed (Matthew 15:1-6). They had set aside God's righteousness in trying to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:3-4). The religion (hence the righteousness) of scribes and Pharisees was defective. It was of the head, not of the heart; it was mechanical, lip service (Matthew 15:8-9). It was superficial, not a true and full commitment to God and His truth. It was done to glorify themselves and impress men but not to glorify God (Matthew 23:5, 23). It should not be difficult to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees. But having said all that, and all of it being true, it probably is not what Jesus had in mind in this context.

There was a real righteousness, a right-with-God condition possible for people under the old law (Romans 10:5, Philippians 3:6). Jesus attained and maintained righteousness under the law (1 Peter 2:21-25). Now Jesus Himself is our righteousness. We are accounted as righteous in Him and His

righteousness is imputed to us (Romans 4:6, 24). We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1). Jesus Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to all (Romans 10:4). Jesus Christ...was made unto us wisdom from God and righteousness and redemption: that according as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:30b, 31), that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus is superior. Therefore righteousness in Him is superior, to that attained by the law and the prophets (Hebrews 3:1-6).

We can paraphrase the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20 as saying: "I am the fulfillment and end of the law. I am the righteousness of God, a righteousness that is superior to anything known or practiced by the scribes and Pharisees under the old law and their own traditions. Unless you are righteous

because you are in Me and I am in you, you shall not enter or be part of the kingdom of God."

Our desire should be the same as Paul's, not to have our own righteousness according to our own standard, but to be found in Christ, dressed in his righteousness (Philippians 3:8-9). If righteousness comes now by the Law (of Moses) there was no reason for Christ to die (Galatians 2:21).

Visit Us Online
www.gospelgleaner.com

"God Will Be There Too, Right Mama?"

Melanie Erwin

Being parents of four young children, our top priority in raising them has always been to make sure they know my husband and I love attending worship. What is important to us has always been important to them too. Church is important to us, therefore they love attending. School is important to us, and they excel in their classes. We love Tennessee football and our children cheer for them too, simply because we do! Children truly are the mirror images of their parents.

On Sunday mornings I often hear them use the phrase, "It's time to go to church." I will sometimes follow up with, "It's time to go and worship God." Recently, in response to my comment, our 5 year old daughter said, "And God will be there too, right Mama?" Even at a young age, she understands God is at every worship service with us listening to everything we say and do.

Her simple, yet pure, comment made me think of how important it is that Christians need always keep that thought in remembrance. God is in the midst of every worship service. He knows what is taught, prayed, sung and also witnesses our partaking of the Lord's Supper. He knows our hearts during worship. He knows who wants to be there and who doesn't. Perhaps if we all kept in mind that "God will be there too," our minds and hearts would be exactly where they are supposed to be. And, perhaps also our complaints of attending worship would decrease as well.

Worship is not for us, it is to be rendered to God. We are blessed and honored to be able to worship Him every Sunday. I sometimes see posts on Facebook of parents, grandparents, etc. missing worship to do other events with their children/grandchildren or friends and family and somewhere in the quotes beneath the pictures it is usually stated how much they love them. And I often wonder – but with what type of love do you love them? Is that a Christ-like love, or a worldly love? If our children have the opportunity to spend the day with God, and we choose to rob them of that and take them to the park, sleep in,

shop, or anything else truth be told we would rather be doing, what are we teaching them?

Maybe we attend Sunday morning, but choose to keep them home that evening. They are learning that we love spending time with them, but they are not learning the importance of loving the one true living God or to love worshipping Him. While it is important to show our children how much we love them, it is even so much more important to teach them that time with God comes first. This is, after all, the most important relationship they will ever have.

The Facebook comments also lead me to wonder if perhaps we take for granted our time in worship to Him because we cannot physically see Him there. How would we react if every time we gathered together we were able to physically see God? How would our worship differ? Perhaps our singing would be louder. Would we focus more on the words in our prayers? Would we be more giving with our money and time if only we could just see Him physically?

But He is there! Out of our sight, but His presence is there. Out of our touch, but His presence is there. Out of our hearing, but His presence is there – watching everything we do and say in His name. May we never let Sunday worship become a habitual routine; and may we never become so lukewarm in our Christian walk that one to two hours of our time with the Lord is "good enough" or any more than that an inconvenience.

So I leave with you the answer I gave to our five year old and her sweet and honest question, hoping it will remain in your heart at the next worship service you attend, "Yes, Emma Grace, God is there too." May we always teach our children by our example, to love the Lord and to worship Him in spirit and in truth and that worship is indeed a blessing and never an inconvenience...because they are watching our every move waiting to mirror our image.

News & Notes

James R. McGill

Obituaries

Deatsville, AL – Gwen Turner, age 87, died on Thursday, March 6, 2014. Gwen was a homemaker and a member of Stoney Point church of Christ. She was preceded in death by her husband, James A. Turner. She was a valuable helpmeet to brother Turner in his years of preaching and teaching. Survivors include her daughters: Denne Turner Fry (James) and Carol Turner Veronese; sons: James Harvell (Deborah) Turner, Kent Addison (Debbie) Turner, Dent William (Patti) Turner and Donnie Glenn (Holly) Turner; brothers: Charles Edward (Sue) Harvell, Wayne Edwin (Judi) Harvell; 13 Grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

Maude, TX – Dale Stinson, 86, of Maud, Texas, died Friday, March 7, 2014 in a local hospital. Brother Stinson was born November 1, 1927 in Maud, Texas. He was a gospel preacher for over 55 years. Survivors include his wife, Nelda Rachel Stinson of Maud; two sons and daughters in-law, Larry and Marsha Stinson of Maud and Trent and Gayle Stinson of Lake Dallas, TX.; two daughters and sons in-law, Sandy and Ron Aland of Dallas, TX. and Tonya and Brian Gray of Gladewater, TX.; 13 grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren.

On the Move

Oneida, TN – John T. Polk II has recently moved from Dover, TN to Oneida, TN, where he will be preaching for the Oneida congregation. His new address is 2327 King Town Road, Winfield, TN 37892.

Nashville, TN – A.T. Pate has recently accepted the work with the Central congregation in downtown Nashville. This means that the Whites Creek church in Nashville is looking for a preacher effective immediately. If interested, contact Hubert Raines at (615) 832-7458.

Killen, AL – Artie Collins has placed membership with the Pleasant Valley church of Christ in Killen, Alabama. This is where *Gospel Gleaner* editor Andy Erwin preaches. Artie will be preaching, and teaching Bible classes as well.

Rock Hill, SC – Andy Brewster will be moving to work with the Charlotte Avenue congregation in June of this year. He is moving from the Augusta Road congregation in

Greenville, South Carolina. Charlotte Avenue is the home congregation of David Pharr, former editor of the *Carolina Messenger*.

Prayer Requests

Warren Kenney, a faithful gospel preacher, has been diagnosed with a brain tumor that is a glioblastoma. He must start radiation and chemotherapy in about 30 days.

If you would like to send them a card, the address is 90 Waverly Court, Martinsburg, WV 25403.

From Rod Rutherford

Brett Rutherford is a missionary in Devonport, Tasmania, Australia. He has been in that good work for the past 14 years. He is married to Joanne, one of the daughters of Ian McPherson, a veteran and very faithful Australian gospel preacher. Brett intends to spend his life in this very needy mission field. Brett was hospitalized because he had experienced weakness on his right side, difficulty in walking, and difficulty in writing.

He was given a number of tests in the local hospital. No cancer was found in his body and a stroke was ruled out. A large mass was found on the right front of his brain. He was taken to a larger hospital in Launceston which is about fifty miles from Devonport. He had an MRI and several other tests.

Lesions were found on his brain behind the mass. He is now being transferred to Hobart where the main hospital on the island is located. They have a neurology department. The growths on his brain will be biopsied to learn if they are malignant. If they are, then the course of treatment must be determined.

Brett is 44 years old and he and Joanne have three children who are 12, 11, and 9 years of age. He works under the oversight of the church in Southaven, MS. We would very appreciate the prayers of brethren on his behalf. His home address is 29 Stephen St., East Devonport, Tasmania 7310, Australia.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00
 Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month
 Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month
 Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month
 Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

Upcoming Events

Marion, IL – The Marion church of Christ will be conducting a gospel meeting April 6-8 with John T. Polk II preaching.

Mineral Wells, WV – The Mineral Wells congregation will be conducting a gospel meeting April 6-10 with Andy Robison preaching. The theme will be "Society Needs the Fear of God."

Hazel, KY – The Green Plain church of Christ will be hosting a gospel meeting April 13-17 with Mike Kiser preaching. The congregation will be celebrating their 160th anniversary.

Florence, AL – The Stutts Road church of Christ will be conducting a gospel meeting April 13-16 with Andy Erwin preaching.

Recent Publications

Gospel Gleaner staff writer Raymond Elliott, has recently published a collection of his articles which were printed through the years. The title of the book is, *Daybreak with the Master*. The price is \$11.00.

If anyone should desire to purchase the book, they can call Alethia Moore at Amridge University, (334) 387-7560. The proceeds from the sale of this book will go to the Bible Department of Amridge University.

New Radio Station in the Smoky Mountains

The Gatlinburg church of Christ has been awarded a license for a low power FM radio station. The dial location will be 101.1 FM.

The call letters have not yet been approved. They are hoping to have the equipment installed and the station in operation by June when the tourist season begins to get in full swing.

They will be able to broadcast sermons and church services, gospel meetings, Bible classes, etc. Whatever additional programming they need will be supplied by the Gospel Broadcast Network. They will be on the air 24/7.

Gleanings from the Mission Field

From Owen Olbricht (3-11) – Right now I am in an outreach effort in Mansfield, MO, with 9 Harding students (5 female, 4 male) during spring break using a survey, what is wrong with churches, that was used successfully this past summer in the Northeast.

After two days of door knocking we have 40 contacts and a teen wanting to be baptized as soon as her mother will permit her baptism.

Members of the local congregation have enjoyed helping with the survey because of the simple approach of the survey.

Anyone interested in learning more can receive information by writing Owen D. Olbricht at odolbricht@juno.com.

West Virginia Christian Youth Camp

Fairmont, WV – The annual West Virginia Christian Youth Camp will be hosted on the following dates this year.

June 22-27 – WVCYC for the Athlete

June 29-July 5 – Senior Week (Ages 14-18)

July 6-12 – Intermediate Week (Ages 11-14).

July 13-18 – Junior Week (Ages 8-11).

July 20-26 – All-Age Week (Ages 8-18).

July 27-Aug. 2 – Singing Emphasis Week.

Contact: WVCYC, 207 Fairmont, WV 26554; (304) 366-6288; camp@wvcyc.com

Future Preachers' Training Camp

Montgomery, AL – The Future Preachers Training Camp will be conducted July 6-13, 2014. The camp will be hosted by Amridge University and co-hosted with the Redland Road church of Christ, Montgomery, Alabama.

Young men ages 13-18 who aspire to learn how to preach, evangelize and be church leaders are encouraged to attend.

The cost is a \$40.00 non-refundable registration fee. Apply now for application:

rogersshepherd@amridgeuniversity.edu.

Southwest School of Biblical Studies Annual Lectureship

Austin, TX – This year the lectures will be centered on the letters to Timothy and Titus. The dates will be April 11-15, 2014. For more information contact the Southwest church of Christ, (512) 282-2486.

Reader Replies

Andy,

I appreciate so much the great work you are doing with the *Gospel Gleaner*. February

issues, numbers one and two are both great and I am persuaded that great good is being done because of these. I was saddened by your editorial in number two. I have long known that Lipscomb and some others have departed from the faith, but I was surprised to learn of F-HUs using a denominational preacher to speak. What is their rationale for this? What can these teachers teach us? It appears to me that these teachers, not knowing the truth, cannot tell the truth! I wonder if some preachers and teachers of the gospel have forgotten that we are all going to the judgment to "give an account" of ourselves.

God's blessings upon you and keep up the great work.

Jerry Noblin
Cabot, AR

Hello Andy, I just wanted to commend your excellent editorial, "What Gives?" in the February 2014 issue of *The Gospel Gleaner*. In particular, your powerful concluding paragraph needs to be remembered, that our "schools are not essential to the cause of Christ. The church can live without you." If ever one of our schools starts to influence the church away from Christ, then its usefulness has passed. Keep up the good work!

Weylan Deaver
Denton, TX

The *GG* is one of the very best periodicals out there and I am sending a subscription.

Tim McHenry
Moss, TN

Dear Brethren, I really appreciate the content of your publication and very much want to "keep it coming!"

Bill Noblin
Hazen, AR

Thank you all! I enjoy your good work and the content.

Ralph Thompson
White House, TN

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nashville, MS
Permit No. 5

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

May, 2014

Number Five

The Prevailing Sentiment

Ronald D. Bryant

In the first century, all the power of the Jewish system was arrayed in opposition to the followers of Christ (Acts 4). On one occasion, those authorities were shocked at the boldness of two disciples of Jesus, Peter and John, who were contemptuously regarded as nothing more than unlearned fishermen from Galilee. When threatened about Christ and the proclamation of His message, they answered with such simplicity and forceful clarity, that they shook the whole Jewish system.

The Cross Had Meaning

To Peter and John the cross was no vague concept or mere sentimental event; it was compelling objective fact. It was a reality that ruled their very existence. While properly respectful of all men – they were not timid, but were emboldened with full confidence in the truth of the Christ, and were convinced to the degree that they would not – they could not relent.

They exalted Christ, as crucified and risen, as both Lord and Christ. Let the Jewish leaders threaten! They would not turn aside, except to pray to God. Amazingly, they did not ask God to alter their circumstances, but that He would grant that they with “all boldness” might present Christ.

They were not fearful of the threats, or the power of their oppressors. They were not emboldened by personal vanity. They had no personal agenda or anxiety. They had no personal cause to advance. They saw their lives as belonging to Him who died in utter weakness, yet had conquered death.

No matter the consequence, they willed to obey God, not man (Acts 4:19ff.). They placed themselves in the hands of God to do with them as He desired and designed. Intriguingly, they gave no consideration to either success or failure! They did not seek to build a personal following, nor great congregations! They preached Jesus

as both Lord and Christ, and the scandal and the triumph of the cross plowed into the hearts and minds of their hearers with telling effect. Men were “cut to the heart;” and earnestly inquired “men and brethren what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

In time, some of the oppressors took notice of the disciples, as they had been with Jesus. In consequence of their unflinching devotion, the faithful disciples had powerful influence for Christ. Because of their faith they also suffered and died for Him! Yet, in all things they gloried in Him. They did not have a spirit of fear, but of power and love, and discipline, all of which was manifest in their pure devotion, their earnest faith, and their ready service. They rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). They lived for Christ and proclaimed the Gospel in the face of great danger and distress.

The Task Has Not Changed

With all of this before us, there is this sobering reality: the life-task of the people of God has not changed! Modern concepts and progressive agendas aside, pure devotion to Christ and full identity with Him is the object and the motivating force of the call of Christ.

It has been suggested that the church of today would be hard-pressed to endure the fire kindled to consume the martyrs of the first two-hundred years of church history. True or not, a contemplation of those martyred, argues that for the most part modern churchgoers are far removed from that kind of devotion to Christ.

Presently, many highly regarded church leaders and influential preachers seem to be consumed with a desire to be admired, accepted, popular, and praised by the world and the worldly!

Continued on page 7

With this article, we will conclude our series of "Great Preachers on Great Preaching" by observing the candid comments of the lamented brother W.A. Bradfield. By so doing, we have taken as examples three different preachers, with three different styles of preaching, from three different generations. Yet, each man shared the same common goal and purpose of edifying the church and reaching the lost through the preaching of the cross.



W.A. Bradfield (1910-1972)

I must admit that brother Bradfield is a favorite of mine. I never knew him personally, but have come to love and admire him through the years of researching and writing his biography. Even in memory, he has become a close friend.

Bradfield Was a Great Preacher

Guy N. Woods offered this observation as to why brother Bradfield was so effective:

"His love for the Lord, and his great concern for the souls of men motivated him throughout life. His powerful and effective appeals resulted from a number of factors. He was an exceedingly forceful and pointed

preacher. He preached, not only with his voice, but with his head, his eyes, his arms; he was not a mere conversationalist; he pounded the pulpit for emphasis when the occasion required it. His vibrant personality made itself felt in the hearts of his hearers and stirred them to respond to his impassioned appeals. He was an effective speaker."

Brother Bradfield's dear friend, Jim McGill, observed:

"Brother Bradfield never got off the message. He preached about the love of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the church of Christ, the gospel plan of salvation, judgment, eternity, heaven, hell, the danger in delay, the uncertainty of life, and the urgent need to respond now. He permeated the message with pleading for every lost soul to obey and be saved—now! Tonight!"

Bradfield's Advice to Young Preachers

During March 6-8, 1967, Bradfield presented a series of lectures on the subject of preaching to the Bible students at Freed-Hardeman College.

During one of these lectures, brother Bradfield noted that the greatest compliment that could ever be given to him or any man was that he was a faithful gospel preacher.

He criticized preachers who competed with and were envious of other preachers. He said the only competition a preacher should have is with the devil.

Brother Bradfield gave several reasons why a man should be a gospel preacher. In the first place, one should preach to save his own soul. Bradfield believed that in preaching the gospel, some of this glorious message would have to "rub off" on

the man preaching it, and thus he would become a better man. He also believed the gospel preacher stood a better chance of saving his family. But more than anything, he believed one should become a gospel preacher in order to save the lost.

He also addressed the question of "Who should become a gospel preacher?" Brother Bradfield believed preachers should only be those who truly love the Lord, have a sincere compassion for lost souls, are willing to make sacrifices, and are completely dedicated to Christ.

In this lecture he proceeded to offer four keys to being a successful gospel preacher.

- ❖ *Work hard.*
- ❖ *Study hard.*
- ❖ *Pray always.*
- ❖ *Practice what you preach.*

Principles for Preaching

Brother Bradfield offered the following principles for every sermon.

- Have something to say. Believe in the importance of what you are preaching.
- Speak in a language that can be understood. Make it plain. The common man must be able to understand you.
- Preach with zeal and enthusiasm.
- Drive it home.

W.A. Bradfield was content to be a faithful gospel preacher. More than anything, he desired to save the lost and build up the church. In the decade of the 1960s alone, more than 10,000 souls publically responded to his sermons. He would be the first to tell us, "The power is in the word!"

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Five
May, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Michael Shank
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *The Prevailing Sentiment*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *W.A. Bradfield on Great Preaching*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *What Is Man?*
Robert Waggoner
- 6 *Jeremiah's Dismay*
Ron Thomas
- 8 SPECIAL FEATURE *The West Virginia School of Preaching*
- 9 *Honoring Fred W. Chunn*
James R. McGill
- 10 BOOK REVIEW
Daybreak with the Master: Meditations on God's True Purpose by Raymond Elliott
- 11 *The Revival of the Gospel Meeting*
Joshua Dement
- 13 *A Day Spent with Artie Collins*
Andy Erwin
- 14 News & Notes
James R. McGill
- 16 Reader Replies

What Is Man?

Robert L. Waggoner

What you think about yourself, and how you behave, depends largely on how you answer ultimate questions about your nature. These questions are:

- 1.) "Who am I?"
- 2.) "Where did I come from?"
- 3.) "Why am I here?"
- 4.) "Where am I going?"

While these questions are often answered on a personal level, i.e., related to family genealogy, heritage, status, etc. they should first be answered with respect to the nature of humanity, i.e., what is man? Or, in other words, what is the nature of humanity?

You're likely to answer these questions one way if you believe that you originated from God, but a different way if you believe that you came only from the natural world. Notice how different perspectives cause these questions to be answered differently.

To the question, "Who am I?" evolutionists answer that humanity has only physical nature whereas believers in God answer that each human being has both a physical and a spiritual nature. The physical body is temporal, housing the individual during this earthly life, whereas the spiritual body is eternal. When the physical body dies, the spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

To the question "Where did I come from?" evolutionists respond by saying that humanity came from an eternal self-existing world, whereas the believer in God answers that humanity was created in God's own image (Genesis 1:27; 9:6). The Bible declares that God is the "maker" of humanity (Job 4:17; Psalm 95:6; Proverbs 14:31; 17:5; 22:2; Isaiah 51:13).

To the question "Why am I here?" evolutionists say that humanity is the result of random chance and has no special purpose, whereas the believer in God says that humanity is delegated by God to have dominion over the world (Genesis 1:26-28).

To the question "Where am I going?" evolutionists declare that humanity is going nowhere because life does not continue beyond fleshly existence on earth whereas the believer in God acknowledges that each human being has an eternal destiny, either to heaven or hell, depending upon how each has lived life on earth (Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29). (See table related to opposing views about humanity at end of article.)

Humanity Is Distinct from Animals

Whereas some people believe that humankind originated only from natural causes and has only animal nature, others

believe that humanity originated from God and is more than animal nature (see Genesis 1:26-30 and Psalm 8:3-8).

- Of no other creature did God collaborate and say, "Let us make . . ." (Genesis 1:26).
- God made man from the dust of the ground and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Other creatures were simply spoken into existence. To no other creature did God give such special attention.
- God allowed man to discover his need for companionship. To no other creature did God withhold female companionship until such need was discovered by the male.
- God communicated with man. To no other creature did God give ability to communicate with Him.
- To no other creature did God give the freedom of moral choice.
- To no other creature did God give the responsibility to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28). He "put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; even the beasts of the field."
- God made man, but no other creature, "a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8:5-8).
- God made man, and none other, in his own "image" (Genesis 1:26; 9:6), "likeness" (Genesis 5:1), or "similitude" (James 3:9). God crowned only humanity "with glory and honor."

Meaning of "Image of God"

The expression "image of God," which is applicable to both male and female, surely means a reflection or likeness of God, much like what is seen in a mirror. Thus, humanity is a mirror image of God.

People have sometimes observed that since humanity has abilities different from animals, e.g., in reasoning, in communicating knowledge to future generations, and in appreciation of things aesthetically, then these are ways that humanity may be considered as being made in the image of God. While these subjective considerations may be true, they are not mentioned in the biblical texts.

Genesis 1:26-30 and Psalm 8:3-8 suggest two ways that human nature is made in the "image of God." First, since these texts are about creation, they suggest that the ability of humans to be creative is one way that mankind is made in the image of God. Although humanity does not have God's ability to create something out of nothing, humanity can use existing materials to create. Thus, Adam was to "keep and tend" the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Noah was to build an ark (Genesis 6:14-16). And, after the flood, people built a tower at Babel (Genesis 11:3-9).

Second, humanity is made in the image of God by being able to rule and have dominion "over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28; see also Psalm 8:6-9). Adam began his dominion by naming all the animals. After the flood, civil governments began. Human capacity to rule, however, is but a weak imitation of God's sovereign dominion over all things.

Able to Choose – A Sinner

Shortly after creation, Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:6). The result was that Eve was told that she would bear children with pain. Adam was told that he would have to earn his livelihood by the sweat of his face. They were both put out of the Garden of Eden and were thereby denied the right to eat from the tree of life. They were separated from fellowship with God and humankind was doomed to die (Genesis 2:17, 3:3; Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27).

Even though humans are unlike God in that everyone is a sinner (Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12), God still indicated to Noah that mankind is made in the image of God (Genesis 9:6). God is still gracious to humanity in that He continues to provide "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). Because people were created in the image of God (1 Corinthians 11:7, Colossians 3:9-10, James 3:10), humans still have an exalted position – just a little lower than angels, crowned with glory and honor, and domination over other living creatures (Psalm 8:5-8). Although everyone sins, God still loves humanity and has initiated means for mankind to be restored to His fellowship (John 3:16; Romans 3:24; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7).

Beliefs Determine Behaviors

People who believe that they are only physical, that they originated only from nature, that they are not accountable to God, and that they have no eternal destiny are inclined to focus their behavior on sinful pursuits that are pleasurable and materialistic.

However, people who believe they are also spiritual, that they came from God, that they are accountable to God, and that their eternal destiny depends upon how they live are inclined to conform their behavior to ways that are pleasing to God (Romans 12:1-2; Galatians 5:22-27; Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:5-17; 1 John 2:15-17).

See Corresponding Chart

What Is Man? (Two Opposing Views about Humanity)	
Created by God	Evolved from Nature
1. Created by God in God's image	1. Evolved through lower primates
2. Life given intentionally by God	2. Life developed spontaneously
3. Created as male and female	3. Evolved as male and female
4. Purposefully created to fellowship God	4. Accidentally evolved without purpose
5. Physical & Spiritual – Temporal & Eternal	5. Physical only – Temporal only
6. Speech (communication) was created	6. Speech (communication) evolved
7. Marriage (family) instituted by God	7. Marriage (family) arose from convenience
8. Requires physical & spiritual nourishment	8. Requires only physical nourishment
9. Ethics determined by God	9. Ethics determined by humans & by nature
10. Created as good, but later sinned	10. Evolved and continues as basically good
11. Separated from God by sin, man needs salvation	11. Since neither God nor sin exists, and man is basically good, salvation is not needed
12. Subject to divine and human authorities	12. Subject only to human authorities
13. Physical death resulted from disobedience	13. Death has always been only natural
14. Afterlife: resurrection, judgment, and eternal destiny to either heaven or hell	14. No afterlife: no resurrection, no judgment, no eternal destiny
15. Consciousness (memory) after death	15. No consciousness (memory) after death

Jeremiah's Dismay

Ron Thomas

In our day, the following qualities are important: (1) we love to present ourselves in a visually favorable way; (2) we hold in high esteem those who are patriotic; and (3) we desire to educate ourselves in the ways of commerce, and produce for ourselves an income that helps in our later years.

Judah, and Israel before her, loved the same things we do today. In their case, their beauty and their patriotism were misplaced. This was because they became educated in the wrong areas of importance.

Vain Beauty and Patriotism

A problem the reader of Jeremiah will soon notice in regard to chronology is when did Jeremiah preach these particular messages? At best, it is an educated guess. There is no real knowledge concerning when these particular messages were preached. Though knowledge is lacking, we can understand a general context of the various messages in relation to Judah's history, and how it applied throughout their history.

Throughout their history, the people of Judah followed the inclinations of their own evil heart and were unable (unwilling) to see the wrong of which they were guilty, unless the Lord brought it to their attention in a severe way (2:35; cf. 2:1-5). Though the people failed to see what they should have seen, it was not because the Lord did not make His way known. Rather, it was because they desired a different path. Consequently, the Lord did not excuse them in their ignorance. In fact, He still demanded from them a penitent heart. It was through Jeremiah's preaching that He helped them to see and understand wherein they failed.

The Lord made an appeal to the heart of the matter, which was an appeal to the heart of the individual. The people of Judah had too much dead weight, and that dead weight was taking them to the bottom of the sea of eternal damnation. Of course, this dead weight was their sins. "Your ways and your doings have procured these things for you. This is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches to your heart" (4:18).

If they would only turn away from such dead weight, the disaster the Lord planned for them would be turned away as well (3:12-13). But, they were not interested in

doing this. Thus, the Lord plainly speaks, "For My people are foolish, they have not known Me. They are silly [stupid, ESV] children, and they have no understanding. They are wise to do evil, But to do good they have no knowledge" (4:22).

The people, in their wisdom and patriotism produced for themselves a land destitute of produce (4:18, 27). Not to be outdone – only because they were blinded – the people "prettied" themselves for those who tried to court them (foreign nations). Alas, the vanity of their beauty was seen by those whom they thought they would assist them (4:30).

Stupidity and Empty Knowledge

How could anyone not hear the Lord and see the guilt associated with their collective and individual doings? Yet, this was exactly the status of the people of Judah. Jeremiah tells us how and why such things as this occur. "An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?" (5:30)

This perfect understanding the Lord had of His people is worth notice. It is remarkable that people so familiar with the Lord's way in their history were so ready to accept teachings that were contrary to the Lord's expressed purpose. They simply desired to believe what they wanted to believe.

Earlier, the Lord told Jeremiah to go through the community and see if he could find even one person seeking to do what was right. Jeremiah came back dismayed (5:1-9).

Once Jeremiah had clarity of understanding in why he was the Lord's chosen one, the people responded to him in a particular way. The false teachers were opposed to that which God's true prophet said; they were educating the people away from the Lord's actual word as spoken by Jeremiah. The common man loved this because it was a message of peace and security. The false teachers were so loved by the people and supported by the government that Jeremiah needed to be silenced. Blind false teachers were leading blind governmental leaders and taking the common man down with them!

Lessons

First, consider the word used in the NKJV “silly” in comparison with the ESV “stupid.” The ESV has a harder punch to it – and that is exactly what the Lord wanted understood. There is no way we can appreciate anything of the circumstances Judah was experiencing when Jeremiah spoke unless we pay attention to his words, and even then there are limitations to understanding. There is something, however, that we can understand, and the ESV brings it out rather plainly in the word used. It is plain stupidity to know the Lord and turn one’s ear away from the Lord’s mouth, thinking nothing will happen when this occurs.

Second, beauty becomes vain when knowledge is lacking. Consider what the Lord was saying. The people of Jeremiah’s day dressed themselves up in such a way to be attractive, but the one they desired (a foreign nation) saw through this vanity, and merely used the people for what they were – harlots!

Third, the Lord knew well that He was talking to a rebellious people, but He also knew that under those hardened hearts were souls that needed saving. The Scriptures teach that it is not God’s desire that any should perish, but that all should come to know His will and repent (cf. 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). These hardened hearts needed to be spiritually circumcised.

Fourth, to be unequally yoked with that which is corrupted is to corrupt one’s self. It may be that one believes he can avoid the corruption, but this and other delusions will come to light soon enough. This leads naturally into the next point.

Fifth, and most importantly in today’s environment, when the blind lead the blind both fall into the ditch. The prophets who preached falsely did so knowing the truth (or at least having access to the truth). Yet, they spoke a different message.

That message does not have to be entirely different, just altered. The priests of Jeremiah’s day were the teachers of the people, but they failed in their obligations to teach because they were being led by powerful and charismatic preachers/prophets.

The pinnacle of the problem, however, was in the people. The people of Jeremiah’s day were the recipients of these messages by the false prophets. Unfortunately, they loved what they were hearing.

Brethren, powerful preaching can be effective, but only the pure word of God can save. Let us be sure we search the Scriptures daily and see if those things preached to us are accurate (cf. Acts 17:11).



Continued from page one: “The Prevailing Sentiment”

In truth, how far removed are we from the devotion demanded by Christ? The danger of being a martyr may be remote – at least in our modern contentment, and with the increasingly popular progressive agendas, but for every person who would follow Christ there remains a cross – a cross where “self” dies and Christ is embraced.

The help of the world, the patronage of its rulers, the loan of its resources, the use of its methods, all of these were refused by the early church, lest by employing them they should dishonor their King. In contrast to this, presently, there is no evidence of that mind-set. Presently, there is a “progressive agenda” being employed to move the careless and unheeding in very different and ever changing directions. Ungodly men, in not a few places, are leading and urging congregations to court the world, use its methods, embrace its wisdom, corrupt the worship of God, and exchange the truth of God for a lie. Incredibly, they do so hoping to attract the worldly into the church.

Who cannot see that in this “progressive agenda” the Way of Christ is being abandoned? Who cannot see that the King is being dishonored? Who will not lament this fact?

The early Christians treated the trifles of this world with indifference and lived with a passionate regard for Christ and for life eternal through Him. Can this truly be said of us? How many of us truly lament our lack of pure and simple devotion to Christ? How many “spiritual shepherds” are willing to “re-study” this specific subject? In truth, what is the prevailing sentiment to which we are holding?

Visit Us Online
www.gospelgleaner.com

Special Feature:

The West Virginia School of Preaching



We appreciate your interest in learning more about the West Virginia School of Preaching. Many years of planning, preparation and prayer have made and continue to make this school a success, measured by the number of faithful Gospel preachers who have graduated from this school and are laboring to do the work of the Lord.

The Beginning of WVSOP

Our journey began long before the first brick was laid by those in the congregation who had the foresight to plan carefully how to train men to preach the Word and to ensure the Lord's foundation was the cornerstone of this good work!

The strong eldership at Hillview Terrace church of Christ agreed to act as overseers of the good work at the WVSOP and one of their first tasks was to ask Brother Emanuel B. Daugherty, the preacher for the Dewey Avenue church in St. Marys, West Virginia, to be the school's first Director. Once he and his wife, Judy, moved to Moundsville in February 1994, Brother Daugherty began the recruitment of students and faculty.

In August of 1994 the first session at the West Virginia School of Preaching began. It was held in the Hillview meeting house with a student body totaling six full-time students and a small faculty of Wirt Cook, Denver Cooper, Emanuel Daugherty, Charles Pugh III, W. Terry Varner, D. Gene West, Bert Jones, and Steve Stevens.

The Victory Lectureship & Continued Growth

In the fall of 1995 the first annual **Victory Lectureship** was conducted with Texas evangelist and editor of the *Firm Foundation*, Buster Dobbs, as the keynote speaker. (The lectureship is held each year in the last full week of October.)

The growth and progress of WVSOP prompted the overseers to make plans for a new facility to house the school. Property just east of the Hillview church parking lot was purchased and ground was broken in September of 1997—a new school building was under way. The new school was very generously supported, especially by the Hillview Terrace members, and this new facility greeted the students as they

began the 1998 fall term.

In 2003 Emanuel Daugherty resigned as Director after nine years, although he continues working at the school as a faculty member and advisor. The Directorship was turned over to Denver Cooper who continued to recruit and do the great work for an additional nine years until his retirement in 2012 at the age of 89. The elders then asked Brother Andy Robison to pick up this good work and he now serves as the school's current Director as well as a faculty member.

Above all our goal remains the same—to teach and train men for the greatest work in the world—preaching and saving the souls of men and women, and building up the church of Christ all over the world.

Curriculum

Our curriculum consists of three areas: 1) Defense, 2) Knowledge, and 3) Communication.

Preachers of this era need to be able to defend the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible,



and the Deity of Christ. A quarter of study in each topic is required, in addition to a course in Inspiration and Revelation (a study in how we got the Bible), and Hermeneutics.



Student Housing

In addition to subjects such as New Testament Church, Church History, Restoration History, Marriage & Family, Godhead, and Denominational Doctrines, this plank requires a course in every book of the Bible. Preachers should know the Bible and Bible-related subjects thoroughly.

Then, knowing the Bible, the preacher must be able to communicate it, both publicly and privately. Three quarters of Homiletics are required, with a fourth quarter focusing on the Work of the Preacher. In English Grammar students learn speaking and writing skills for all levels of the preacher's



work. A strong Personal Evangelism class is also required.

The Lord has blessed the Hillview Terrace church of Christ and the West Virginia School of Preaching. We are grateful to all who have contributed to this good work, and hope to continue (Philippians 1:6).

Honoring Fred W. Chunn

James R. McGill

Fred W. Chunn (1891-1975) was born in Kentucky. He was baptized into Christ at age 17 at the Antioch church of Christ near Mayfield, Kentucky, in 1908.

Four years later he preached his first sermon at Antioch. He continued to preach for the next 68 years. Henry, Tennessee, near Paris, was his home for most of his life. He taught in the Henry high school and preached for the Henry church of Christ.

Chunn married Mable Joyner in 1917. They were married 55 years. She was a constant supporter of his preaching. She kept a very large book in which she recorded every sermon he preached in every gospel meeting series, including the location, the exact dates, the topics, and what he was paid, if anything. He

preached in hundreds of evangelistic meetings.

In these gospel meetings, he would preach each evening, and sometimes mornings, too, for a week, ten days, or two weeks. Often he was asked to return year after year. He preached in twenty meetings at one congregation—the Burrus Chapel church of Christ, in Lake County, Tennessee.

The Record Book

Chunn suffered a disabling stroke on a Sunday morning in October, 1970, at the East Wood church building in Paris, Tennessee, where he was to begin a series of gospel meetings that morning. Though he lived four more years, he was no longer able to preach. It was during that time that I had opportunities to visit

with him and to spend time looking at the book his wife had kept in such detail. She recorded, in separate sections of the giant book, not only the details of every gospel meeting series in which he preached, but also every wedding at which he officiated, and all of the four thousand funerals he conducted!

Clalytus Wilson, gospel preacher, historian, and former Paris elder, said Mrs. Chunn told him that her husband never just used a standard funeral message. He prepared for every occasion with the needs of each family in mind and said what he considered to be most appropriate about the deceased and most beneficial to the surviving family.

For forty years before I ever attended a funeral Chunn conducted, I would hear people speak of what a

wonderful job he always did. They would say, "It's hard to describe. There's just something about the way he does it." Finally, one Sunday afternoon in 1970, at the Cottage Grove, Tennessee, church of Christ, where I was located, Fred Chunn came to conduct an afternoon funeral.

I think I learned a little about why he was so highly regarded. He was totally in command. He had received in advance all the input from the family regarding their wishes. He had instructed the funeral directors and the pallbearers. There was no doubt about the sequence. There was great precision and dignity.

Busy Day!

Fred Chunn told me about the busiest day he ever had: One Sunday, in the hours between the morning worship and the evening worship, he conducted three funerals and officiated at two weddings! The five events were at four different loca-

tions. At one church building Chunn had a wedding and a funeral in the same building, one right after the other. He watched the wedding florists taking out their flowers as they met the funeral florists coming down the aisle, bringing in their flowers.

A Carroll County, Tennessee, funeral director told me, "Fred Chunn is every mortician's dream preacher. I guess I've had a hundred and fifty funerals with brother Chunn. Every funeral oration is different, but every one concludes the same way with the opening lines of Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar."

It was surprising to me to notice in the big record book that Chunn was not paid anything for many of the funerals he conducted. For many others it was five dollars. Even for those earlier times the compensation did not cover his expenses.

Fred W. Chunn was not widely known beyond northwest Tennessee and west Kentucky, but there was

perhaps no preacher more highly respected, or more in demand, in that area. The lives of Fred and Mable Chunn were lives well-lived.

The Memorial

It seems appropriate that, at Freed-Hardeman University, there is a classroom in the old main administration building that honors his memory with a plaque inscribed "The Fred W. Chunn Room." The Chunn room is directly across the hall from the memorial to M. S. Mason, another beloved preacher, and a Freed-Hardeman teacher, who was murdered near Searcy, Arkansas, in 1930.

When one thinks of so many who learned the truth and obeyed the gospel during Fred Chunn's hundreds of evangelistic meetings, his influence truly lives on in the lives of generations of Christians. He died in 1975. He was 83.

BOOK REVIEW

Daybreak with the Master: Meditations on God's True Purpose

By Raymond Elliott; Amridge University Press, 2014, paperback, 267 pages
Reviewed by Andy Erwin

Gospel Gleaner staff writer and longtime faithful gospel preacher, Raymond Elliott has recently published a collection of his timely articles. If you are looking for a book to use for daily devotionals, this is the book for you.

Brother Elliott has provided a great service to Christians who are looking for such a book from the pen of a faithful brother in the Lord. Readers will find the book to be deeper than

the average devotional book, and it is full of scriptural references and applications.

The author divides the book into six sections and covers such topics as Christian living, doctrinal matters, the church, and marriage and the home. To teach about such great matters, Raymond Elliott uses illustrations from nature, personalities, and even "Scenes from My Office Window."

Preachers will find the book to be useful for sermon ideas, especially midweek devotionals when their time is limited.

The reader will find this book to be helpful in starting the day. The articles are usually kept to a page or two,

and can be read in a relatively short amount of time. For those looking to fill their mornings will godly meditations while preparing for the day, this book will prove to be very helpful. It is also a good book to read on lunch breaks. But do remember, it is not the usual devotional book. You will learn great doctrinal truth as well as gaining practical biblical applications for your life.

The book can be ordered from various bookstores, even Amazon. Proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Bible Department of Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama. If you choose to order directly from Amridge University, the school will receive a greater share of the proceeds.

The Revival of the Gospel Meeting

Joshua Dement

As a student of church history, I enjoy reading about the successful gospel meetings that took place in the past. In Northeast Arkansas, people are still encouraged by gospel meetings which took place 50-60 years ago.

In years gone by, it was common knowledge that every congregation would hold at least one gospel meeting per year with many holding two or three. Ten years ago, when I was in high school, from the first of March through the end of October you could pretty much find a meeting to attend every night if you so desired. Such is not the case any longer. The growing majority of Christians have the mindset that gospel meetings are old, outdated, unsuccessful evangelistic tools that are a waste of time and money to hold. Each year fewer gospel meetings are held, and the ones that do take place often go by with little to show for it. It is my conclusion that the churches of Christ need a revival of the gospel meeting.

Gospel meetings, also known as revival meetings, serve many purposes. They are one way that we strive to go and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19). Untold thousands of lost souls have been convicted, converted, and counseled by the messages that poured forth from the pulpit during gospel meetings. It was common for hundreds to respond for immersion or restoration. Meetings would continue for weeks or even months because people continued to respond.

Gospel meetings were often the catalyst for establishing new congregations of the Lord's church. A preacher would go into a community where the church was not meeting, set up a tent or use the local schoolhouse, get the word out about the services, and preach to packed crowds each night and often each morning. From such humble beginnings arose some of the largest and most influential congregations in this country.

It is interesting to note that when congregations ceased to hold gospel meetings, congregations started to close their doors and often ceased to meet completely. Since that time as well, it is seldom heard of a new congregation beginning that was not the result of a split from another congregation.

Many once faithful Christians have used gospel meetings as their entrance back into faithful service. Upon

the invitation of a member, they return to their familiar place of worship, hear a powerful soul-stirring lesson from God's word that again pricks their heart, and re-ignites that fire of zeal for the Lord. Oh yes, the church would be vastly different were it not for gospel meetings.

Often the excuses brethren make for not holding meetings falls back upon apathy, laziness, selfishness, and a lack of faith. A meeting will be a success or a failure depending on the amount of preparation put into it. If gospel meetings were easy and automatically successful every congregation would hold them.

So what can congregations do to revive the gospel meeting?

ADVERTISE

If flyers are not mailed to sister congregations, ads are not placed in the local newspapers, and announcements are not run on local radio and television newscasts do not expect a very good turnout. It is indeed a waste of time and money to pay a preacher to come in and host a meeting if no one outside the local church knows about it.

Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have proven to be excellent resources to use in getting the word out. Do not forget though, that an old-fashioned phone call, door knock, or letter can be the most powerful form of invitation that can be used.

Do not forget the small churches either. Often small congregations get overlooked in the mail-outs presumably because it is thought that no one from there would attend. It has been my experience that you get more visitors from small churches than you do from larger ones.

COMPARE CALENDARS

It is never a good practice to hold a gospel meeting at the same time as a sister congregation in close proximity. Support from fellow Christians is often the backbone of gospel meetings. They help to fill the building, encourage the preacher, and edify the local church members.

There was a time in the recent past where I knew of three congregations within ten miles of each other all holding meetings on the same date and at the same times.

This shows a lack of unity and fellowship among those congregations. Make some phone calls, compare calendars, and support each other in these efforts.

CHOOSE A SOUND PREACHER

Many meetings are not successful because of the man chosen to present the lessons. If he is an entertainer, listeners might have a good time but they will not be uplifted, edified, and convicted by the word of God (Romans 1:16; Hebrews 4:12). On the other hand, if he is condemning and predominantly negative he will run people away.

A gospel meeting preacher must be sound, zealous, loving, and encouraging. Yes hearts must be convicted, but let the word of God do that. Name calling, belittling, criticizing, and condemnation are not attributes of a Christian and have no place in the pulpit.

Some congregations appear to be so desperate for growth that they do not examine the doctrinal stance of the men chosen to speak. If churches invite false teachers knowingly, or allow the meeting to continue when they are made aware of the beliefs of the preacher they are bidding him God speed and are become partakers of his evil deeds (2 John 10,11).

FAMILIAR IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER

Many congregations use the same man for their meetings every year. While this arrangement can and does work sometimes, it is not recommended. The more time that a man spends with a congregation often diminishes the influence that he has on them. Unless there is a family tie or special connection to the congregation, people generally like to hear someone new to them. Preachers should be invited back if the meeting is successful, but maybe not for back to back meetings. Most congregations where I see gospel meetings being utilized to their greatest potential are those which use different men for each meeting.

LOCAL IS NOT ALWAYS BETTER

It has become popular to use the located preacher as the gospel meeting preacher also. Why bother hosting a meeting? The purpose of a gospel meeting is to bring in a fresh face and presence to the pulpit. Church members need to hear different preachers from time to time and gospel meetings are an excellent way to accomplish this. Likewise, preachers need to hear other preachers. We need to be uplifted and edified by hearing God's word proclaimed from a mouth other than our own.

In one congregation, their last two meetings featured their two local preachers. Was it because they did not want to pay another preacher? Did they not think another preacher could preach as well? Would the preacher not give up the pulpit to another? Did they have "preacher-itis"? I know of some Christians who will listen to any other preacher than their local man. Some congregations will host a gospel meeting when they hire a new preacher in order to introduce him to the congregation, community, and to visitors from sister churches. This can be a great idea, but local is not always better.

GET THE LOCAL MEMBERS THERE

I have witnessed in most congregations a sad spectacle of local church members not supporting gospel meetings. It is inevitable that there will always be some who are simply weak and will not attend, but many just need encouragement. Start announcing the meeting regularly at least two months in advance. This allows people to mark off those dates on the calendar and schedule around them. Give them something to do. By involving them in the preparations it shows that they are needed. Pick them up if they are elderly and do not drive after dark.

SEEK THE OPINION OF LOCAL MEMBERS

Many elders simply choose a man and set a date without ever discussing it with the congregation. If the congregation has a suggestion for a preacher for the meeting, the elders or men of the congregation should entertain that suggestion. If members feel that their suggestions are not being considered they are not likely to support the meeting.

WORK and PRAY

No meeting will be successful without work being done to prepare for it, or without following up during and after it. The community members must be invited. Visitors need to be contacted. Bible studies need to be conducted. New converts need to be taught to observe all things. Once we have done all we can, we must pray for its success.

Gospel meetings can be just as successful today as they used to be. Let us endeavor to bring about a revival of the gospel meeting in local churches of Christ. Host meetings, attend meetings, support sister churches' meetings, and recognize them as the powerful evangelistic tool that they are.

A Day Spent with Artie Collins

Andy Erwin

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend some time with brother Artie Collins. For many years I have known this great man, and have respected him for what he has meant to the church and how he has faithfully labored for the Lord. My respect for him has only grown as my association with him has grown.

Brother Artie, when were you baptized?

"I was baptized scripturally in January of 1960. Willie Cochran baptized me at the Lyles congregation in Hickman County, Tennessee. I had been baptized before, but it was to please Marie, and was not for the right reasons. So, in 1960 I was baptized to obey the Lord."

Brother Cochran had a great influence upon you.

"Yes. He and my brother Charles, who was a great gospel preacher, influenced me to preach. Charles was ten years older than me. And we both started preaching when we were thirty."

You were also blessed with a good wife. Tell us about the importance of a preacher selecting the right kind of woman for his ministry.

"Well, Marie was good to support me in my preaching and to correct me. She would say, 'Here is what I think about it...', and then she would leave it alone. She would give me advice about my mannerisms and when she thought I was giving the wrong impression. Sometimes we can appear to be too aggressive if we're not careful."

"Marie came from a good, faithful Christian home, and she was very devoted. When we were dating, I was a Methodist. I would go to

church with my mother and Marie would tell me to drop her off at the church of Christ. She would not go with me, and that would make me so angry. But, later I learned the truth and realized why that was so important to her."

You and Marie have raised a wonderful family and all of your children and grandchildren have obeyed the gospel. What pointers do you have for Christian parents who are trying to raise their children to be faithful?

"The most important thing is to set the right example at home. Be consistent. Each child is different, and you will have to teach each child accordingly. We taught our children to obey the gospel, and to date and marry Christians, and that makes a big difference in how they live as adults."

Brother Artie, you have seen a lot of changes in the Lord's church since you were a young preacher. What are some of the biggest problems/needs we have today?

"I believe the biggest problem facing the church today is a lack of leadership. There has been a change in the mindset of our leaders. I think a lot of that comes out of our schools."

What advice can you offer to help us improve our leadership problems?

"Churches need to provide training for men and their wives. Young men need to be encouraged to be leaders in the church and to prepare themselves. Their wives need to prepare themselves also for being an elder's wife, or a deacon's wife. And these classes need to be con-

ducted by the right kind of teachers. They need to be faithful men."

Have you noticed a change in preaching over the years?

"Yes. Many of our young preachers are not dealing with important but controversial issues like marriage and divorce or the oneness of the church. They want to tiptoe through the tulips."

What advice would you give to a young preacher?

"For years I have recommended that a young preacher should get the tapes of the Open Forum (Freed-Hardeman) when it was conducted by Alan Highers. He dealt with so many controversial issues that we face and did an outstanding job. Preachers should learn about these issues and how to answer them early in their preaching career. Young preachers should also spend time with older preachers. They need to have someone to talk to and ask questions. And when we send them to a preacher training school, they need to be grounded before they go. This grounding starts in the home. There is so much worldliness in the church because it is in the home."

From time to time, you have had to deal with controversial issues in ministry. What advice do you have when such issues arise?

"It depends on how it comes up. Is it doctrinal? Is it in my home congregation? I have always tried to recognize these things and wake up the people who are involved. You can't just bury your head in the sand, but you can't let these things distract you from your work either."

Thank you, brother Artie.

News & Notes

James R. McGill

Anniversaries

Austin, TX – *The Christian Worker* is celebrating its 100th year of publication this year. *The Christian Worker* began in Wichita, Kansas, in 1915. In 1986 the paper became a work of the Southwest congregation in Austin, Texas, when Bill Jackson was preaching there.

It is now the second-oldest publication among churches of Christ. *The Gospel Advocate* began in 1855. The now defunct *Firm Foundation* began in 1884.

Sam Willcut, the minister for the Southwest congregation, serves as the paper's editor.

Tupelo, MS – The Gloster Street congregation celebrated their 100th anniversary on May 4. Alan Highers, editor of the *Spiritual Sword* was the guest speaker. Chad Ramsey is the minister at Gloster Street.

Graduations

College Grove, TN – On April 7, the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies celebrated their 12th graduation with eight graduates. The College Grove congregation oversees the school. Michael A. Stewart is the director.

Knoxville, TN – June 8, the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies will conduct its annual graduation in the Karns church building. Ten students are expected to graduate. David Lipe is the director of this school.

Leadership Camp

Knoxville, TN – The Karns church of Christ will host its annual leadership camp June 1-8. There is no cost for the camp. All meals and materials are provided by the Karns congregation. Campers will also stay in the homes of Karns members. You can register online at www.wedopreaching.com/leadershipcamp.

Future Preachers' Training Camp

Montgomery, AL – The Future Preachers Training Camp will be conducted July 6-13, 2014. The camp will be host-

ed by Amridge University and co-hosted with the Redland Road church of Christ, Montgomery, Alabama.

Young men ages 13-18 who aspire to learn how to preach, evangelize and be church leaders are encouraged to attend.

The cost is a \$40.00 non-refundable registration fee. Apply now for application:

rogersshepherd@amridgeuniversity.edu.

Retiring

Knoxville, TN – James Meadows announced his retirement from the faculty of the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies. He came to the school nineteen years ago as director. He directed the school for ten years and remained for nine as an instructor.

Rock Hill, SC – David Pharr has announced his retirement as editor of the *Carolina Messenger*. Brother Pharr has served this post well for many years. The next editor has yet to be named.

House Parents Needed

Florence, AL – The North Alabama Christian Children's Home is interviewing prospective house parents for one of their homes that houses girls. NACCH hires the house mom and pays her a salary, plus benefits. The husband can work outside the home. Contact Don Williams, Executive Director, at 256-366-3327.

Churches Needing Ministers

Childersburg, AL – The Childersburg congregation is looking for a preacher. Send resumes or interest to: Childersburg, church of Christ 419 Coosa Pines Dr. Childersburg, AL 35044, mray410@charter.net or churchofchris22@bellsouth.net. The office number is: (256) 378-6644.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00

Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month

Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month

Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month

Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

Columbia, KY – The Columbia congregation is looking for a fulltime preacher. The church has no elders at the present.

Contact: columbiachurchofchrist501@gmail.com.

Florence, AL – The Salem congregation is looking for a fulltime minister. Call (256) 764-9339.

Barrackville, WV – Contact: Teddy Toothman (304) 336-7633. Or contact any of the Elders on the contacts page at <http://www.churchofchristbwv.org/leaders.html>.

Hackleburg, AL – The Mountain View congregation is looking for a minister. Contact Russell Lynch (205) 570-1620.

Gleanings from the Mission Field

From Owen Olbricht -

March 28 – I gave a 6 hour seminar on evangelism at the Bear Valley Bible Institute, which included 40 students and faculty, and preachers from the Denver area.

March 31-April 14 – During a mission trip to Miass and Chelybinsk Russia, I am speaking twice a day. We are seeing some pretty snow scenes and enjoying weather in upper 20 and lower 30. Attendance is good but not what it was during our early trips in the 90s. Economy has improved and the newness and excitement of receiving Bibles and religious materials, and hearing Bible lessons have greatly decreased.

South Carolina – Three Campbell brothers – Tom, Everett, and Glenn – went on a mission trip in April to assist the congregation on St. Helena Island (near Buford). James Tillman has been the preacher for the St. Helena church for about ten years. The Campbells are members of the Smyrna church of Christ in Culleoka, Tennessee, where there is an extension of the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching.

New Book from Owen Olbricht

Owen Olbricht has written a new book titled, *Men of Influence, According to God's History*. It is scheduled to come off the press in May.

Gospel Meeting News

West Plains, MO– Gary Colley preached in a gospel meeting the week of April 6, with three baptisms and two placing membership. Gary and Maggie Colley lived in West Plains when Gary preached full-time for the church in that city. He presently preaches for the Getwell church of Christ in Memphis.

Andy Erwin, *Gospel Gleaner* editor, recently held a gospel meeting for the Stutts Road congregation in Florence, Alabama. The meeting resulted in 31 public responses to the gospel including 2 baptisms, 2 restored, and 27 prayer requests. Perry Taylor is the outstanding preacher at Stutts Road.

On the Move

Victor Eskew is moving back to Paris, Tennessee to work with the Eastwood congregation. He has preached for Eastwood previously.

From Gerald Cowan

I have ended nearly nine years of work with the church of Christ in Dongola, Illinois that followed 15 years with the church of Christ in the neighboring city of Marion. I am not retired but looking for a kind of retreat for continued service. I have extensive experience in gospel meetings and lectures and in short-term missions, domestic and foreign. I would be interested in commuting to work as interim, part-time, or regular but non-resident minister for any church of Christ within reasonable driving distance from Marion, Illinois, where I have lived for 24 years. I would also be interested in preaching gospel meetings, Vacation Bible School Series for adults or young adults, or special lectures on requested subjects. I am available for meetings immediately and am willing to travel wherever I am invited.

I can be contacted by mail at 1110 S. Vicksburg St., Marion, IL 62959, by telephone at 618 997-9759 (please leave a message), or by email at gerald-cowan1931@aol.com. References are available upon request.



SOUTHWEST
Southwest School of Bible Studies

FACULTY

Rick Brumback
director
Dwayne Bryant
Alfonso Macias
John Moore
Don Walker

Southwest graduates serve as preachers, authors, campus directors, missionaries, and school leaders on five continents. Whatever your passion, with strong academics and hands-on training, our collegiate program will empower you to serve Christ and His church.

- Two year full-time program for men and women
- Well-respected Bible faculty
- Verse-by-verse study of the entire Bible
- Training in expository preaching
- No tuition
- Living expense assistance available
- Studies in Biblical languages



*"To know Jesus and...
make Him known"*

swsbs.edu

Reader Replies

I received the April issue (bundle) of the *Gospel Gleaner* today, and I have been reading it. It is a fine issue.

The advice you selected from T. B. Larimore is very valuable! The MTSP ad is good -excellent appearance.

Jim McGill
Nashville, TN

Thank you for the great job you are doing with the *Gospel Gleaner*! Thank you for publishing the note about Brett in the April issue. Brenda and I leave Monday to spend time with him in Australia.

Rod Rutherford
Powell, TN

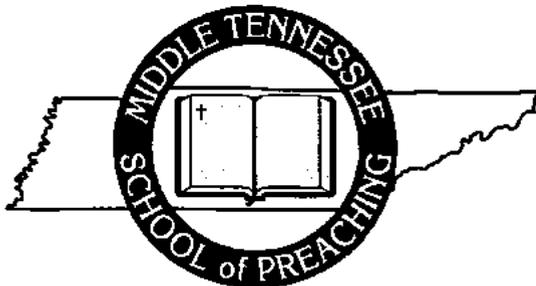
I too appreciate and enjoy the good work you are doing with the *Gospel Gleaner*. I only wish that more members of the church took more interest in subscribing to sound periodicals published by our brotherhood. We would be more knowledgeable of things to help us do the will of God.

Eli Thornton
Killen, AL



Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

**MIDDLE TENNESSEE SCHOOL OF PREACHING
& BIBLICAL STUDIES**



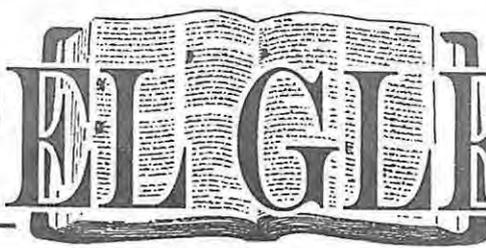
Evening Classes - Seven Locations

*College Grove, Culleoka, Goodlettsville, Lebanon,
McMinnville, Murfreesboro, Nashville*

mtsp@clearwire.net
mtsop.net

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nashville, MS
Permit No. 5

The GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 26

June, 2014

Number Six

The Amazing History of the Early Church

Ronald D. Bryant

The history of the early church is recorded, not only in the New Testament, but also in the annals of secular history. It is historical fact that the early days of the church were characterized by amazing faith, fervor, and fidelity. The numerical growth was incredible. The number of believers multiplied and their devotion to Christ and to one another is heartwarming, even inspiring. Yet, there is this intriguing fact: this rapid growth and fervent devotion took place in a context of unparalleled hatred, hostility, and violent persecution.

A History of Persecution

During the first three hundred years of church history, any person who became a Christian joined the ranks of a hated, despised, and cruelly persecuted "sect." The first converts to Christ were Jews, who soon faced the same hostility which led to the death of Jesus. That hostility was soon empowered by acts of censure set against them by the Roman Empire. They were systematically set upon, stoned, beaten, deprived of property and rights, and threatened with imprisonment and death, because they confessed Jesus as Lord and Christ, and sought to proclaim and honor His will.

In almost every place, those who gave allegiance to Jesus paid a horrible price. It is a matter of record, and it must be respectfully insisted that those early Christians counted the cost and chose to pay it. Sadly, tens of thousands were legally murdered! In that time simple profession of faith in Christ was a crime. The term "Christian" was the "title" of the crime that was written on the backs of the condemned. Roman law decreed that one who held to faith in Christ was to be allowed no quarter; and no apology or special pleading was permitted.

In writing of those events, Tertullian wrote, "Public hatred asks but one thing, and that not investigation into the

crime charged, but simply the confession of the Christian name."

For a time Christians were spoken of as "the third race." After the Romans, the Greeks, and the Jews, Christians were counted as vermin; literally as "the off-scouring of the earth," and as unworthy of life. Amazingly, those early Christians readily accepted – even embraced – those terms of derision. They were so resistant to the world and so out of step with it that they had no desire for any part of it – including the advantages which it might afford. They were dead to the world! Interestingly, it is a matter of record, that on a day when many Christians were being put to death in Carthage, the masses were led to cry out against them, saying, "How long must we endure this third race?"

A Monument to Their Faith

Intriguingly, the faith of those Christians, their uncompromising allegiance to Christ, and their willingness to suffer and die for Him, produced not sympathy or admiration, but outrage. Yet, it is their allegiance to Christ which stands as a monument to their faith. They were completely separated from the Roman world, in ethics and morals, in life, in worship, and in service. They did not accommodate the world, nor court its favor. They lived for Christ, and as a result were as salt and light, in a decaying and dark world. It is not readily recognized, but in time those Christians lifted that decadent world off its hinges.

Though despised and hated, and hounded to death, in God's purpose their blood served to advance the kingdom! In that time of seeming weakness and defeat, their devotion to Christ was used by God to change the course of human history. They engaged in those conflicts as men whose very lives were not their own!

Continued on page 6

When the beloved John dipped his pen into the well of inspiration to give us his three epistles, the subject of fellowship was one of his greatest concerns. John began by declaring what he had seen and heard so that "...you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

John desired fellowship with his brethren, and he wanted his brethren to have fellowship with him. But, he understood that the only way this mutual fellowship could occur was through a mutual fellowship with the Father and the Son. The individual has fellowship with the church only in so far as he has fellowship with God. The church has fellowship with the individual inasmuch as the church and the individual are in fellowship with God.

The Question of Fellowship

What is fellowship? Fellowship is not merely an association one shares with another; rather, it is the upholding and supporting of another in their relationship with God and their spiritual decisions. It is the relationship that we share when we are born again into the family of God.

What if the individual is not in fellowship with the Lord and not yet part of His family? Sometimes an individual from a denominational background attends the services of the Lord's church and decides he/she would like to become a member of that particular congregation. Before such fellowship can exist with the congregation, the individual must have fellowship with the Father and the Son through obedience to the gospel. It would be sinful for the church to extend the right hand of fellowship outside of God's terms for fellowship.

At other times, an individual Christian will live in open and rebellious sin. Through their sins, they have left their fellowship with the Lord. Clearly it would be sinful for the church to extend fellowship with someone who is not in fellowship with God. This individual must repent before fellowship can occur (James 5:16; Galatians 6:1-2).

"Light" simply cannot fellowship darkness (1 John 1:5-6). Our love for the light of the Lord forbids our dwelling in darkness.

Concerning false teachers, our love for truth forbids any fellowship with error. Thus, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 6-10).

Applying the Text

From this passage several relevant and applicable lessons can be gleaned. In the first place, the idea of fellowship is illustrated. The passage teaches that it is sinful to uphold and support a person in error; and on this matter it seems that many needed lessons must be learned. It would be wrong for a congregation, school, or individual Christians to support and uphold a false teacher in their attempts to undo the things "which we have worked for" (NKJV, 2 John 8).

When we fail to heed John's instruction, congregations, colleges, and good works will inevitably go the way of Satan. Truly, they will "...go out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 John 2:19).

Moreover, as they go out from us, some Christians will continue to support them in their anti-Christian endeavors. These brethren bid "Godspeed" to the perpetrators and support them as they go out from us, taking churches, colleges, and good works with them into darkness. Such brethren become living contradictions, as "light" cannot fellowship "darkness."

Our love for truth, light, and the mission of Christ will forbid the faithful Christian from any such fellowship. For the faithful Christian realizes, "...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we

have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:9).

Love for the things that have been worked for will not only cause a faithful Christian to refrain from supporting evil doers, it will cause him to seek and fully support those who are faithfully working for the Lord. Gaius is a prime example of such a brother (3 John 1 ff.).

Gaius and Diotrephes

Gaius provides us with an example of a brother who continued to support men like John in their endeavor to promote the gospel of Christ. Diotrephes provides the antithesis to Gaius. The evil man loved to have the preeminence in the church; so much so that he would speak maliciously against the beloved apostle.

Brethren who are in darkness will often speak maliciously of those dwelling in and attempting to spread light, for darkness does not comprehend light (John 1:5), and those in darkness hate light for their deeds are evil (John 3:19-20).

Diotrephes hated John, because he was dwelling in darkness while John was dwelling in light. The very appearance of John only served to remind him that his deeds were evil. John had but one alternative, and that was to expose this wicked man for what he was doing, so that his brethren would recognize his evil deeds, and "follow not that which is evil, but that which is good" (3 John 10-11).

In Conclusion

Fellowship is a biblical doctrine and God takes the matter very seriously. Every Christian must evaluate their view of fellowship. They must determine if their fellowship is with light or darkness. If we uphold those who through their satanic agendas are attempting to undo all that has been worked for, we will be just as guilty as them by partaking of their evil deeds. Let us be as Gaius, and give our full support to those who are truly doing the work of the Lord.

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Six
June, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Michael Shank
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *The Amazing History of the Early Church*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *Fellowship in the Epistles of John*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Is It Wrong to Identify False Teachers and Their False Doctrines Publicly?*
Ernest S. Underwood
- 5 *Applauding Apostasy*
Hugh Fulford
- 7 *A Day Spent with Bob Spurlin*
Andy Erwin
- 8 SPECIAL FEATURE *The Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies*
- 10 *It's a Great Time to be a Young Preacher!*
Roger Shepherd
- 12 *Not By Our Righteousness*
Owen Olbricht
- 14 News & Notes
James R. McGill
- 16 Reader Replies

Is It Wrong to Identify False Teachers and Their False Doctrines Publicly?

Ernest S. Underwood

The Bible teaches that children of God are to preach and teach the word, as well as defend it. Admitting this, we shall explore what the Bible says in answer to the question posed in the title above. Is it anti-scriptural, unloving, unkind, and mean-spirited to identify both the false teacher by name, and the false doctrine he or she teaches by name? Is the one who exposes such teachers and their doctrine bereft of godliness?

FACTS OF THE MATTER

Before answering these questions let us freely admit that it is possible for one to do all of these things in an arrogant and hateful attitude. However, before we assign any vicious motive to the one who exposes the false teachers we should first determine if he is correct in his appraisal of those teachers and doctrines. After all, have any of us developed such wisdom that we are able to judge motives of those who make such appraisals?

Yet, it is a fact that we have biblical passages wherein the Holy Spirit, through the preachers and writers inspired by Him, tells us of the ungodly motives of false teachers. After warning his readers that there would be false teachers among them, the apostle Peter continued by saying that these teachers "...will secretly bring in destructive heresies...because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words..." (2 Peter 2:1-3).

These false teachers hoped to deceive Christians for the purpose of exploiting them. One can hardly turn on a radio or television religious program without having to listen to or view the money beggars using their wiles to deceive the listener into sending them money. Is it wrong to identify such individuals or religious organizations by name – whether publicly from the pulpit or in an article such as this?

THE SCRIPTURES DEMAND IT

To contend that such is wrong or sinful is to condemn every faithful prophet of God in the Old Testament, and every preacher or writer in the New Testament. What may seem even worse is that such a position condemns the Lord of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Matthew 23 and listen as He exposes and gives a scathing rebuke to the religious leaders of His day – the scribes and Pharisees.

Read also the book of Jeremiah as he preaches to rebellious Judah.

Listen to Stephen as he calls those ungodly murdering Jews: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears..." (Acts 7:51)

Read as the apostle Paul confronts Elymas by saying, "O full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness..." (Acts 13:10).

To listen to some denominational preachers today, they would contend that each of these men should be marked as unloving and without the spirit of Christ. It is sad beyond belief that there are some of *our brethren* who will defend the false teacher while condemning those who would expose the same.

A PERSONAL & PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Several years ago while living in another state, I had a weekly radio program every Sunday morning. On this program I was engaged in a series of lessons on the one church and how one becomes a member of the one church, and how the one true church worships.

In one lesson I showed by the Scriptures that one must believe and be baptized in order to have forgiveness of sins. I used Mark 16:15-16 as a reference to show that Jesus Himself taught this very thing.

A denominational preacher also had a Sunday morning radio program. Two weeks after I had delivered the lesson on baptism being a command of Jesus, this preacher opened his radio program with: "*The command to be baptized for the remission of sins is a command of the devil.*"

On hearing this blasphemous statement, on my next program I immediately challenged him to a debate on the subject. I followed this challenge with certified mail stating the challenge and giving propositions for the debate. Of course, he declined.

However, two men of the congregation where I preached, who referred to themselves as "main members," were extremely upset with me. They accused me of harassing and embarrassing this denominational false teacher. They also stated that we ought to try to get along with other churches rather than trying to embarrass them. Thankfully,

the congregation did not agree with those two men. They are no longer associated with that church. The church publicly withdrew its fellowship from these two, and from four other men who promoted the same thing as the other two men.

IS IT UNGODLY TO DO SO?

In reference to the second question: "Is the one who exposes such teachers and their doctrine bereft of godliness?" Were Jesus, Paul, Steven, Peter, and others bereft of godliness when they called names and identified false teachers and their doctrines? Who will dare to say so?

But then one last question needs to be asked and answered: "Why do those who call themselves by unbiblical and denominational names, especially the preachers of those denominations, become so incensed when one calls them by the name they call themselves?" It doesn't seem

reasonable that they are ashamed of that name, whatever it may be. In fact, they prefer that denominational name to the name of the One who died on the cross. They speak long and loud about "the lovely name of Jesus," and claim that the church which they "pastor" is a "church with an open Bible." Yet, they refuse to wear that lovely Name, and though they claim to have an open Bible, their minds are closed tighter than a steel trap.

One last thing that this writer has noted about such teachers and preachers is that they are adamant in their denunciation and criticism of one who points out their hypocrisy, using such terms as: not having the spirit of Christ; mean-spirited; hateful; and a host of other such designations. But, for some reason, they do not see themselves under these same descriptive terms as they accuse others. Perhaps it was Shakespeare, or some other man, who said, "Consistency, thou art a jewel."

Applauding Apostasy

Hugh Fulford

During the recent (April 29-May 2, 2014) Pepperdine Bible Lectures in Malibu, California, Jarrod Robinson of Carrollton, Texas delivered a highly emotional speech calling for an expansion of the use of women in leadership roles in churches of Christ, including their serving as preachers. Brother Robinson's assigned text was Galatians 3:26-28, and if he referred to any other passage of scripture I failed to catch it, and I listened to and watched the video of his speech twice.

Of significance is the fact that Jarrod did not address the statements of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34 ("Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak . . .") or I Timothy 2:11-12 ("Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.") Apparently, however, Jarrod was alluding to these texts when he said that Paul gave instructions regarding women that involved a "short term resting place along the way," but that these were not "the finish line" with reference to the role of women in the public functions of the church.

This is the tired old line of reasoning employed by those who think that the apostle Paul's instructions were rooted in the culture of an antiquated and unenlightened society and were not given to govern the role of women in the body of Christ for all time and in all places. Brother Robinson and

those who approach scripture in this fashion do not consider the inspired apostle's instructions as prohibitive of women today doing anything in the public gathering of the church that a man can do or filling any leadership role that a man fills.

In spite of Robinson's glaring failures to deal with corollary texts related to his topic, and in spite of his misapplying the one text that he did discuss, the Pepperdine lecture-ship crowd "ate it up." During the course of Jarrod's speech the audience applauded five times, and at the end of the presentation when he asked the crowd to "stand and sing the gospel," the audience gave him another round of applause! In so doing, they became glaringly guilty of applauding apostasy!

Mike Cope, director of the Pepperdine lectures, and known for his determined effort to get the churches of Christ to accept women as preachers and in other leadership roles, assigned Robinson the topic because he felt that he was the best one to promote Cope's agenda in spite of its volatile and divisive nature.

As mentioned earlier, Robinson's speech was highly emotional. It was based on and rooted more in political correctness than in a fair and accurate exegesis of the biblical text. He is representative of a growing number of preachers who are abandoning faith in the absolute authori-

ty of the scriptures in favor of a leftist reading of the scriptures in order to conform to the demands of contemporary culture.

Several of the institutions of higher learning supported by members of churches of Christ have already moved in this direction, and the students (including future preachers, elders, deacons, and Bible school teachers) that are now being trained at such institutions are championing these kinds of liberal ideas. The wife of the president of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee frequently fills the pulpit of various churches of Christ. This same university now has (or soon will have) its first female preaching major, and the preacher (male) of a large middle Tennessee church of Christ (Fourth Avenue in Franklin) has promised to mentor her!

Galatians 3:26-28 (brother Robinson's assigned text for his lecture) teaches that all people regardless of racial, ethnic, social, economic, or gender differences have equal access to Christ and the salvation that is to be found in Him. It does not teach that physical differences no longer exist or that God has somehow obliterated these differences. There still are Jews and Gentiles, but both can be saved in Christ. We still have employers and employees, but both can be Christians and treat each other fairly. We still have males and females, but both have equal access to Christ. We still have the husband/wife relationship, but the husband is still the head of the wife and the wife is still to be submissive to her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33). We still have the parent/child relationship, but parents are still over their children and children are still to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-4). To deny these differences in roles and relationships is to deny the plain teaching of the word of God.

The same is true with reference to various roles within the church. God has ordained male leadership for His church (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). (Please read and seriously reflect on what these texts say, especially with reference to the gender of the church's leaders.)

These instructions are never trumped by political correctness or the ever changing demands and expectations of contemporary culture. People who believe the Bible to be the word of God, who respect the authority of the Scriptures, and who want to honor God recognize that the things which the apostle Paul wrote are the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 14:37), not simply cultural "short term resting places along the way."

I marvel at the naïve applauding of apostasy displayed by the Pepperdine lectureship crowd. At the same time, I am not terribly surprised by it.

Continued from page one: "The Amazing History of the Early Church"

In the first century, the Jewish system was arrayed in opposition to the followers of Christ (see Acts 4). Those authorities were shocked at the boldness of two disciples of Jesus, who were regarded as ignorant and unlettered fishermen. When threatened for preaching Christ, they answered with such forceful simplicity that they shook the whole Jewish system.

It is apparent that Peter and John did not view the cross as some vague concept or merely a dramatic event, but held to it as a holy and compelling objective fact. The death of Christ ruled their very existence. Those servants of God gave proper respect to all men, including those who sought to destroy them. Yet, far from being fearful, they were bold in proclaiming and in defending the truth of the Christ.

They lived to proclaim and personify Christ. They would not turn aside, except to pray. They did not ask God to alter their circumstances, but that He would grant that they with "all boldness" might present Christ. They were not fearful of the threats, nor were they emboldened by personal vanity. They saw their lives as belonging to the risen Savior. They willed to obey God, not man (Acts 4:19ff). They gave no thought to success or failure! They did not seek to build a personal following, nor great congregations!

They preached Jesus as Lord and Christ and through them the scandal and the triumph of the cross plowed into the hearts of their hearers. Men were "cut to the heart," and earnestly inquired "men and brethren what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) Truly, some took notice of the disciples *that they had been with Jesus.*



SOUTHWEST

Southwest School of Bible Studies

FACULTY

Rick Brumback
director
Dwayne Bryant
Alfonso Macias
John Moore
Don Walker

Southwest graduates serve as preachers, authors, campus directors, missionaries, and school leaders on five continents. Whatever your passion, with strong academics and hands-on training, our collegiate program will empower you to serve Christ and His church.

- Two year full-time program for men and women
- Well-respected Bible faculty
- Verse-by-verse study of the entire Bible
- Training in expository preaching
- No tuition
- Living expense assistance available
- Studies in Biblical languages



*"To know Jesus and...
make Him known"*

swsbs.edu

A Day Spent with Bob Spurlin

Andy Erwin

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend some time with Bob Spurlin. Brother Spurlin's story is one of courage and endurance. He has been afflicted with multiple sclerosis for almost twenty years. Yet, he has authored three books during that time, selling over 50,000 copies. You may be familiar with the book titled, "Don't Ever Give Up!" which has sold over 30,000 copies.

Brother Spurlin, when did you notice your health was changing?

"In 1995, I began to notice I was having real trouble getting up and down. I was working in sales, and my job gradually became harder to do. So, I went to the doctor and found out I had MS."

Prior to 1995 you had served a few congregations as their preacher. How long did you preach?

"I preached for about thirty years. I preached in Tennessee, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama. I went to school in Montgomery at Alabama Christian College and from there I went to the Memphis School of Preaching. I liked the aggressive approach they took in their curriculum. You could study the whole Bible in two years."

Who were some of your favorite teachers?

"I really loved Roy Hearn and E.L. Whitaker. But, my favorite was probably Charles Pledge. He was a true scholar and had a very outgoing personality. He was very helpful to me as a student."

As a gospel preacher, what do you see as great needs in the Lord's church today?

"Over the years I have noticed a passive and lukewarm attitude in some elders. Apathy seems to be a great danger among us. I believe it is vital that we overcome this attitude."

Concerning your struggle with MS, what advice or encouragement can you give to people who are struggling in a similar way?

"Well, every day is a new day; and you have to approach it as such. I have drawn strength from the examples of others. I also stay in contact with brethren, and that helps. I try to live with 1 Corinthians 15:58 in mind: 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'"

You have also had the blessing of a faithful and godly wife. What has it meant to have Beverly in your life?

"There is no amount of money that could cover her value. She has been a faithful and godly wife, helper, and friend throughout it all."

What made you decide to begin writing books?

"I felt like I had something to say. I believed I had a vital message for Christians and non-Christians alike."

How did you begin the process of becoming a writer?

"I always enjoyed writing, but never did much of it. After I was diagnosed with MS, I began sending out a newsletter as a means of outreach. Then I began writing books. And the sale of the books helped us to get out of the financial strain MS had caused. We were able to establish a medical fund."

Do you plan on writing any more books?

"Not at the moment. I am not sure I am able."

The day that I spent with brother Spurlin, he walked with assistance from his bed to a nearby chair. He was able to do this for the first time in a long time only a few days before. He continues to struggle, but chooses to face each day with courage and determination. He requested that we keep him in our prayers. Please say a special prayer for this good brother, his dear wife, and their family.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00

Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month

Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month

Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month

Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

Special Feature:

The Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies

Abraham Lincoln once said, "I will study, and prepare, and perhaps someday my chance will come." The instruction and preparation you will receive at the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies is provided because of the understanding that someday *your* chance will come. The teachers and the congregations that provide the means for your studies understand that someday you will be given an opportunity to work for the Lord, to do something, somewhere to bring increase to the body of Christ – and they want you to be ready.

The training and instruction you will receive will not be in vain. You will have opportunities to do good works (Galatians 6:10). Only you can determine how faithful you will be when these opportunities present themselves. One makes such a determination and then proceeds to prepare. Obviously the students who enroll in this school do so because they have made such a determination to do good for the Master, and to be prepared for the opportunities He presents.

Our students have opportunities to teach and preach the gospel. They have opportunities to be leaders in the Lord's church. And, most importantly they will be given the opportunity to leave the church in a better condition than they found it. Every one of us has this opportunity. This school exists because of the hope we have that you will be prepared to behave in such a way as to leave the church better than you found it.

The Faculty of MTSP

It has been said that a school is not better than its teachers. The faculty of the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies consists of men (and women in ladies' classes) who have been faithful teachers of the word of God for many years. The faculty represents the school in a fine way. You will have an opportunity to sit at the feet of men and women who are not only there to teach you, but they are there to mentor and serve you as true brothers and sisters in Christ. We are speaking about people who will be dear friends for years to come. Many of these teachers stay

in continual contact with their students to help them in the preaching and teaching of the word, and also to pray for them and offer wisdom for life's challenges.

The Graduates of MTSP

It can also be said that a school is not better than its graduates. Since the first graduating class in 2003, scores of graduates have gone on to accomplish wonderful things for Christ. Every graduate is a testimony of the validity of this school and the training they have received by the way they work for the Lord.

- 93 men and women have graduated.
- 66 men have graduated from the school of preaching.
- 27 women have received diplomas in biblical studies.
- 65% of the men who have graduated are currently preaching in six states.

How to Become a Student at MTSP

It is easy to become a student at the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical studies. No pre-registration is required. You may register at school on the first night you attend classes at any of our seven locations. Classes are open both to men and to women unless noted otherwise. All classes are open to beginning students, regardless of present level of Bible knowledge, or past education. No transcript or high school diploma is required. All ages are invited to enroll. There is no tuition charge. There are no fees of any kind—from enrollment to graduation.

What Is It Like to be a Student at MTSP?

All classes are evening classes. 36 credits are required for graduation. Courses usually earn one unit of credit each. You may take classes at any period or periods you choose – usually from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Take as many or as few classes as you wish, from one class a week up to three classes each school night.

Seven Locations for the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies

———— College Grove ————

College Grove Church of Christ

8751 Horton Hwy. (Hwy. 31A)

College Grove, TN 37046

Contact Jim McGill at 615 969-0559

E-mail: jimrmcgill@clearwire.net

———— Culleoka ————

Smyrna Church of Christ

3201 Smyrna Church Rd.

Culleoka, TN 38451

Contact Everett Campbell at 931 359-3792

E-mail: mtsp@clearwire.net

———— Goodlettsville ————

Waycross Church of Christ

111 Flat Ridge Rd.

Goodlettsville, TN 37072

Contact Mike Stewart at 615 451-3925

E-mail: mtsp@clearwire.net

———— Lebanon ————

Highland Heights Church of Christ

505 N. Cumberland St. Lebanon, TN 37087

Contact Phil Randolph at 615 596-1209

E-mail: psrando@gmail.com

———— McMinnville ————

Bethany Church of Christ

5066 Nashville Hwy.

McMinnville, TN 37211

Contact David Costello at 931 728-9290

E-mail: davidvcostello@yahoo.com

———— Murfreesboro ————

Walter Hill Church of Christ

7277 Lebanon Rd.

Murfreesboro, TN 37129

Contact Glenn Pritchett 615 430-5384

E-Mail: glennpritchett@comcast.net

———— Nashville ————

Meads Chapel Church of Christ

1251 Antioch Pike Nashville, TN 37211

Contact Milton Stephens 931 478-0281

E-mail: lynncoc@bellsouth.net



Visit Us Online at mtsop.net

It's a Great Time to be a Young Preacher!

Roger Shepherd

There is a tremendous need for preachers and evangelists! God had only one Son and He was a preacher. This was His purpose in life (Mark 1:38).

My father had only one son out of seven to preach (me). I have only one son and he is a preacher. My family is very proud of these facts.

In the last forty years I have seen many proud parents who listen to their sons preach in our Future Preacher Training Camps. Paul encourages the church to "commit these (teaching) to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). He encourages preachers to "Preach the word; do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5). Are we as the church doing this? When was the last time you encouraged a young man to preach?

Preachers in the Pulpit

The minister is a new creation of God by the blood of Christ, the water, and the word. He is a new creation being born into the body of Christ by the blood of Christ like everyone else. He contacts the blood in baptism like all believers in being called to minister or to serve humanity through Jesus Christ (Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5). He is guided into a life of service or ministry by the word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Therefore, he is an ordinary person serving God in the body of Christ. Ministry is a gift of God, but it is a calling to which one must respond.

Some Reasons Not to Preach

It is a great time to be a preacher. Young preachers are being used in a great way to evangelize the world. The church is in great need for the right kind of preachers. In order to think correctly on this, we are compelled to think on why not to preach.

Preaching is not designed to impress people. Paul said: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Self is not in the limelight.

Preaching is not for the purpose of producing "envy, strife, insincerity, and selfish ambition, but goodwill" (Philippians 1:15-16).

Preaching is not for money and materialism. Paul corrected those who used "godliness as a means of gain" (1 Timothy 6:3-6). Jesus instructed the apostles to go into the field to evangelize and preach and "provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts; for a worker is worthy of his food" (Matthew 10:9-10). The money will take care of itself.

Preaching is not for one who has an agenda - to get even with someone; to tell someone off; or to tell something new, but, speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

Why Preach?

Paul encouraged many young preachers such as Timothy and Titus. It is imperative that we listen to his teaching in training young preachers.

Young preachers must know why they are to preach. Paul charged young preachers to "preach the word with conviction, rebuke, exhortation, longsuffering, and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:1-4). The instruction is to preach the good tidings of the gospel. Why? It is God's means of salvation (Romans 1:16).

Secondly, preachers are evangelists (2 Timothy 4:5). The word "evangelist" means "a messenger of good, proclaim the Gospel, the good news. Missionaries are 'evangelists,' as being essentially preachers of the gospel" (W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 208).

This is not completely accomplished behind a pulpit, but in the field. He leads the congregation into the community in order to seek and save the lost!

Thirdly, preachers are to "fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5). Ministry is a service rendered to believers and non-believers, not "an ecclesiastical function" (Vine, p. 411).

MINISTRY U Young Preachers' Camp

I conduct a Future Preachers Training Camp each year with the aforementioned title. What is the significant meaning? The name emphasizes the broader spectrum of preaching with emphasis on preaching, evangelizing, and ministry in the present time.

Campers are trained in hands-on ministry identifying with local churches. These young men are preaching and ministering in local churches now, not the distant future. It is time for the church to recognize the amazing abilities of our young preachers. Ministry U has a unique focus.

The focus of the camp is to train young men who can do the preaching and ministry for the fifty percent of our 13,000 congregations that don't have funds to hire a full-time preacher. Therefore, we recruit young men of Christian character and quality for ministry and evangelism to be practiced in the present time. Since its inception in 1972, this camp has emphasized recruiting young men who sincerely aspire to preach the gospel of Christ.

Ministry is the ability to serve others with a practical faith in ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of the people in the church and the community. Those who train preachers have the task given by Christ to equip young men to do "the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12).

Amridge University has a unique way of doing this with young men ages thirteen to eighteen years old. We believe that the following five pillars of ministry can be instilled in the same young man:

1. Equipping to Preach.
2. Equipping to Serve.
3. Equipping to Evangelize.
4. Equipping to Worship.
5. Equipping to Lead.

Conclusion

I have been preaching for forty-two years and if God gave me another life, I would be a preacher! Preaching the gospel is the greatest calling on earth!

The Young Preachers' Training Camp is scheduled for **July 6-13, 2014**. The campers will be trained according to college guidelines for sermon preparation in order to prepare and deliver a ten to twelve minute sermon. They will also be trained in other aspects of sermon preparation, practical ministry in various areas of local church work, evangelism, and missions. They will return home ready to minister in the present time. The camp will address the current ministry needs for the selected young men. The camp is limited to twenty-five campers, so go to www.amridgeuniversity.edu and submit an application today.

Future Preachers' Training Camp

July 6-13, 2014

Montgomery, Alabama

The Future Preachers Training Camp will be conducted July 6-13. The camp will be hosted by Amridge University and co-hosted with the Redland Road church of Christ, Montgomery, Alabama.

Young men ages 13-18 who aspire to learn how to preach, evangelize and be church leaders are encouraged to attend.

The cost is a \$40.00 non-refundable registration fee. Apply now for application:

rogersshepherd@amridgeuniversity.edu

www.amridgeuniversity.edu

Not By Our Righteousness

Owen Olbricht

If our acts of righteousness will not save us, then why should we be baptized? Is not baptism a work of righteousness?

Paul wrote, "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:3-5).

What are "works of righteousness"? They are the opposite of acts of wickedness. Righteous acts in one sense are acts that are moral and spiritual. Other than righteous and wicked acts there are acts which are neutral, so to speak, that are neither moral and spiritual nor wicked. A woman may wash her hair and a man may shave his face. These are not righteous acts or wicked acts, but are neutral acts. Such are not acts engaged in to be saved.

Salvation in Christ and the Cross

Salvation is provided by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and not by our own righteous and good acts which we perform. This is not to say that we can do nothing to receive salvation and eternal life, for God says we can (Romans 2:6-11; Hebrews 5:9), but it is to say that our own righteousness cannot save us; "For there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). Since no one is righteous, no one can be saved by their own righteousness.

Paul wrote that we cannot provide our own salvation by our own good works. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Jesus has provided our salvation through His death on the cross. A crucifixion in and of itself is not a righteous act. If crucifixion is a righteous act, then every man on earth can be crucified to forgive sins. But Jesus' crucifixion was considered righteous because it was required of God. His death was righteous because He fulfilled God's requirement, a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins.

Likewise, Jesus' submission to baptism was a neutral act, which became a righteous act because God required it. Jesus told John why He should be baptized: "Permit it to be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

The fact that God required baptism made it a righteous act for Jesus to fulfill. Nothing about being buried and being raised from water is a righteous act. If so, the more a person is buried under the water and raised from water the more righteous he would become by performing the act. But, if it is required of God and received in obedience to God, then it becomes a righteous act.

When we were children, we dunked each other under the water. This was not a righteous act because we were not dunked as an act of obedience to God.

If Jesus had refused to be baptized, His refusal would have been an unrighteous move on His part. By doing so, He would have sinned. He received baptism to fulfill an act God sent John to perform (John 1:33). Thus, by receiving baptism, Jesus fulfilled a righteous command of God. Baptism was not what Jesus did, but what John administered.

The baptism Jesus requires of us is like the baptism John administered to Jesus – a heaven required act, a requirement of God (cf. Matthew 21:25). It is not an act of human righteousness, but because God requires baptism, this neutral act becomes a righteous act. That is why Jesus considered it an act of righteousness that He was required to receive of John (Matthew 3:13-16).

Jesus did not say to John, "It is fitting for *Me* to fulfill all righteousness." He said, "for us" – that is, He was to submit and John was to administer.

Jesus' baptism was not accomplished by the work He did, but by the work of John. Our baptism is the same. We simply submit. Another does the work, thus it is not a work of our own righteousness.

Our baptism requires more than what was required of Jesus' baptism by John. John's was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin (Mark. 1:4; Luke 3:3). Jesus did not need to repent of sin or have sins to be forgiven. John's baptism required both of all others (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), and so does our baptism (Acts 2:38).

Our baptism is not an act of our own righteousness so that we can be saved, but it is in order to receive the righteousness provided by Jesus' death on the cross. The act of baptism has no intrinsic, meritorious value; if so we could continue to be baptized and increase our righteousness and deserve blessings from God.

Forgiveness is not based on our merit in baptism, but on forgiveness through the blood of Jesus that is given to those whose faith and willing obedience motivates the act of baptism, and the repentance in the heart of the person who is being baptized. God rewards the faith that prompts the act, the reformation and transformation associated with baptism (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12, 13). Without the act of baptism there is no expression of faith, a lack which brings condemnation. "He who does not believe shall be damned" (Mark 16:16b).

The Example of Jericho

At previous times God required acts that had no intrinsic value in relationship to the expected result. Since the act had no innate value, faith in God, not in the act in itself, was required to bring about the desired result. Thus, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days (Hebrews 11:30).

Israel's faith was not in the marching, encircling Jericho thirteen times, shouting, or the blowing of horns by the priests (Joshua 6:1-20). They realized that these, their works, would have no effect to bring down the walls. Thus, their faith was in none of these, for these acts were neutral in relationship to the demise of the walls. Their faith was in God and His power to tear down the walls.

The walls did not fall because of the power of any act on their part. They fell because of the power of God in whom they trusted. Faith motivated the act and thus the act was blessed by God.

Like our salvation, Jericho was a gift of God (Joshua 6:2). Jericho was given to them, not because of their work to tear down the walls, which would have given them reason to boast, but because of their faith which prompted the action.

In like manner, baptism has no power in and of itself to save us. It is a neutral act which God rewards because of the faith of the person that motivates him to be baptized. This is the same as in the destruction of the walls of Jericho. The walls did not fall because of the power in anything Israel did. They fell because of God's power as He rewarded their faith. The same is true of baptism, which is blessed because of our faith in the power of God to bless our being buried and raised with Christ in baptism.

Paul expressed it this way: "Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you ... He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" (Colossians 2:12, 13).

We do no work in being baptized, even as Jesus did no work in His baptism, which He received at the hands of John. The one who administers baptism does the work of immersion and God in whom we have placed our faith acts by making us alive and forgiving our sins. Baptism is a neutral act that becomes a righteous act because God requires it, but it is not a work of our own righteousness.

Conclusion

In baptism we depend on the grace of God to forgive our sins because of Jesus' death on the cross, and not on the intrinsic value in baptism, our own righteousness, or the power of our obedience which God has required before He will forgive our sins. Baptism cannot forgive our sins, but the blood of Jesus can forgive our sins when we obey God by being baptized.

We are saved when we are baptized, if we act by faith in God's working (Colossians 2:12). Our salvation is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His grace, He saves us (Titus 3:5).

WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF PREACHING



Two-year Program – Tuition Free

Housing Available
wvsop.com

**Training Gospel Preachers for
20 Years**

News & Notes

James R. McGill

Obituaries

Wanda Baxter - Wanda Roberts Baxter died at the age of 95 on March 28, 2014.

Wanda was the widow of the late Batsell Barrett Baxter, whom she met at Abilene Christian University. They married on December 22, 1938, in Taft, Texas. She lived a life of service in support of his ministry as an evangelist and Christian educator.

A devoted wife and mother, Wanda is survived by her three sons, Barrett Scott Baxter (Elaine), Richard Alan Baxter, and John Douglas Baxter (Randi), five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and five siblings.

Ernest A. Clevenger, Jr. - Ernest Clevenger served as minister for churches in the following cities: Athens, TN; Murray, KY; Russellville, AL; Birmingham, AL; Montgomery, AL; and Chattanooga, TN.

He taught at Russellville High School, Alabama Christian College of Biblical Studies, Alabama Christian College, Southern Christian University and Faulkner University; and lectured at numerous colleges and universities in the U.S.

Clevenger served as an instructor, professor, academic dean, president of Boyd-Buchanan School, and president of Faulkner University.

He wrote numerous books and articles published in many newspapers, periodicals and other venues. He died on April 25.

Tim Eldridge - Tim Eldridge preached in North Carolina and in the Nashville area for twenty-five years. He died May 10. He was 47. He most recently preached for the Bairds Mill church of Christ near Lebanon, Tennessee. The funeral service was conducted by Hubert Raines.

Edith Tucker - Edith Tucker, widow of long-time gospel preacher Paul M. Tucker, died May 5. She was 96. For many years she taught the ladies' Bible class at the Crieve Hall church of Christ in Nashville, where a memorial service, to be conducted by Bill Watkins and Tim Frizzell, was scheduled for May 29 at 7 p.m.

24th Annual Truth in Love Lectureship

Pulaski, TN - The East Hill church of Christ hosted its annual Truth in Love Lectureship in May. The event was well attended.

Tornado Damages Church Building

Athens, AL - The Coxe church of Christ suffered damage to its building in April. They are repairing the damages now. The entire community was devastated by this tornado. Two residents of the community were killed.



Coxe Church Building

Gleanings from the Mission Field

Ronald Gilbert is now making plans for his annual trip to Zambia after a very beneficial trip to Malaysia and Singapore. To find out more about his work and how you can support it visit: www.IBTMinistries.org or contact the Rock Valley Church of Christ, PO Box 49494, Cookeville, TN 38506.

Concerning **Brett Rutherford** - In a recent issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*, we posted a prayer request for Brett Rutherford, who is a missionary in Australia. Here is a follow-up correspondence we received from his wife, Jo:

Hi Everyone,

Brett went down to Hobart for an MRI on Wednesday. He then met with the neurosurgeon who was very pleased to see that, although the lesions were still there, they had not grown at all since his first scan March 5th. He said he would meet with a group of specialists on Friday (today) to discuss Brett's case. We just received a call from him to tell us that they have had their meeting, and although they still don't know what it is, they are all in agreement that they no longer believe that Brett has lymphoma or any oth-

er type of malignancy. This was great news! They are planning on running more tests, which may require hospitalization, but at this stage he shouldn't need another biopsy. He is being referred to a neurologist for further assessment. The doctor indicated that whatever the condition is, he didn't believe it was life threatening.

It has been such a great encouragement for us to know that there have been so many Christians around the world praying for Brett, and we can see these prayers being answered!

In Christ,

Jo Rutherford

Gorlovka, Ukraine – (from brotherhoodnews.com; May, 25, 2014)

“A Bible training building doubling as a worship location was taken over by armed insurgents this morning (US time) during worship,” Howell Ferguson, Stateside Coordinator of the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver, said on Facebook.

Howell quotes eyewitness Olga Paziura, who described what happened.

“During the morning worship service in Gorlovka (the church I attend), armed men (they called themselves the troops of the Russian Federation) came in and demanded we leave as they were seizing control of the building for their own purposes. After much negotiation, we were given two hours to remove the contents from the building that we wanted and the rest would be destroyed. And they also told us that this building now belongs to the Russian Federation. While we were taking out stuff they watched us standing there with their guns. We were not able to take out everything. The TV, washing machines, fridges were left there. We all together started to take everything out. It took about three hours to carry most of the stuff out. Then it took another three hours to load two trucks. So it was just very shocking and stressful. Some girls lost consciousness and started crying. It is good that they didn't take us hostage because it could be possible in fact. Anyway now it passed and I'm at home but I still cannot believe what happened.”

Howell preaches with the North Jackson church of Christ in Jackson, Tenn., and works with the extension program of BVVID.

The building is used for the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Ukraine and for Christian worship and activities of the Central church of Christ in Gorlovka.

They were given only hours to remove personal property.

“I have had no contact with anyone this weekend as graduation was Saturday. Please keep our brethren including staff and students in your prayers,” he wrote.

In his April report published online May 5, Howell mentioned that he did not travel this year to Ukraine for the graduation ceremonies because of the unrest in the country.

Seven students were to have been graduated yesterday, Howell said.



BVBIU and Central church of Christ facility

Firm Foundation Preservation Project

The complete 125 years of the *Firm Foundation* are now available on CD. For those interested, contact Barry Jones at 704 Red Oak Drive, Orange, TX 77632, or by phone 409-670-1675.

Brother Jones has also placed on CD numerous brotherhood periodicals, books, and articles. The collection is simply amazing. Many of these works are almost impossible to find.

Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies

Pensacola, FL – The Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies has two events upcoming. They will be hosting a “Laborers/Leaders Camp” for young men ages 13-18. This camp is scheduled for July 7-11.

They will also be hosting a camp for preachers titled, “Sharpening Our Skills.” Tom Holland will be directing this camp. It is scheduled for July 28-31.

For more information on either of these camps contact Sidney White, Director of NWFSBS at (850) 776-2476.

Reader Replies

Thanks for the great work you do with the *Gospel Gleaner*. Religious journalism has always been a vital part of the

Lord's work, even in this "electronic age."

I appreciate the *Gleaner* and its variety of articles. Also, I am thankful for your stand for the truth. Keep it up.

David O'Connell
Rogersville, AL

Dear Bro. Erwin,

I get the *Gospel Gleaner* and enjoy it so much. I read every word of it and pass it on to a friend.

I was sorry to read that you were not going to have any more articles on "Great Preaching." I heard Bro. Bradfield several times and he really could present the word of God as well as others.

I am 86 years of age and have lived in Memphis, TN. My husband and our children didn't miss going to all the gospel meetings that were going on in the 50s and 60s and all the churches were sound. Sad, but it's not so these days.

I enjoy your news and notes. I like to know when people have passed on or other things that are happening in the church. It is so sad people are leaving God.

I pray that you have many years to teach the gospel. I attend Antioch church of Christ at Halls, TN.

Margaret Meeks
Halls, TN

We enjoy reading the *GG*. The publication is very edifying and educational.

Tim and Alison Walton
Edmond, OK

Thank you for this great paper!

Rickey Comer
Oakdale, TN

Very good paper! I always try to pass it on.

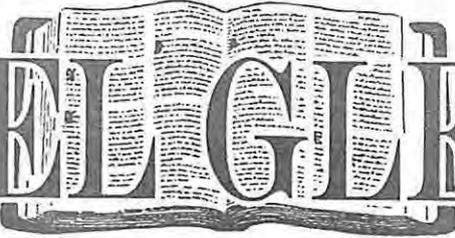
Dorothy Loyd
Jackson, MO



Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage
PAID
Nettleson, MS
Permit No. 5

The GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 26

July, 2014

Number Seven

Devotion to Christ – Then and Now

Ronald D. Bryant

Through their unflinching devotion, the Christians of the first three centuries were a powerful influence for Christ. However, because of their faith, they also suffered and died for Him!

Yet, in all things they gloried in Him. They did not have a spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and discipline – all of which was manifested in their pure devotion, their earnest faith, and their ready service.

Our brethren of this ancient day rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41). They lived for Christ and proclaimed the gospel in the face of great danger.

The life-task of the people of God has not changed! Pure devotion to Christ and full identity with Him is the object and motivating force of the call of Christ.

The Church of Today

It has been suggested that the church of today would be hard-pressed to endure the fire which consumed the martyrs of the first two hundred years of church history. Whether this is true or not, a contemplation of those who suffered and died for Christ argues that, for the most part, modern churchgoers are far removed from their kind of devotion. Presently, many highly regarded leaders and not a few preachers seem to be consumed with a desire to be admired, accepted, popular, and praised by the world and the worldly!

In truth, how far removed are we from the devotion demanded by Christ? The danger of being a martyr may be remote – at least in our modern contentment,

and with the increasingly popular progressive agendas, but for every person who would follow Christ there remains a cross – a cross where “self” dies, even as Christ is embraced.

The Church and the World

The help of the world, the patronage of its rulers, the loan of its resources, and the use of its methods were refused by the saints of God in the early church, lest by employing them they should dishonor their King. In contrast, what is the present mindset? When and where a “progressive agenda” is employed, it moves careless and unheeding persons in a very different and ever changing direction.

There are those who are leading and urging congregations to court the world, use its methods, and embrace its wisdom. They are not hesitant to corrupt the worship of God, and exchange the truth of God for a lie. Incredibly, in the name of getting the worldly into the church, they make the church worldly. With fair speech they seek to deceive, and they lead the people of God astray. The King is being dishonored. Who will not lament this fact?

The early Christians treated the wisdom of the world as unworthy, and they would not use the world’s methods to advance the cause of Christ. They viewed the trifles of this world with indifference, while living with a passionate regard for Christ, His will, and His purpose.

Can anything comparable to this be said of us? Is the apparent lack of pure and simple devotion to Christ even lamented?

My maternal grandmother was a guiding influence for New Testament Christianity in my family. As a child, her family helped to begin the Lord's church at Cedar Creek in Perry County, Tennessee. As an adult, she helped to convert her husband, daughter, son-in-law, and grandsons. She also helped to influence the children she taught for 33 years as an elementary educator in Hickman and Perry County, Tennessee.

Mary Belle Bates left this world for glory on March 1, 2004. Seeing that I was a young preacher, my mother saw fit to give me her biblical studies library, which included many commentaries, concordances, Bible dictionaries, and Bibles. She was a serious student of the word of God.

Her collection of Bibles was an interesting assortment of translations and study Bibles. She also had one Bible which she purchased from B.B. James, a favorite gospel preacher of our family, from his time as a Bible salesman. But, the centerpiece of this collection was her favorite and most used Bible at the time of her death.

Reflections about Her Bible

A person's Bible speaks volumes about his or her attitude toward the word of God.

Concerning this particular Bible, it is very telling to note that this was but one Bible in a long line of well-worn Bibles. In other words, these Bibles were used. I am reminded of the old song, "Dust on the Bible." Truly, there was no dust on this Bible!

The well-worn cover of this Bible is a testimony to her study habits. She read it often. She carried it with her. She carried it often. She took advantage of the opportunities she had to study the word of God.

Within this well-worn cover, you will find well-worn pages that are

filled with marginal notes. Her notes reflect the depth and breadth of her studies. She wanted to remember verses and sermon notes on first principle matters, the church, Christian living, the Godhead, Bible translations, and key words within the text.

When a sermon was preached on a subject of particular interest, she would jot down the key points and even significant thoughts given by the preacher. For example:

"There is never a time to be un Christian."

"The person in love with self has no rival!!!"

"Live each day as though it were the last. Be prepared!"

"But we can have a happier stay if we bloom where we are planted."

Having reached 90 years of age, she also quoted Psalm 92:14: "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."

The context from which this passage comes is quite comforting. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; To show that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him" (Psalm 92:12-15).

Grandma's Bible tells me that she was a student of the word of God. Her Bible tells me that she was a Christian. She understood the gospel plan of salvation and obeyed it. She was added to the Lord's church and understood that vital concept. She knew about Christian virtue, and the loveliness of Christian womanhood. She grew in the word, even unto an advanced age. She was ever-learning, but unlike the women mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:7,

she was able to come to know the truth. Indeed she brought forth fruit in old age.

Perhaps the most precious memory I have of this Bible, is the memory of my Grandma Bates sitting in her favorite chair with this Bible in her lap explaining the plan of salvation, the Lord's church, and the Lord's return to me. Precious memories! How they linger! How they ever flood my soul!

What Does My Bible Say about Me?

Holding her Bible in my hand, and knowing how much it means to me, I cannot help but consider my own Bible. What does my Bible say about me?

Is it well-worn from years of study? Have I understood the words which teach us how to become children of God? Have I made any notes pertaining to life and godliness?

If perhaps, someday my Bible should be handed down to one of my children, could they tell how much the Lord meant to me? Could they see that I loved to study His word? Would they cherish receiving my Bible because they knew how much it meant to me?

AE



The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Seven
July, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
David Pharr	John T. Polk, II
Travis Quertermous	Andy Robison
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com
(256) 627-3215

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *Devotion to Christ - Then and Now*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *Grandma's Bible*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Drink, Drank, Drunk*
John T. Polk, II
- 5 *Life Is Too Short!*
David Pharr
- 6 *The Beatitudes*
Stephen R. Bradd
- 8 *Reach Out or Fade Out*
Roger Shepherd
- 9 *Thank God for Worn Out Shoes*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 10 *Stay Put*
Ron Thomas
- 11 *Paul Before Felix*
Raymond Elliott
- 13 *Elders and Anointing Oil*
Gerald Cowan
- 14 *Honoring W. Claude Hall*
James R. McGill
- 15 News & Notes
- 16 Reader Replies

Drink, Drank, Drunk

John T. Polk, II

When does "social drinking" become "unsocial drinking?" Most people seem to think drunkenness is determined by (1) their own capacity; (2) their companions' capacity; (3) the legal percentage of alcohol consumed compared to their body weight; or (4) how painful their "hangover" is on the next day. It is actually none of the above!

According to the way the Bible deals with the subject, drunkenness is determined by definition and purpose. The Bible word for "drunken" literally refers to the loss of judgment, caution, and reasoning. It is scientific fact that this alteration begins to occur with the very first drink of alcohol. If the purpose for the drink is its medicinal property, then as with every medicine, the harm of the dose is weighed against the benefit to health.

Let's have a party!

"But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean" (Isaiah 28:7-8).

What wonderful fun it is (?) to be with people socially while they are consumed by the alcohol they consume, fall all over the place, and vomit and void all over themselves and us! This surely makes for such a great prom, roadhouse, tavern, or business convention that we'll keep coming back again and again! "Social drinking" leads to habitual drinking socially!

From Proverbs 23:29-35

- Problems "hang over" after socially drinking.

"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?" (v.29)

- Social drinkers have a fear of increasing addiction.

"Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine" (v.30).

- Social drinkers experience the personal misery of the after-effects, which the commercials never show.

"Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper" (vv.31-32).

- Social drinkers lose trust at home and at work.

"Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things" (v.33).

- Social drinkers cause damage to be done to those outside of their family who see them drunken, reeling back and forth, and lose the ability to feel pain.

"Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 'They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?'" (vv. 34-35)

How Does A Person "Get Drunk?"

No one ever "got drunk" by refusing to drink altogether! Israel's King, Elah, was "drinking himself drunk" when he was assassinated (1 Kings 16:8-10). The Syrian king, "Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post" and lost the battle to the Israelites (1 Kings 20:16-21). Therefore, God's warning said: "Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink" (Isaiah 5:22).

The purest vow before God in the Old Testament meant total refusal of alcohol. The Nazarite vow of purity meant that the man "shall drink neither wine nor strong drink" (Luke 1:15; Numbers 6:1-4).

When "In Rome"

What possible justification can a Christian have for the regular practice of drinking wine and intoxicating beverages? Since the only way to be drunk is through drinking that which makes one drunk, Christians throughout the world should show those still in the world how to be sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; Titus 2:2).

"Social drinking" is sinful drinking, no matter where in the world it occurs! Paul condemned "drunkenness" in Rome (Romans 13:13), in Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; 11:20-22), and in Asia (Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18). Timothy fully understood that, wherever he was, abstinence was best (1 Timothy 3:1-3, 8; 5:23).

The Medical Purposes of Alcohol

Alcohol as a medicine should be used with a very low dose for pain relief and out of necessity.

To relieve his recurring and weakening digestive problems, Paul told Timothy: "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities" (1 Timothy 5:23).

Whether this wine was fermented or not the emphasis is on the words "a little." Such wording gives no room for "social drinking," which always seems to involve more than "a little."

It has been established that grape juice has beneficial digestive properties apart from its alcoholic content. Timothy was a total abstainer from "wine," for he had to be told to "use a little" as his medicine. The inspired Paul had made it clear that Christian men who became elders were not to be "given to wine" (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7), that is, lingering where it is served, having the regular practice of drinking it, or enjoying its use! If that doesn't condemn "social drinking," what would?

With Deacons, the phrase is "not given to much wine" (1 Timothy 3:8), which is not approving the regular practice, but showing that a deacon should not have "much wine" on his mind! Again, "social drinking" was not to be a part of a Christian man's thought or concern.

In Moses' Law, God absolutely prohibited a "priest's" use of wine or intoxicating drink when offering sacrifices (Leviticus 10:8-11; Ezekiel 44:21). Since New Testament Christians are priests who offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:5), it is reasonable, consistent, and clear that the regular practice of "social drinking" should be avoided (Ephesians 5:18) in order for Christians to be able to offer sacrifices "everywhere" (1 Timothy 2:8). Timothy understood this teaching and kept completely away from the practice himself!

Alcohol and similar drugs may be given as a sedative to ease a person about to die. "Give strong drink to him who is perishing" (Proverbs 31:6). Jesus on the cross was offered "sour wine" (vinegar) mixed with an ingredient (the description of "strong," or "intoxicating drink") to dull His pain (Matthew 27:33-34; Mark 15:22-23), but He refused. Just before His death, however, "sour wine" (vinegar) by itself, was offered to Him (Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:36; John 19:28-30), and He took it. Jesus maintained His purity in life by refusing anything akin to "strong drink" and vinegar only just before His death.

Keep in mind that alcohol is a mood affecting drug. "And wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more" (Proverbs 31:7). And, people assume it is the only remedy for the "bitter of heart" (Ecclesiastes 10:19). However, righteous Hannah, used prayer to deal with her "sorrowful heart" rather than drunkenness (1 Samuel 1:12-15). Though alcohol might indeed lift one's mood, repeated moodiness needs more spiritual attention than "spirits!" "A merry heart does good, like medicine, But a broken spirit dries the bones" (Proverbs 17:22).



Life Is Too Short!

David R. Pharr

As people get older they often remark about how time flies." Time is the same for young and old, but the older we get, the more conscious we become of the swift passage of our lives.

Job said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6). The Psalmist said, "He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again" (Psalm 78:39). James wrote that life is "even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (4:14).

Life is too short for us to pass deliberately the opportunities for joy and enrichment that come our way. It is not so much that others deprive us of happiness, but that we deprive ourselves. It is tragic that some miss so many of the good things of this world simply because they will not allow themselves the pleasure.

Life is too short to neglect friendships. No one has too many friends and no friendship is of negligible value. Probably every day there are opportunities for making and strengthening relationships with others. A stranger today could be a brother tomorrow.

Life is too short to neglect fellowship with fellow Christians. The public and private occasions when we can be together to share interests, to share laughter, and to show affection are blessings from God. We realize that even the most gregarious person needs some time to be alone, but we also realize that the opportunities will soon be gone. Faces we remember from the past are not seen anymore. Their cherished voices and pleasant laughter are absent now. Life is too short for us to deprive ourselves of opportunities for Christian fellowship.

Life is too short to entertain bad attitudes. Sometimes it happens that someone will get upset or cross and let a sore fester inside for months and even years. Their satisfaction is the satisfaction of being consistently miserable. This does, of course, affect and hurt others, but the worst injury is to the one storing the ill will. Time is too short and life too precious to be blighted by unchristian attitudes.

Life is too short to refuse the opportunities to do good for others. The building blocks of the meaningful life are kind words and helpful deeds. People tend to think of this after it is too late. Perhaps one time many would disagree with Jesus is when He said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), but in fact He was right. Our own selfishness can rob us of great blessings.

Life is too short to neglect opportunities for spiritual enrichment. One who feels he can live a consecrated life with-

out much help simply does not understand the Christian life. Bible classes, special services, gospel literature, etc. are not intended as activities just for people with nothing to do. It is a sad irony that so often those who most need help are the ones who deny themselves such opportunities.

Life is too short to fail to speak to others about the Savior. We are a dying race and very soon we will all be gone, including our associates, friends, and family – gone to the place

which depends upon our relationship with Christ. Life affords no greater privilege than the privilege of helping another to be saved. But worldly pride, selfishness, indifference, and a lack of preparation will keep us from even trying. Too soon we may watch our neighbors perish.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

The Beatitudes

Stephen R. Bradd

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew 5-7, begins with a section commonly referred to as the beatitudes, meaning “perfect joy.” Most of the beatitudes are paradoxical and contrary to this world's view of joy.

The word “blessed” is used throughout this passage, and it can be accurately replaced with the word “joyful.” Another synonym that could be utilized is the word “happy,” as long as one understands that this bliss is not due to good luck or chance (i.e., “hap,” which is the root word in “happy”).

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

Jesus begins His lesson by saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

To be poor in spirit is to feel a deep sense of spiritual poverty. It is to empty oneself and to understand one's insignificance in comparison to Almighty God and even others (cf. Philippians 2:3-4).

To be poor in spirit is to have a state of mind that is lowly and reverent before God. It is to be full of humility, not pride (e.g., the tax collector and Pharisee, respectively, in Luke 18:9-14).

It is impossible to be poor in spirit until one realizes his spiritual need. As long as a person delights in sin, he will not be poor in spirit, and he will not seek the Savior since he does not find it necessary (cf. Matt. 9:12).

To be poor in spirit is a joyful condition because one who is aware of his sinfulness and hopelessness without God will seek the kingdom of heaven and find hope therein.

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Secondly, Jesus declared, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).

In the Greek language, the strongest word for mourn is used here. This term indicates a type of mourning that cannot be hidden.

The blessing here is not upon all who mourn (e.g., those with worldly sorrow would be excluded, cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10). Those who mourn because of sin and consequently repent are the ones who will be blessed (cf. James 4:8-10).

Such a person mourns over sin from a tender conscience and a broken heart, realizing it is sin that separates him from God (cf. Isaiah 59:1-2). After one realizes his sinfulness, he can be comforted by the discovery and acceptance of God's pardon, made possible by obedience to the saving gospel (Romans 1:16; 6:17).

Blessed Are the Meek

Thirdly, our Lord spoke these words, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

Those listening to Jesus speak were full of the hope that He, as the Messiah, would lead them to conquest in a physical kingdom that would dominate by force (cf. Proverbs 16:32). However, Jesus taught that true joy is found in meekness.

The primary meaning of this word is “mild” or “gentle.” Meekness is not another word for weakness, as some mistakenly believe, for genuine meekness is strength under control.

The word “meek” has its origin in the taming or domestication of animals. A wild animal is strong, but destructive and of little value when out of control. However, when a horse, for example, is tamed, it loses none of its power, but its strength is brought under the control of its trainer. It is now a useful animal and can be employed for much good.

The same is true of man. A person who is strong (physically or spiritually) is of little use to the Lord until he submits to Him and allows his strength to be controlled by God's desires. A meek person is totally given to the divine will. Such a one does get angry when circumstances warrant it, but he does so in a controlled manner (i.e., without sinning, cf. Ephesians 4:26). Moses is a good example of meekness (cf. Numbers 12:3; Exodus 32:19ff); so is Jesus (cf. Matthew 11:28-30; John 2:14ff).

The meek shall inherit the earth in the sense that they shall enjoy it more fully while living upon it (cf. Philippians 4:10-13). Selfish, violent people may literally possess the earth and its physical treasures, but the meek truly inherit the real blessings of this world and appreciate them without becoming obsessed with them.

Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness

The fourth beatitude is found in Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

Jesus declared that those who feel an intense desire for righteousness – that which is right or just – shall obtain it.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is an attitude, a frame of mind, which realizes God's word is "righteousness" (Psalms 119:172) and is to be understood and obeyed. The righteous word of God is spiritual food that is needed to grow stronger (cf. 1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 4:4).

What type of person doesn't get hungry or thirsty physically? One who is either sick or dead! The same is true spiritually. If a person doesn't have a strong desire to grow spiritually and feed on God's word daily, then he is either spiritually sick or dead!

May those who desire righteousness do so as a deer pants for water (cf. Psalms 42:1-2)! If one yearns to be filled and to find true, lasting joy, he must put the kingdom of God first and seek His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Blessed Are the Merciful

Fifth, Jesus declared, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

To be merciful is to withhold justified punishment; it is to relieve the misery of one who deserves to suffer.

The merciful show pity to others, and much joy is found therein (cf. Acts 20:35). Humans typically have little difficulty showing mercy toward self, but may find it challenging to be lenient toward others. However, disciples of the Lord must learn to love their neighbors as they love themselves even when it comes to granting mercy (cf. Matthew 22:39).

If one fails to develop this attribute, God will not bestow mercy upon him (cf. Matthew 6:14-15). The parable of the unforgiving servant also clearly communicates this thought (Matthew 18:21-35).

Being merciful is a natural outward expression of an inner hungering after righteousness (cf. Matthew 7:12), and such will generally ensure that one's personal quest for righteousness will not turn into self-righteousness (e.g., Luke 18:9-14).

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

Sixth, Jesus stated, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they

shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

The "heart" is the center of one's thinking processes; it is the mind, biblically speaking (Proverbs 23:7).

The "pure in heart" are those who are free from evil desires and purposes; their thoughts and speech are pure (cf. Matthew 12:34). This is because they meditate on those things in which there is virtue (cf. Philippians 4:8).

Such persons experience great joy in seeing God. Of course, they do not see Him physically since He is a Spirit being (cf. John 4:24), but they do see Him through faith in Christ.

But many of the Jews, having their hearts defiled with carnal hopes or self-righteous pride, failed to see God as He revealed Himself in the person of His Son (cf. John 14:6-9; Matthew 13:14-17). Not only do the pure in heart see God in this way, but they shall also see Him "as He is" in the hereafter (1 John 3:2). It should be noted that one might appear to be pure by his actions, though his heart is far from such (Matthew 23:25-28).

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

The seventh beatitude is seen in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Peace is generally thought of as the absence of conflict or war, but to the follower of Christ it is much more. It includes an internal component of contentment, even in the midst of trials, conflict, and persecution. This is the peace from God that surpasses human understanding (cf. Philippians 4:7).

One is rightly considered a peacemaker when he seeks reconciliation and strives to live peaceably with all (both men and God). A true peacemaker is one who shares the gospel of peace in hopes of fostering spiritual reconciliation.

Christians should always seek external peace to the best of their ability (cf. Romans 12:18), but it should not be acquired at any cost. If peace can be achieved without compromising one's convictions, purity of heart, and earnest desire for righteousness, then it must be pursued. The humble and wise peacemakers will be joyful; however, the selfish and foolish "piece-makers" (i.e., lovers of conflict and division) within the body of Christ will be miserable.

Blessed Are Those Who Are Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

Finally, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10).

To be persecuted for righteousness' sake is to suffer at the hands of others for doing right. This is much different than being punished for wrongdoing (cf. 1 Peter 4:12-16).

It should be realized that in order to maintain peace, one

must sometimes suffer persecution. If one is faithful to the Lord, he should expect persecution (cf. 2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:18-20). One should react to persecution as Christ did. He did not retaliate but denied Himself. He did not develop grudges but had a spirit of forgiveness.

Those who suffer because of their loyalty to the kingdom of heaven are blessed by being bound more closely to the kingdom for which they suffer. The joy in being persecuted is found when one realizes he is suffering for the name of Christ (e.g., Acts 5:41; 16:22-25). All who suffer as faithful servants of the Lord should "leap for joy" (cf. Luke 6:23)!

Matthew 5:12 reads, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Though Christians should live joyfully here on Earth, their ultimate reward will be in heaven. Let it always be remembered that the suffering experienced here is nothing in comparison to the bliss God has in store for His faithful ones (Romans 8:18).

Also, Christians should find comfort and strength in the example of the prophets (and the Christ, cf. 1 Peter 2:21-24), understanding that persecution for righteousness' sake is not a sign of God's disfavor. Persecution should be embraced, not resisted, as a way to develop one's character through suffering (cf. James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5).

In Conclusion

It is also worthwhile to note that there seems to be a logical progression to the beatitudes. After one comes to realize his sinfulness, he must empty himself of pride and self-sufficiency (i.e., become poor in spirit), and he must mourn. This will make it easier to submit to God completely and be strong under His control (i.e., meekness).

Such a person will naturally hunger and thirst after righteousness for he realizes that without God and His spiritual nourishment, he is destitute. A strong desire to do what is right should lead one to be merciful as God was to him, and it will also help in the effort to be pure in heart.

One who is full of mercy and devoted to purity is highly qualified to be a peacemaker. However, a person who possesses these attributes of true joy will be hated by the world and will suffer as one persecuted for righteousness' sake.

We would do well to put the beatitudes to memory and frequently reflect upon them as a guide for examining the inner man (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5). The daily prayers of all disciples will be greatly enriched by reflecting upon these wonderful attributes and requesting divine help in developing a character in which perfect joy is manifested.



Reach Out or Fade Out!

Roger Shepherd

Every seed is a possible flower (Luther Burbank). We say, "Every sinner is a possible Christian."

The disciples of Jesus are instructed to sow the seed which is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The seed of the kingdom cannot grow another Christian unless it is sown in the heart of lost people according to God's will (1 Corinthians 3:6-9). The seed is sown in the human heart and God causes spiritual growth. Christians are God's fellow workers in the kingdom. Jesus encourages the church to evangelize by sowing the seed of the kingdom reaching out into the community (Matthew 13:1-23).

A church that seeks to reach out to the lost is not going to fade out! However, saints are encouraged "Reach out or Fade Out!" Some have chosen to "Reach Out!" Will you join the outreach efforts of the local church, the family of God? Personal teaching of the lost is exciting! There is joy in heaven over sinners that repent (Luke 15:7). Sinners cannot repent unless they are taught. Otherwise, the church will fade out.

Christianity Is a Taught Religion!

The early disciples of Christ were trained to teach the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23-25). Disciples follow the example of Jesus to: 1) teach the Gospel, 2) preach the Gospel, and 3) minister to the needs of people. The gospel is the "power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16).

Discipleship is specifically designed to search for souls interested in a home Bible study. The goal is to sow the seed of the kingdom so God can give the increase in souls converted to Christ.

God's leaders are ready to help you learn how to do effective outreach evangelism. The following three things will aid you in this work:

- 1.) Know and appreciate the value of one soul (Matthew 16:26).
- 2.) Develop a likeable personality. Don't get caught up in a clique. The lost needs a friend in deed (John 15:12-17).
- 3.) Have a genuine love and appreciation for lost people (Mark 6:34).

In doing personal teaching in reaching the lost with the gospel your sight of the present can preclude your view of the future. This was demonstrated by a wise old Native American. He held an acorn before his two sons and asked: "What do you see?" One said, "An acorn." He could only see the present. The other answered, "An oak." To the second the father commented, "With your vision, some day you should be chief." He could see the future.

It makes a significant difference which one is seen; the pre-

sent or a vision of the future. What do you see when you look at the world? Do you see lost souls? Do you see yourself teaching sinners how to be saved? Do you see that one can make a significant difference in the salvation of the lost? May that one be you!

Preaching the Gospel Is a Good Investment!

You are investing your money in some way. One dollar spent for lunch will last five hours. One dollar spent for a necktie lasts five weeks. One dollar spent for a cap lasts five months. One dollar spent for an automobile lasts five years. One dollar spent in the mission of God lasts for eternity (Roger Babson). You cannot take your money with you, but you can send it on ahead of you by preaching the gospel to the world (Matthew 6:19-20).

A tree, although it must have water to live, cannot stay alive simply by receiving water. It must give away gallons of it every day through its leaves. If in some way a tree should stop giving, it would also stop growing and would soon die (Raymond Balcomb).

Are you being encouraged to start giving in abundance of your time, efforts, money, and teaching the gospel so many souls can live eternally? One hour spent in Bible study with the lost has eternal rewards.

Reach Out in the Classroom

Abraham Lincoln said, "The philosophy (opinions, ideas) of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next." Likewise, the ideas of the biblical classroom will be the vision and direction of the church in all generations!

Sowing the seed of the gospel of the kingdom in the lives of your children at a young age is very significant to their spirituality. The Bible school is a great way to accomplish the mission of God to make disciples.

The growing church continues to be about the Father's business. Local evangelism is being revived with the leadership of good people in the churches of Christ. You can make a difference. Victory does not come from the will to win, but the will to prepare (Coach Bud Wilkinson).

Preparation is always the hardest part of a job. Preparation sounds like a lot of hard work, pain, and sacrifice. It is! However, it is worth all the effort. You can prepare to make a difference in life. We have opportunity throughout the world to preach the gospel to the lost.

In Conclusion

Talents are useful only when used in reaching out into the world with the gospel. "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determina-

tion alone are omnipotent" (Calvin Coolidge).

Persistence will put talent to work. Talent without work is wasted time and effort. God has given Christians the talent to evangelize the world.

The church becomes a team with God in sowing the seed of the kingdom in order to evangelize the world. The word *team* means *Together Everyone Accomplishes More!*

Personal teachers work with God. Paul said, we are "workers together with Him" (2 Corinthians 6:1). A team is a small number of people with complementary skills, who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves accountable to God (Katzenbach and Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*, p. 112).

The church can use your talent to help evangelize the world. Together we win in *Reaching Out* rather than *Fading Out!*

Thank God for Worn Out Shoes

Robert L. Waggoner

He was a hard-working man but he was out of work and had very little money. His two healthy boys wore their shoes out by using them for brakes as they rode their wagon down the hill. And his little girl wore her shoes out by jumping ropes. His children all needed new shoes.

Then his wife's washing machine broke down – hopelessly beyond repair. Looking in the newspaper he found a second-hand washing machine for sale and went to look at it. It belonged to a very wealthy couple who were asking only a few dollars for it.

Feeling his poverty, he remarked how lovely their home was with all its modern conveniences. He told them about his children and their worn out shoes, then said, "It must be nice to have every convenience. You must be very happy."

The lady of the house immediately excused herself as she started to cry. After a moment of silence, her husband remarked, "We have a little girl, but she has never walked a step in her life. A worn out pair of shoes would make us very happy."

The man took the washing machine home; then he thanked God for his healthy children and their worn out shoes.



Stay Put

Ron Thomas

What prompts a person, or people, to stop hearing the Lord? This great question is asked by each generation and the answer is the same: whatever value might be associated with the Lord's way, and/or with morality and worship, it is still that case that the Lord's word does not deal with practical things in the here and now, such as surrounding nations threatening the homeland (Israel/Judah). This short-sighted answer was the doom of the covenant people of Jeremiah's day. This attitude of theirs, if it is ours, will also be our doom.

The short-sighted answer that belonged to the people blinded them to Jeremiah's preaching/warning concerning what the Lord was prepared to do (Jeremiah 6:22-30). The Lord's wrath would soon be experienced in a way that the people would not soon forget.

In fact, as you look at the passage referenced, the Lord made plain just what kind of punishment the people were about to experience; from the north the Babylonians would come, and they would show no mercy to their victims (6:23). What fear the people might have had in anticipation of that occasion would not compare with the fear the people were actually going to experience! The Lord had rejected them (6:30).

Why Were the People of Judah So Obstinate?

First, take note of the way they looked upon the Lord's word: "To whom shall I speak and give warning, That they may hear? Indeed their ear is uncircumcised, And they cannot give heed. Behold, the word of the LORD is a reproach to them; They have no delight in it" (Jeremiah 6:10, NKJV).

In this verse we see the attitude of a hard people. Through the years they had heard one false teacher after another speak about "smooth things." Whatever they may have heard from God's true servants, it was the sheer quantity of the false teachers, and the loudness of the message spoken by them that drowned out Jeremiah's preaching. When this is coupled with the desire they had to hear and apply that which was said by the false prophets...well, you get the picture. The crop that is planted is pure seed, but the weeds that grow up around the crop eventually choke it if the pure seed is not cultivated. The leaders (shepherds) of Judah had a spiritual, moral, and royal obligation to tend to the needs of the people, but they failed in their leadership responsibilities.

Second, the hardness of the people with regard to the

holy purposes of God brought a response that was callous. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the Lord" (6:15).

The word "blush" is used as a verb, and it means "to redden in the cheeks or face...from a sense of guilt, shame, confusion, modesty, diffidence or surprise" (Webster). Because right and wrong, the holy and unholy, were so corrupted in the minds of the community (and individual), the sense of shame, guilt, or modesty was gone. It reminds me of that which I read in the history books. The horrors of war harden men into callousness; many soldiers have walked by dead comrades and have hardly noticed bloated bodies full of maggots. The picture in your mind is not easily shaken, but hardness to the death and decay of the battlefield keeps one moving to the next conflict. Sin has this same effect upon the nature of man's soul.

With these two points in mind, the Lord once again appealed to the people to hear His word. "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls'" (Jeremiah 6:16, NKJV).

These words from the Lord were given to a people determined to go their own way; they felt they had a better sense of what needed to be done than anything the Lord's prophet was offering them at the time. You and I know the folly of such thinking, but we can become guilty of the same if we refuse to submit to the Lord's way.

To those in Jeremiah's day, the Lord's foundational way went as far back as the time of Moses and Israel coming out of Egyptian bondage. The Lord appealed to them to remember that occasion, and how He delivered them from Egyptian bondage. They needed to go back to that time and start again. Interestingly enough, the Lord wanted them to remember how they came from Egyptian bondage, and if they refused they would return to Babylonian bondage.

They refused; it cost them dearly! This is an exhortation that we need to reflect on as well.

Lessons

Given the knowledge we have of the Lord's dealings with his people, Judah and Israel, why would any of the Lord's people today fall into the same downward spiral?

The answer: Distractions! Distractions are many. There is the distraction of association (family); there is the distraction associated with occupation; and there is the distraction associated with recreation. Distractions are part of life. All of us are plagued with them. But, not a single distraction needs to move us away from what is truly important.

When the Lord appealed to the nation to remember the old paths, He had in mind that which Moses brought with him from Sinai into the land of promise (Canaan). In Isaiah's day, the Lord made a similar appeal to the people when they were determined to turn from the Lord and seek guidance from that which pretended to display wisdom: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

For us today, it is not to the time of Moses that we need to turn; we need to go to the time of Jesus and His apostles (cf. Acts 2:42). It is easy to progress beyond the Lord's word because society progresses. The Lord's people, however, need to *stay put* with Him and in the way of righteousness (John 14:6).



Paul before Felix

Raymond Elliott

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified..." (Acts 24:25)

preached a relevant message, that is, a needed lesson for the present audience.

The preacher on this occasion was the great apostle Paul. We all have to admire his determination and courage in preaching the gospel of Christ regardless of the circumstances. This man of God felt indebted to all men since he possessed the inspired message of salvation (Romans 1:14-16; 1 Corinthians 9:16). To speak the truth boldly to an assembly of dignitaries that would assuredly disagree with the message requires great courage and fortitude. Because of such faithfulness, Paul could truthfully say, "But the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me" (2 Timothy 4:17). Preachers of this caliber are in great demand today in the church of the Lord.

Righteousness

Thus, we read in Acts 24:25 that Paul "reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come." Felix, like all un-regenerated men, was filled with iniquity. "There is none righteous, no not one." "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23). The sinner can become cleansed from his sins only through the blood of Jesus Christ. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

The Audience

The audience was made up of people like Felix and Drusilla, among others. Felix and his brother Pallus had been slaves in the household of Agrippina, mother of the emperor Claudius. Thus, he had come from being a lowly slave to becoming a ruler over a province. Felix was a corrupt individual. He was guilty of selling justice for bribes, among other vices. Drusilla was a daughter of Herod Agrippa, who murdered the apostle James and who miserably perished soon afterwards (Acts 12:1, 2; 20-23). Her first husband was Azia, king of Emesa. It is believed that Felix, with the aid of one Simon a sorcerer, lured her away from her husband. Felix and Drusilla lived in open adultery.

In short, mankind was on its way to eternal ruin when God manifested his love toward us in the death of Christ. Man deserved to die and be lost. The only way that the sinner could be made righteous was through faith in Christ Jesus in humble obedience to the gospel. He was, therefore, pardoned of his wrongs. God's justice was tempered with mercy. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The man to whom God does not reckon sin is the individual whose sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 4:7, 8; Ephesians 1:7).

The Sermon

Let us now observe the sermon that Paul preached to this august but corrupt audience. The apostle spoke of "the faith in Christ Jesus" (Acts 24:24). On other occasions Paul appealed to the Old Testament Scriptures to prove the Son-ship of Christ, His death, and resurrection (Acts 26:22-23). Paul also

Self-Control

Felix was living in open adultery with Drusilla; therefore, this lesson on self-control was very appropriate for the occasion. Felix was one who practiced immorality and satisfied his unbridled lust.

What can be said about Felix can also be said about many in today's world. Beyond a shadow of doubt, the Bible teaches that one should have control of the appetites and passions of the body. One has defined self-control as "One who holds himself in." Another has written that self-control is "reason's girdle as well as passion's bridle." It is indeed difficult to be guided by what we know rather than by what we want.

Among the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, self-control is mentioned (Galatians 5:23). Paul commands, by the Holy Spirit, the Christian to "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Peter exhorts brethren to grow spiritually by adding to their lives such attributes as "self-control" (1 Peter 1:5-11). If a man can control himself, he is indeed greater than one who can take a city by force (Proverbs 16:32).

Judgment to Come

The apostle Paul spoke of "the judgment to come." One must realize and understand that a day is coming in which all of life's conduct must be perfectly appraised by the Lord; and, that divine justice will be meted out upon those who have followed their own willful ways of sin.

One of the cardinal doctrines of the Holy Scriptures is that of the second advent of Jesus Christ, who, at that time will be supreme Judge (Matthew 25:31-46). "The times of this ignorance therefore God overlooked, but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent: inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 16:30, 31).

At the judgment each person will have to give account of himself (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Surely the solemn contemplation of a coming judgment should motivate each one to prepare for such an event. If such were done, there would be a great effort to obey the Lord in doctrinal and moral matters. O, how the world needs sermons like the one Paul preached to Felix relative to righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come!

The Response

To every sermon, there is a response, whether it is positive or negative. The Bible states that Felix was terrified. The King James Version said that he "trembled."

Felix was not ignorant of the truth. In fact, he had a "more exact knowledge concerning the way" (Acts 24:22). Nothing could be more terrifying than to speak of righteousness to a man of such iniquity; of temperance in all things to a man of unbridled lust; or to drive home what was said on these topics by depicting the judgment to come.

The terror which seized Felix was necessary to begin a change a life; but lust and ambition smothered the kindling

fires of his conscience. It is therefore probable that preaching will often change the feelings of a person without truly changing the heart.

The Sin of Procrastination

Felix was guilty of the grave mistake of procrastination. He told Paul to "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me" (Acts 24:25). Procrastination is called the "thief of time." A man has nothing but the passing moment. Felix is typical of millions whose spiritual life is ruined by putting off matters until a later date.

Here are three reasons not to delay obedience to the gospel. First, it is a guilty thing. "I will when..." means "I will not now." It is rebellion of spirit put in the least flagrant form, but, it is still a state of sin.

Second, procrastination is a delusive thing. We think we will be willing to do the right thing later on. But, outward hindrances tend to become stronger than weaker; life becomes more complicated; and, inward and spiritual obstacles become more difficult to overcome. We should beware of the "deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

Third, it is a fatal thing. If vice has slain thousands, and pride has slain thousands, surely procrastination has slain tens of thousands!

Archias, a supreme magistrate of the city of Thebes, was seated at a feast, surrounded by friends, when a courier arrived in a great haste, with letters containing an account of conspiracy formed against him. "My Lord," said the messenger, "the person who wrote these letters conjure you to read them immediately, being serious things." "Serious things tomorrow," replied Archias, laughing, and he put the letters under his pillow. This delay was fatal. The conspirators that evening rushed into the banquet room, and put the careless Archias, without all his guests, to the sword.

As far as the divine record is concerned, Felix never found that convenient season. He had to appear before Caesar later to answer charges of corruption in his government. Drusilla and her son by Felix later perished in the eruption of Vesuvius, which also engulfed the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

These souls, along with others, will face the Lord in judgment and give account of the deeds done in this life. How sad for people to know the way and yet postpone their obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While the mercy of God lingers, as a penitent believer, one should be immersed into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).



Elders and Anointing Oil

Gerald Cowan

In the church of Christ do elders anoint the head with oil and pray for people? If not, why not?

I presume the question is based on James 5:14, "If any is sick let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil."

Prayer for the sick is common, but anointing with oil has not been in common use for a long time. To answer the question as to why it is not used one must first determine why it was used in biblical times, and if it was intended for the same use in perpetuity. None of that is answered clearly or definitively in the scripture.

Possible Uses

There are two possible ways the oil could be used. First, it could be used physically as medicine in its own right (as in Luke 10:34). One would doubt the curative properties of oil (or wine too), as compared to medicines readily available today. But, perhaps the meaning could be, "Use whatever medicines and medical help are available and add them to your prayers to God." If one asks why the elders are mentioned, it may be because as leaders and overseers in a time when "doctors" were few and scattered, elders would likely stand in for many other offices in society, especially in a religious community or church. Anointing with oil would be discontinued in favor of more effective remedies, although prayer would continue. It would also be generally pointless to call for the elders now to diagnose and treat physical sicknesses in Christians.

Second, the oil could be symbolic or representative of something else. It could be a social amenity, a customary sign of hospitality, as suggested in Luke 7:46. Such anointing was also a sign of fellowship and acceptance (see Psalm 45:7, Hebrews 1:9). If that is the meaning in James 5:14, the suggestion is that elders should show ordinary signs of fellowship and acceptance of the person. But such usage was a cultural custom, not a universal mandate. Just like the kiss of greeting and the washing of a visitor's feet (also in Luke 7:46, compare John 13:3-5).

Why would the elders, or others called to the person, bring with them what should have been furnished by the caller? Oil could indicate the receipt of some blessing (as in Psalm 23:5). So, it could be either thanksgiving for a blessing, or a request for a blessing. It may be that the oil here was not intended as thanks for a blessing received, since it was apparently administered before prayer and before the blessing of healing.

Oil was also used as a sign of consecration, of things or of persons (Genesis 28:18-19, Exodus 40:9, 1 Samuel 10:1). But

it could not be so in James 5:14, since Christians are already anointed and consecrated to God (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

The point is, none of these things has any religious significance *now* and are certainly not commanded *today*. Yes, hospitality and fellowship are commanded, and there are ways to show them, with or without oil, in every culture and circumstance.

The Holy Spirit

Some want to see the oil as somehow symbolic of the Holy Spirit and His works, and perhaps tie it somehow to supernatural or miraculous healing by the Spirit. In this case the anointing with oil would be done in conjunction with a miracle of healing.

This idea seems to come from Mark 6:13. The Lord's spiritually endowed disciples to cast out demons, anointed many of the sick with oil and healed them. But that would have to assume that the elders in question had a gift of healing (see Ephesians 4:8-11), and that they employed the symbolic oil and their prayers to effect healing by the Spirit of God. Even if that were the case, it would be inappropriate and meaningless *now*, since the gift of miraculous healing is no longer valid. The gift of healing was neither given to, nor possessed by, any Christian after the death of the apostles and those to whom they conferred it by the laying on of their hands (Acts 8:18). It would be pointless, a claim of power that nobody has today, to associate anointing with oil somehow with miracles of the Holy Spirit.

In Conclusion

There is nothing in the text or the context to indicate that anointing with oil (by elders) had some spiritual basis that made it applicable to the church forever, or that it was an obligation imposed by God upon the church and its elders. If it was to be required in the church for all time, some explanation and foundation for the practice would surely have been given.

It seems best to conclude that this anointing was a cultural or medicinal measure, *not a spiritual one*. So, to abandon it is not breaking faith with God. And again, as said at the beginning of this article, one who continues the practice must explain why it was practiced *originally*, what it meant *then*, what it supposedly means *today*, and why it should be continued.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00
 Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month
 Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month
 Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month
 Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

Honoring W. Claude Hall

James R. McGill

W. Claude Hall (1883-1967) was born at Yorkville in northwest Tennessee. I first met him the morning of December 29, 1948, the moment I entered the door of Freed-Hardeman College for the first time. I mistakenly thought I was arriving in time for the start of the new school term, but the term had started two weeks before the Christmas holidays. So I was the only one arriving that day.

They were expecting me. Three senior professors, L. L. Brigrance, age 69; C. P. Roland, 55; and W. Claude Hall, 65, greeted me. (I was 17. They seemed like seniors.) Brother Hall did all the talking. He said,

"He wants to prepare himself to preach. He will need Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Spoken English, English Composition, and Fundamentals of Speech. Your first class, starting right now, is New Testament with Brother Brigrance. Just follow him up the steps."

Registration took less than two minutes. How nice it would be if all registrations could be like that!

The college then had Saturday classes instead of Monday classes. The teachers and students who went out to preach would often be unable to return until Monday. The custom in those days was to begin Sunday evening worship later than now, usually at 7:30. Many did not have cars and depended on travel by bus. They had to spend the night where they had preached, before returning to campus on Monday.

One Saturday afternoon in English class, I came to the attention of brother Hall in a special way. I suddenly developed the most intense stomach pain I have ever felt. When I regained consciousness, on my back on the floor, and opened my eyes, brother Hall was standing over me and looking down at me. The doctor said my problem was "nervous tension." Perhaps that's kind of an all-purpose diagnosis.

At class reunions among those who were students during the W. Claude Hall years, most of the discussions about former teachers are about brother Hall, although all were great instructors. Most discussions are humorous and fond memories. When he would assign an essay, some student would always ask, "How long do you want this to be?" His answer: "About as long as a rope!" There were many such memories.

It was claimed that he had "the world's largest spelling class" The required daily spelling sessions included the entire freshman class and occupied half of their lunch period. Students stood around all the walls of the auditorium. When a student misspelled a word, he had to sit down. Possibly the worst misspelling that ever occurred was when a student was asked to spell "coffee." He pronounced the word correctly and then spelled it "k-a-u-p-h-y."

He required every student in his Bible classes to use the American Standard Version of 1901 exclusively. Not everyone liked that idea. One alumnus said, "I resented it then, and I resent it still."

The friendship of W. Claude Hall and C. P. Roland and their families was very close. It seems very appropriate that a campus dormitory was named "Hall-Roland" hall.

In two special crises at Freed-Hardeman College these two men were there when most urgently needed. First, in 1923, the school co-founders, A. G. Freed and N. B. Hardeman, developed irreconcilable differences. The Board of Directors fired both men. Then, for two critical years, Hall and Roland filled that administrative void. In 1925, N. B. Hardeman was permitted to return with Hall L. Calhoun as his co-president.

A quarter-century later, when the board terminated Hardeman's presidency in the spring of 1950, Hall and Roland came to the rescue again. Most of the students and some of the teachers had left. It was of critical importance that they locate a man who could become president and serve effectively in such difficult circumstances.

When they found a president in H. A. Dixon their prayers were answered. They thanked God for His wonderful providence. President Dixon served for twenty years until his death.

W. Claude Hall died on August 17, 1967. It was his and Lelia's 59th wedding anniversary. His close friend C. P. Roland, and H. A. Dixon, along with Thomas Scott and Vernon Morris, conducted his funeral.

When my wife Nedra and I went to Germany to work with her brother, Glenn Olbricht, and his family in 1960, brother Hall wrote us an interesting letter every month. Besides that, he gave us five dollars every month (equal to \$50 in today's purchasing power) with the specific instruction that it was not to be reported as part of our personal support, but was to be used to purchase whatever we wanted.

The only time I ever dared to disagree with brother Hall was when he said, "The way to do foreign evangelism is to train people here who are native to that culture and language. They will be much more effective."

He mentioned as his proof an excellent example, Franz Weiss from Germany, who was a model student at Freed-Hardeman. My response to his argument: "But if Nedra and I had not gone to Germany and met Franz, then Franz would not have come to Freed-Hardeman."



News & Notes

Obituaries

Kenneth Hoover, age 77, of Emmitsburg, Maryland died Monday, June 30, 2014 at 9:28 a.m. at John's Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. He was married for 35 years and is survived by his wife Carolyn; four daughters, Lisa Ford, Tammy Babkoff, Debbie Newcomer, and Gwen Hinton; one son Kenny Hoover; and a host of grandchildren and great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his daughter Marsha Alexander; his brothers Albert Lewis, Thomas, and John Hoover; and is survived by a brother Jerry Hoover and a sister Arlene Brown.

Kenneth began his ministry as a gospel preacher at the age of 14. His service to Christ spanned six decades in Kentucky, Illinois, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arizona.

Exhibit Evangelism at Illinois State Fair

SPRINGFIELD, IL: Exhibit Evangelism is scheduled at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield August 7-17. This is a cooperative work with sister churches in the state. The focus of the work is evangelism in the market place. Last year over 300 enrolled in free Bible study via the mail. This also has ancillary benefit: young people are on the "front line" engaging the public. If you are in the area, please stop by the Expo Building on the fairgrounds in Springfield.

Revival in Gospel Meeting Attendance

CLAY COUNTY, TN: From traveling around these past couple of years, I have noticed an increased interest and response from the local Gospel Meetings around the TN-KY state line. Last year, we had the biggest crowd since the 60's and possibly ever at New Hope church of Christ in the middle of Clay Co. Other churches this year reported many responses at their Meetings and several churches in Clay County are at capacity with their buildings. To God be the glory! The only thing the local churches need in an immediate sense is elders to lead the flock. Let us all be thankful to God and pray for leadership in our rural churches.

Tim McHenry
Mt. Gilead church of Christ
Tompkinsville, KY

Graduation at Southwest School of Bible Studies

AUSTIN, TX: On July 13, 2014, the Southwest School of Bible Studies will hold its 36th Graduation Ceremony. This year's graduating class of five students is a diverse group, and they look

forward to serving the kingdom in a variety of places and ways. **William Chen** will be returning to his native Taiwan, where he will preach and help in beginning a Taiwanese school of Bible studies. **Thomas Clinton** will be returning to his native Liberia, West Africa, where he, too, will preach and assist in beginning a ministry-training effort. **Joshua Moore** will commence an internship with the Southwest congregation in Austin and continue in the Southwest Graduate Program. **Joshua Ortiz** will be moving to Miami, Oklahoma, to preach and to work with the brethren there. And **Jon Williams** will begin an internship with the Roanoke Church of Christ, Roanoke, Texas. We appreciate all the generous support and encouragement that allow us to continue training preachers and teachers of the gospel.

Upcoming Gospel Meetings

KILLEN, AL: The Pleasant Valley congregation will be hosting their annual homecoming and gospel meeting August 3-6. **Alvin Austin** will be preaching.

ROGERSVILLE, AL: The Cedar Grove congregation will have a gospel meeting July 13-18. **Bill Irby** will be preaching.

GREENFIELD, TN: The Greenfield church of Christ will host their annual gospel meeting beginning August 3. **Grady Miller** will be preaching.

MAYNARD, AR: **Josh Dement** will be in a meeting July 28-August 1 and August 3-6 with the Evening Star church of Christ near BEECH GROVE, AR.

Nashville Lectureship

The Meads Chapel church of Christ, 1251 Antioch Pike, Nashville, TN. 37211, in association with the *Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies*, is presenting the 9th annual *Restoration Revisited* series, August 3-6.

Dave Miller is the scheduled speaker for the four Sunday sessions at 9 & 10 a.m. and 6 & 7 p.m. Weekday evening services are at 7 o'clock: **David Sain** will speak on Monday; **Billy Bland** on Tuesday; and **James Watkins** on Wednesday. **Bill Hunter** will direct the singing at all sessions.

The speaker at each session will discuss one of the seven churches of Asia to which Jesus addressed letters (Revelation 2 and 3).

Meads Chapel evangelist **David Propheter** is the lectureship director.

News from West Virginia

West Virginia Christian Youth Camp has been in session in June through August. A new week, Singing Emphasis Week, takes place July 27-August 2.

West Virginia School of Preaching starts classes August 11.

Reader Replies

Andy,

Here is an update on our son, Brett Rutherford, who is a missionary in Devonport, Tasmania, AUSTRALIA. Thank you for the coverage you have given to this in the *Gospel Gleaner*.

A few months ago, a tumor was found on the right side of Brett's brain. He had been experiencing problems in walking and some other skills. Since then, additional lesions have been found on other parts of the brain. Initial testing ruled out a number of possibilities. The first tentative diagnosis was lymphoma (cancer), but later tests have ruled that out.

Now his neurosurgeons have narrowed it down to a family of brain diseases of which multiple sclerosis is the most common. However, they have not yet pinpointed the actual disease. Regular visits to his neurosurgeon with scans continue on a monthly basis. He is feeling better and has resumed much of his work.

Because of his low income as a missionary, he had been in the public insurance system (somewhat similar to Obamacare), but treatment was slow and not satisfactory. Because of the generosity of brethren who funded a trip to Australia for Brenda and me, much more was given than needed so it

has enabled Brett to move into the private system where he has good doctors and much better attention. Brenda and I deeply appreciate our many friends and brethren who have given to make this possible. We will continue to keep you posted.

Rod Rutherford
Powell, TN

I enjoy this so much.

Dan Jenkins
West Palm Beach, FL

Thanks so much for sending us your paper.

Ronald Gilbert
Cookeville, TN

I appreciate the Gospel Gleaner for its excellent articles.

Jim Costello
Franklin, TN

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

August, 2014

Number Eight

Religious, but Worldly

Ronald D. Bryant

It may come as a shock, but worldliness is, and has ever been, a problem in religion. It is not simply a problem to pure religion; it is a problem in religion. The world does not retreat because one comes to believe in God and earnestly desires to honor Him; it only changes its approach. The world ceaselessly works to change one's view of his relationship with God. It presents itself as an alternative to God; a different object of devotion. It is willing to accommodate man's desire for religious expression, even as it works to supplant God as sovereign, and as the only worthy object of worship.

Worldly Allurement

Worldliness, all dressed up in "Sunday-go-to-meeting" attire, constantly courts the interest and the allegiance of immortal souls. It readily provides any number of idols, and consistently works to marginalize only those things that admit to the God of heaven and His sovereign will. Scriptural mandate and biblical requirement are of little concern to those ruled by worldliness. Objective and authoritative revelation is trivialized, and held to be nothing more than antiquated rules and regulations. Worldliness works to move man away from God, always insinuating that man is the final arbiter of truth and the final authority in all things.

Worldliness has its attraction. Its wisdom is proffered as normal and as normative. It is popular! It is popular because it seems to work. Yet, corrupt values can only serve to corrupt! First, worldliness is a powerful and pervasive system of assumptions which destroy love for and fear of God. The worldly are willing on occasion to tolerate God, but they do not reverence Him. On occasion they are willing to reference God, but are not willing

to obey Him. The world urges man to see himself only as a physical being, devoid of spiritual identity, except that which he may choose to create for a time. The worldly insist that evil is normal and normative, and that righteousness, as required by God, is abnormal. It insists that truth is subjective – like beauty, existing only in the eye of the beholder, and is of no real value or significance.

Worldly Opposition

Worldliness opposes the very center, and the essence of the Christian faith – the conviction and confidence regarding the being and character of God, His actions, His will, and His requirements. When and where worldliness prevails in a culture, it works to influence, even dominate, the religious groups in that culture. No one is immune! Regrettably, worldliness is so much a part of our existence that without fail when we go to worship God, it slides right into the pew and sits with us. If we attempt to worship God, it will hum a tune of self-centeredness in order to distract us.

Knowing the power and the danger posed by worldliness, God gave directives regarding it. The inspired writers declared:

- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).

Continued on page 5

The book of Ephesians contains a marvelous study of the New Testament church. Many descriptive names are given, and a greater understanding of the church can be gained from a brief study of such names.

Church

First, let us address the name *church*. Those who are in Christ are *the church*. The Greek word *ekklesia*, *ek* meaning "out of" and *klesis* meaning "a calling", is translated *church* in our English Bibles. When we read of the *church* in the New Testament we read of "the called out." Paul explains to the Colossians that we are called out of darkness (Colossians 1:13). To the Thessalonians he explains how we are called out of darkness by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14). A similar statement is found in Ephesians, "the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (3:6).

Household/Family

In this letter, Paul also teaches us that the church is the "household of God" (2:19). To Timothy he would declare the church of the living God was in fact the "house of God...the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The word *household* is derived from the Greek word *oikos*, thus carrying with it the concept of family. In the case of Ephesians 2:19, *oikos* is used to represent the entire assembly of those in Christ.

The term *family*, from *patria*, is synonymous with the term *household*, although it is found only three times in the New Testament. In the case of Ephesians 3:15 attention is given to God, the Forefather and Identity of the family of Christ, *in whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*.

Body

Paul speaks of the assembly as a *body*, or *soma*. Of Christ and His relation to the church Paul writes, "He is head over all things to the church, which is His

body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all" (1:22-23). Since there is only one *Head*, there must also be only one *body*. This Paul affirms, "There is one *body*, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (4:4).

What is the significance of the term *body*? This term speaks of Christ's headship over His church. He does the thinking for His body, so to speak. By His authority the assembly exists in Him and works for Him.

Moreover, the term "body" is also indicative of our relationship with one another. Every member of this body must do its part (4:16).

Paul also taught this principle in 1 Corinthians 12:

- For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ (v.12).
- For the body is not one member, but many (v.14).
- But now are they many members, yet but one body (v.20).
- "...there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another (v.25).
- The individual member must never think greater of himself than he does the body, "for we are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (v.27).

Ephesians 5:23-32 conveys the idea that the church is subject to Christ in all things. He is head over the body as a husband is head over his bride.

We are members of His body. He has sanctified and cleansed us. He has loved us and given Himself for us.

Being members of His body, we have the moral obligation to live holy lives and remain submissive to His authority in all things. We are joined to Him as a bride to her husband. We become one flesh with Christ when we are joined to Him in His body, the church.

If man is to have any hope in this life, he must leave the world and all its allurements and be joined to Christ (2:12). Be sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word (5:26).

Kingdom

The last of such terms we shall note is *kingdom* (*basileia*) (5:5). This term speaks of the nature of government in the church. To see the church as a kingdom is to understand Christ as King. He is "Lord and Christ" and "King of kings."

In an earlier passage in Ephesians Paul spoke of the supremacy of Christ (1:20-23). In Ephesians 5:5 we read of the "inheritance of the kingdom," but we ought not to consider the kingdom only in the sense of a future fulfillment.

The writer of Hebrews made clear that the kingdom Christ now exists. Note, "But ye are come ... To the general assembly and church of the firstborn...Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:22-29).

Clearly, the kingdom is already in existence and now here on earth. Our Lord is returning once more, not to establish His kingdom, but to gather it unto Himself and consume all things that are outside of it. The kingdom of Christ is the only kingdom which shall stand at His return.

The Lord's church is His family, His body, and His kingdom. Such descriptions vividly portray an institution which is essential to the salvation of men.

Those who believe the church is insignificant, or that one church is as good as another, would do well to study Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. They will find that the Lord loves His church, His body, His bride, and gave Himself for it.

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Eight
August, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbricht
David Pharr	John T. Polk, II
Travis Quertermous	Andy Robison
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com
(256) 627-3215

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *Religious, but Worldly*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *Notes on the Church from Ephesians*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *The Empty Tomb*
Grady Miller
- 6 *Sin and Its Consequences*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 7 *Let Us Be More Like Jesus*
Gerald Cowan
- 8 *Bear Valley Bible Institute: Celebrating 50 Years of Preacher Training*
- 10 *Some Thoughts on Elders and Preachers*
Ernest S. Underwood
- 11 *Where Were They?*
Owen Olbricht
- 12 *From a Woman's Perspective: After the "Amen"*
Melanie Erwin
- 13 *God's Law of Exclusion*
Travis L. Quertermous
- 14 News & Notes
- 16 Reader Replies

The Empty Tomb

Grady Miller

Not too long ago I attended a seminar hosted by the Biblical Archaeology Society. I have subscribed to their journal for thirty years and have many of their books, pamphlets, and DVDs. So, the program was a real joy. The topics dealt with important issues, and the speakers were men known for their scholarship and field experience on many of the high-profile excavations in Israel.

One speaker in particular had served as Chief Archaeologist of the Jerusalem District and offered fascinating insights into the best known and most famous sites in and around the Old City — the Temple Mount, the Via Dolorosa, the Ophel and City of David, Mount Zion, the city walls and gates, etc. And, the fact that he was a native Israeli, a Jew who does not believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and Son of God, did not detract from the lectures he presented on the topography, history, and importance of Jerusalem.

Indeed, he offered a fascinating perspective on the life and death of our Lord. He truly believes in “the historical Jesus” but not “the Christ of Christianity.” He argued that the Gospels reflect the historical reality of Jesus’ ministry, the tension and controversy that led Him to the Cross, and saw Him buried in a rock-cut tomb where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher now stands.

From his point of view, there was indeed a Death on a cross. And there was most certainly a Burial. But there was not and could not be a literal bodily Resurrection. That is a pillar of faith, and not a fact that can be tested and verified.

“So, what happened to the body of Jesus?”

I knew he had been asked that question hundreds of times. That is the question a believer asks someone who argues that there was no Resurrection. In those days following Pentecost and in the years afterwards when the first century disciples were preaching a Risen Lord, critics and scoffers could have pointed to the grave where the earthly remains of Jesus were yet buried. The charge that His disciples stole the body was easily brushed aside by pointing out that soldiers guarded the tomb to prevent that very deception (Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15).

No question about it, the Israeli expert and world-renowned scholar would have a well-rehearsed, carefully reasoned, plausible explanation to account for the

Empty Tomb; some theory that would make me think – a challenging, credible hypothesis requiring real thought and deep-digging research to refute.

Well, maybe it was a brush-off. Maybe the celebrated, credentialed scholar just didn’t have the time or the desire to engage a “nobody” in cowboy boots with a Southern drawl. Maybe he remembered other times and dealings with argumentative zealots and wasn’t in the mood for a head-butting session. Maybe he gave a quick, casual dismissal for reasons I can’t even begin to imagine.

The Scholar’s Answer

To paraphrase the learned scholar, the family and friends of Jesus took His body back to Nazareth and secretly gave our Lord a private, family burial in an unknown plot and, for reasons of their own, chose not to share that location with others.

Think about that for a minute. It’s about as good an explanation as anyone has ever offered for the Empty Tomb. It makes as much sense and is just as defensible as the Swoon Theory (Jesus didn’t really die on the Cross but revived later, rolled away the stone and secretly slipped out of a guarded tomb). Or, grief-stricken, confused women went to the wrong grave after the Sabbath, an empty grave, to finish the anointing of His body. Or, His disciples spoke of the Resurrection as a spiritual metaphor, meaning that the living message of Jesus did not die with Him. Or, the early disciples only saw, or thought they saw, or wanted to see the risen Jesus in a vision.

Josephus tells us that forty years or so later the Roman army penned up a million Jews in Jerusalem when they laid siege to the City. Jerusalem was jam-packed with families who made their pilgrimage to the City for the Passover festival. The roads from Galilee down to Judea would have been just as choked with traffic and travelers following the Passover when Jesus was crucified, when Mary and her helpers took the body of Jesus back to Nazareth for a secret burial. The whole countryside knew what happened in Pilate’s judgment hall! All Israel knew what happened at Golgotha!

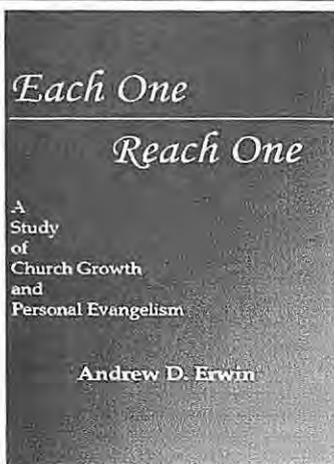
Remember, it was not only the friends of Jesus but also His enemies that made their way back to Galilee

after Passover in Jerusalem. Who can believe that Mary, so prominent in the earthly ministry of Her Son (Mark 3:31-35), so very visible as she stood at the foot of the Cross (John 19:25), and numbered with the 120 disciples in Jerusalem before Pentecost (Acts 1:14) — that Mary could have smuggled the corpse of Jesus out of Jerusalem and all the way back to Nazareth along those crowded roads?

How quickly could they travel? Did they carry Jesus' body on a bier, donkey, or a cart? Who wouldn't have noticed that? How many nights on the road did they camp? How many friends and neighbors did they meet along the way? And did they sneak into Nazareth under the cover of darkness?

The burial of a stranger in a big city might be seen but hardly noticed by the people who live there. We drive by the cemetery every day and see piles of dirt and the funeral home tent and never stop to ask who died. But Nazareth was hardly more than the wide spot in the road! His family was one of but a handful of families in that little village. A secret burial of that most infamous prophet and rabbi in His own home town is just too preposterous to take seriously.

But, so is every other "explanation" of the Empty Tomb!



Each One Reach One contains 26 lessons on the theme of church growth and personal evangelism with discussion questions and a personal Bible study.

\$12.00 plus shipping

Gospel Gleaner Publications

3778 CR 33

Killen, AL 35645

andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

Continued from Page 1: *Religious, but Worldly*

- Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4).
- I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

Countering Worldliness

Worldliness can be countered only by the fact of God. And, the fact of God is powerful, especially as His holiness is recognized and acknowledged. Worldliness, the system of evil that would destroy true faith in God, continually seeks to undermine the fact of God as holy. It suggests that the holiness of God is irrelevant.

It is intriguing to observe modern churchmen in their neglect of the fact of the holiness of God. They prefer to speak of the love of God, and the gentler aspects of God, to the complete neglect of the holiness of God. In most religious activities, God has been so marginalized that His true character and His will are seldom considered, let alone allowed to rule or guide. Personal preference coupled with a preference for the softer side of God leads many religionists to set God's holiness aside. Man's abandonment of the authority and purpose of God is very evident.

Holiness is not compatible with worldliness. Worldliness resists the holiness of God, and fosters a distorted view of the love of God. Yet in all things, in all His attributes and actions, God's holiness is central.

God's holiness includes the following: It is His immeasurable goodness, the full measure of all that is true and right. It is His purifying purity; the basis of His resistance to all that is false, wrong, impure, and evil. God's love is ruled by His holiness, and is therefore virtuous and right; it is holy love. God's holiness and love are inseparable. They each express the other; they define and determine all that God says and does. God's holiness calls us out of the world, and into His will and purpose in Christ.

Any religion that is not ruled by the holiness and the love of God, cannot prepare anyone for eternity.

Sin and Its Consequences

Robert L. Waggoner

The gospel of Jesus Christ is “good news” because it reveals how a bad situation can be overcome. The bad situation developed because Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s commandment not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6). When God placed Adam and Eve within the Garden of Eden, they were innocent from wrong doing. They had the potential for being forever supplied with all physical and material needs and for everlasting life, including close associations with God. But by their disobedience they brought pain, suffering, and the sentence of death upon themselves and all their posterity. They also caused themselves and all their descendants to be separated from God. They had been warned about consequences of disobedience, yet they disobeyed. Why?

Reasons for Sin

Sometimes disobedience results from deception. Eve was deceived (Genesis 3:13), but Adam was not (1 Timothy 2:14). Whether or not one is deceived, sin results from yielding to temptation. “Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14-15). Notice that temptation comes from one’s own desires. Desire is portrayed as a woman who conceives and gives birth to sin. Sin is presented as coming to maturity and then producing death. Even so, sin comes from Satan, the devil. “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning” (1 John 3:8, see also John 8:44).

What Is Sin?

Just what is sin, and how may it be characterized? In the Bible, sin is described in several ways. “The devising of foolishness is sin” (Proverbs 24:9). “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). Descriptive English language terms regarding sin are rebellion, transgression, evil, missing the mark, failure, blunder, unrighteous, impious, depraved, lawless, turning aside, going astray, etc.

Sin is deceptive because it promises more than it can give. Thus, “the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Genesis 3:4-5). But death did

come as a result of sin (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12). Sin seems to be enticing, i.e., attractive, alluring, as when Eve “saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate” (Genesis 3:6). But what Adam and Eve learned is that they were naked. And with that they also realized shame, fear, and guilt. Sin is rebellion against God’s commandments. It is an offense against God that produces alienation and estrangement from God (Isaiah 59:2).

Misconceptions about Sin

Three major misconceptions about sin currently exist within our culture. Each has consequences. First, while many people may not say so, they often act as though there is no such thing as sin. Failure to acknowledge the existence of sin is often derived from the influence of Darwinian evolutionary theory which holds that God does not exist, that humanity evolved, and that there is no universal ethical standard to which everyone is accountable. The fact that sin is no longer a significant word in our culture’s vocabulary indicates that we are becoming increasingly mindless of sin and are decreasing as a God-fearing society.

Second, secular humanists, who also believe in evolution, generally believe that people are inherently good. Although they think that evil exists within society they reject the notion that individuals are sinful. Since they cannot blame existence of evil on individual sins, they blame the existence of evil on society as a whole. But this belief is illogical because without individuals there would be no society and whenever evil exists within society it must first exist within individuals. Because individuals are not charged with sin, our society is becoming increasingly evil.

Third, among people who believe in the existence of God and human accountability toward God the most prevalent misconception is that the first sin of Adam and Eve is inherited by all humanity. Because every person is a human descent from Adam and Eve, all humanity is considered to have inherited a sinful nature. Every newborn child is considered guilty of Adam’s transgression and therefore totally depraved and deserving of eternal damnation. However, this belief is inconsistent in many ways not only with biblical teaching but also with natural experiences.

First, the Bible declares that all humanity is the offspring of God (Acts 17:29). God is not evil but good. Jesus noted that the Old Testament referred to people as "gods" (Psalm 82:6-7; John 10:35). People are declared, both before and after Adam's sin, to be made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9). Jesus was human, being the offspring of David (Revelation 22:16), yet Jesus was perfect (Hebrews 4:15).

Second, the law of God is written in everyone's heart. Everyone has a conscience (Romans 2:14-15; Matthew 7:12). Every individual is responsible for his own sin, not that of others (Deuteronomy 24:16). People corrupt themselves (Genesis 6:12; 8:21, Deuteronomy 32:5, Psalm 14:1-3, Romans 3:23, Ecclesiastes 7:29). People can choose between right and wrong (Isaiah 7:16, Romans 5:14; 9:11). The "Golden Rule" implies human ability to know right from wrong (Matthew 7:12).

Third, sin is never considered a calamity or misfortune in the Bible. Rather, sin is described as rebellion (1 Samuel 15:22-23; Nehemiah 9:17). Moreover, the teaching that people can inherit sin is inconsistent with natural experiences. Our natural experiences inform us that people reap the consequences of actions (their own and others), but not the actions themselves. If people can inherit another person's act of sin, why is it that only the first sin of Adam is inherited? Why not Adam's other sins also? If people can inherit a sin of Adam, why is it that sins of other people are not inherited? If an act of sin can be inherited, why cannot an act of righteousness also be inherited? Actions, whether good or bad, are not inherited. People are not guilty of Adam's sin and do not inherit a corrupt nature because of it.

A most significant consequence of sin is that in order for humanity to be restored to fellowship with God, God had to give His Son to die on the cross that we might have forgiveness of our sins (John 3:16-17; Acts 5:31; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). Sin is so heinous that nothing short of that was possible. Because God loves us and wants our fellowship, He wants us redeemed from sin. He makes our reconciliation possible through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19). And that is good news.

Let Us Be More Like Jesus

Gerald Cowan

We often sing a song that says, "O to be like Thee, blessed redeemer ... Stamp thine own image deep on my heart" (written by Thomas O. Chisholm, 1897). Another of our songs says, "I want to be more like Jesus and follow him day by day ... More and more like Jesus, my Savior who died for me" (written by J. M. Stillman, 1878). The apostle Paul, who tried to copy Jesus in everything, asked people to follow him as he himself followed Christ, in the way that Christ has shown us (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians 3:16-17). We should be serious about both the desire and the effort made to become and be more like Jesus. If we list a few of the outstanding qualities and characteristics of Jesus we may be surprised by what it really means to be like Him.

He was submissive and obedient to His mother and His step-father as long as it did not prevent Him from doing the will of His heavenly Father (Luke 2:49-52). He was open and honest about who He was, what He was doing, and what He asked others to do – no pretense, no hypocrisy and no duplicity, not even to save His own life.

He obeyed the law of God that applied to Him and His time (Galatians 4:4). No matter how He was tempted by others or by Satan, He did not sin by violating any part of God's law (John 8:46, Hebrews 4:15).

He did not retaliate against His enemies, and did not punish them when they mistreated Him, even though He was able to do so and would have been justified in doing it. He did not even allow His disciples to defend Him with violence or physical force (Matthew 26:50-53) and does not allow it now, though some pseudo-Christian churches have waged bloody wars and "crusades" in His name.

He did not and does not bribe or force anyone to serve Him or do His bidding. But self-professed followers buy and sell religious offices and favors and have tortured people in various inquisitions to prevent them from departing from what their church calls orthodox.

Some complain that Christ, His gospel, and His church are not strong enough or attractive enough to evangelize and convert the world. But the problem is not with Jesus, or His words, or His church. The problem is that only a few are really like Him. But the world sees the rag-tag disreputable un-Christ-like people who profess to be followers of Christ and are confused, thinking Jesus is like the people who call Him Lord and claim to belong to Him (Matthew 7:21-23).

The Gospel Gleaner is now on Facebook

BEAR VALLEY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Celebrating 50 years of Preacher Training

Any work, business, or enterprise that has a 50-year history has many stories! Reaching a 50-year plateau is a noteworthy benchmark. So also is it with the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver.

It all began when two elders of the Bear Valley church of Christ, Roy Baker and Bill Hughes, were given an idea: why not start a preacher school at the foot of the beautiful Rocky Mountains? Even though the Bear Valley congregation was just three years old, these men had big dreams and great faith. So, in the fall of 1965, the Bear Valley School of Preaching (as it was known back then) was begun. Thirteen men enrolled in that first class.

As the years have continued, men from all over the



United States made their way to Denver to enroll in this two-year program. Bear Valley now has well over 1,000

alumni and graduates preaching the Word all over the world.

Bear Valley's Purpose

When the Bible Institute was begun in 1965, it was clear that the reason was clearly stated in 2 Timothy 2:2. Bear Valley is training men who can then teach others. With a 50-year history, it is clear that the Institute is doing something right in this goal.

Also, Bear Valley's motto is "We Train Preachers." While there are many good works that are a part of serving God, Bear Valley is focused on one primary area: training preachers. As a result, everything we do, from the curriculum to the faculty assembled is to accomplish that one objective.

Bear Valley's Unique Curriculum

Bear Valley has assembled teachers that have earned reputations as being knowledgeable and exper-

rienced. There are men who have had mission experience, having been personally in the mission field. We have men who have spent a majority of their lives serving as full-time ministers. Bear Valley has teachers who have expertise in biblical languages, history, geography, church growth, evangelism, homiletics and hermeneutics. Most importantly, these men are knowledgeable of God's Word, from Genesis to Revelation.

Perhaps one aspect that is unique about Bear Valley is that they have two men who are nationally recognized scholars in their respective fields. Michael Hite is well known as an expert on the LOGOS Bible Software program. Each year he is on numerous programs sharing his knowledge of this software. This tool can be an important resource for any preacher or teacher, but it requires some education on how to maximize its use. As a result, Bear Valley has a class devoted to teaching this software, with Michael teaching it. Being able to sit at the feet of this man in his "Ministry Technologies" class is a bonus to the program at Bear Valley.

In addition, Denny Petrillo is known for his knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and has excelled in the area of Exegesis. His class on Biblical Exegesis is typically a student favorite. In addition to this, Bear Valley teaches an exegetical approach to the biblical text in its textual classes. It is important not only to know what the text means, but why it means that. Bear Valley gives students the tools to study and research questions for themselves.

One Bear Valley graduate said: "The exegesis program at Bear Valley is what made my time as a student truly exceptional. Learning the tools for deeper Bible study and putting those tools to use not only made me a better Bible student, but also increased the amount of joy I received while studying" (Wesley Walker).

Bear Valley is also approved by the Colorado Board of Higher Education to grant degrees. As a result, a student can receive an Associate, Bachelor and even a Master's Degree in Biblical Studies.

Bear Valley's Facilities

Bear Valley students enjoy modern stadium-style classrooms. Each classroom is equipped with all the current technology (such as PowerPoint projectors), and also has the latest in Video Conferencing equipment. This enables Bear Valley to teach in remote locations all over the world, as well as to have men from various locations teach here.



do their research in this beautiful library.

In addition, Bear Valley boasts a library of over 18,000 volumes. The students have all of the resources they need to

Bear Valley's World-Wide Focus

In 1997, Bear Valley launched into a new area of preacher training. An opportunity to start a full-time school in the Ukraine opened up, and Bear Valley seized the moment. Since that time, and the overwhelming success of that program, Bear Valley has begun new schools all over the world. These are not video schools, but fulltime schools with live teachers, libraries, etc. Presently, Bear Valley has 18 international schools, training over 300 men. In the years we have had these international schools, hundreds of men have graduated, dozens of churches planted, and thousands baptized into Christ. We hope to begin four new schools by the end of this year.



For men who are thinking about doing mission work, Bear Valley is a logical place to go. With these international schools, a man can connect with an area in which he would like to work. If his heart is in Africa, Bear Valley has extension schools. Europe, Central America, South America, Asia, India – you name it, Bear Valley has extension schools there.

Contact Bear Valley

Obviously there is much more that could be said. For all interested in learning more about this work check out the web site: www.WeTrainPreachers.com, or call the office at 1-800-766-4641 (toll-free).

2014 BEAR VALLEY LECTURES

FIFTY YEARS

**MAKING KNOWN GOD'S
ETERNAL PURPOSE**
A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

MARIE BLACKWELDER • PACE BODENBACH • BOB BODLESON • BJ CLARKE • ERIC CLER
MICHAEL DEY • JASON JACKSON • JEFF JENNINGS • DAVID LYLE • DAVID MILLER • STAFFORD NORTH
NELYN OTEY • DAN OWEN • ERIC OWENS • ERIC PARRISH • DENNY PETRALLO • NEAL POLLARD
BOB REIDEN • ANDY ROBINSON • DANIELA SARGACE • BOB TURNER • MIKE VESTAL • BILL WICKING
JUNE WUKE • MARTRA LAIN • KATHY POLLARD • LISA RUPPERTON

SEPT 18-21

BEAR VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST
2707 SOUTH LAMAR STREET • DENVER, COLORADO

FREE BANQUET
FRIDAY EVENING - PLEASE RSVP @ 303.986.5800

DON'T MISS IT!

DENVER

WETRAINPREACHERS.COM

Preach the Word as it is written without fear or favor, without compromise. Any congregation that has a preacher like that, well, you ought to love him to death. God will bless him and make that congregation strong.

-Marshall Keeble

Some Thoughts on Elders and Preachers

Ernest S. Underwood

In the military, at least when I was drafted back in 1952, the popular saying to all of us recruits was, "Rank has its privileges." As the years have gone by, I have come to the conclusion that a similar saying can be adopted by those of us have reached the "golden years." I believe it can truthfully be said in many instances that "age has its privileges."

For a good portion of my life I have been acquainted with the observation that "age does not always imply wisdom." However, I believe that most would agree that true wisdom only comes to one as he grows older. By this I mean that one, in order to gain the kind of wisdom of which I speak, must have lived long enough to have experienced the overall living of life, having experienced both the good and the bad. Having done this, if he is an astute person, he will know how to separate the wheat from the chaff.

With these remarks behind us, I intend to discuss some things that go on in some churches of the Lord that *need not be*, and somethings that *must not be*, especially as they relate to the elders and the preacher.

Elders

A congregation which has men meeting every qualification given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul should and must appoint such men to the work of an elder. For a church to fail or refuse to do this is indicative of the fact that it is not operating in harmony with the Scriptures.

Paul left Titus in Crete to "set in order the things that were lacking" (Titus 1:5). The churches on the island had appointed no elders, one of those things that evidently was lacking. Paul's instruction to Titus was that he should take care of this matter and "appoint elders in every city." Paul states that these men who compose the eldership must have enough knowledge to detect a false teacher and his teaching. They must also have enough love for God and for the souls under their care to "stop the mouths of the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). It is their grave responsibility to feed, nourish, lead, protect, and defend from all false teachers and their teaching, the precious souls of all those whom they oversee.

Yet, many of those who have preached for fifty years or more, and have served in several different churches during those years, have witnessed elders, and some-

times the entire eldership, who have been much more interested in attendance numbers and bank account figures than they have been in spiritual growth of the members of the church they are serving. Even though elders do have the responsibility to see that such things are taken care of, it should be noted that God has made available to them those special servants (deacons) to attend to these matters. The Scriptures do not teach or command that the elders are to spend the major portion of their time with things concerning the church building and grounds.

Elders have an important and specific work to do and they are not authorized to assign this work to others, the preacher included. First, even though wisdom would dictate that the elders listen to and consider any comments made by the members about the choice of a preacher they may be considering for the local work the final decision must be that of the elders. They must choose a man (male gender – a female will never be considered by an eldership that loves and obeys the Lord.), who is sound in the faith, and a man whose morals, and the morals of his family, correspond to the teaching of the Scriptures.

These men must also understand that they are not inviting a man to work with the church for him to do *their work for them*. They must also understand that the man whom they are considering should not be expected to simply be a "go-for" for the membership. The one thing which they must demand of the preacher is that he "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

To illustrate this point; several years ago in a city where I was preaching there was a rather large congregation located across town. When its preacher left for another work the elders compiled a list of fourteen duties which any applicant for the work would be expected to accept and fulfill. I obtained a copy of that list. In that list of duties were some good things, some somewhat silly things, and some ridiculous things. Yet, in all of those items, there was not one requirement that the man must be able to preach. This was a sad situation.

Second, the elders must insist that the preacher *do* the work of a preacher then give him the time to do this work. They must not be hesitant in telling him what they

expect. Scriptural elders want the "whole counsel of God" taught. They must realize that they have no right to forbid him from preaching on certain biblical subjects, as did an eldership with whom I interviewed several years ago. I was invited to accept the work on the condition that I would not be allowed to preach on: 1) The different translations; 2) Marriage - Divorce - Remarriage; 3) The work of the Holy Spirit, especially how He did His work. Needless to say, I did not accept that work.

When the preacher fails in his obligation to preach the whole counsel, and begins to ride some kind of hobby or just gets lazy and/or indifferent to his work, the elders must attempt to guide him back to his work. If he continues in his indifference, or if he insists on preaching constantly on his "hobby," he should be dismissed regardless how likeable he may be to the members or how "good" he seems to be with the young people.

Preachers

First and foremost, the preacher's work is to preach. In order for him to do this he must prepare. For several years I have taught a course in a school of preaching in India on First and Second Timothy, and Titus. I firmly believe that all such preacher students should be soundly indoctrinated in both the importance of learning how to preach, and how to prepare themselves for this most rewarding work. I especially emphasize 1 Timothy 4:6-16.

A warning: Regardless of how much knowledge a young man receives in college or a preacher training school, he neither possesses the wisdom, nor the experience to accept the position (work) of an elder. He must remember that *it is not his duty* to go to any given congregation and immediately "appoint" elders. Nor is it his work to "get rid of the elders" because he believes himself to be more qualified to know who should or should not be elders.

We would encourage preachers, both young and old, to read and carefully study Second Timothy chapter three. After having done so, let him carefully and prayerfully note the charge that the apostle gives immediately following in chapter four: "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away

from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

May it ever be faithfully preached and lovingly obeyed!



Where Were They?

Owen D. Olbricht

Severe storms and tornadoes traveled out of Texas through the southern states from Oklahoma to North Carolina, Sunday through Tuesday, April 27-29, 2014. Homes were destroyed and much damage and devastation followed in the path of these storms. Immediately, congregations from all across the United States became involved in helping those who suffered loss because of these storms.

Such willingness by churches to help those in need is not unusual and can be seen among Christians throughout history since the beginning of Christianity (Acts 2:45; 4:34, 35; 11:29). This is true because of the life and teaching of Jesus. Peter reported concerning Jesus that He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). His followers want to help others because they are trying to "walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

Jesus' Teaching

Jesus laid down principles that motivate His followers to help others who are destitute. One of these great principles is the "Golden Rule" that is found in what is called the Sermon on the Mount. "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them*" (Matthew 7:12).

Jesus taught that a neighbor is the person who helps those who are in dire need, in like manner as the Samaritan who helped an unknown man that had been beaten and left to die (Luke 10:30-37).

In the judgment scene Jesus presented, all people were gathered before Him and being separated, some on His right hand and some on the left. To those on His right hand, who helped others, He will tell them to come and inherit the kingdom; but to those on the left, who did nothing, He will tell them to depart into everlasting fire (Matthew 25:31-46).

Paul, a spiritual servant of Jesus, reported to the Ephesian elders that Jesus had said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

In his letter to the churches of Galatia He wrote, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).

Those who are following Jesus' teaching will try to find people who have suffered loss in order that they can supply their needs. This is why churches were out front helping these storm victims.

Where Were They?

Where were the atheists in this time of crisis? In their zeal to make known their faith, they have become organized to fight the belief that God exists. Millions of dollars are being spent to portray atheists as living an acceptable and enjoyable lifestyle that benefits society. Some of these non-believers might have been active in helping in this time of disaster; but, if so, it was only a few of the twelve million in the United States, and the media did not find them.

Some time ago a number of believers who demonstrated in Washington D. C., which was estimated to include over 500,000, was not reported by the media, but a small group of atheists who later demonstrated in the same place made national news.

If even a small group of atheists supported the relief efforts, the media would have discovered and reported their effort. This would have made national headline news.

Who Serves Society More?

Truly, those who believe in God serve and assist their communities more and better than atheists. Atheists have become drones on society, who greatly benefit from the dedication and generosity of the believers' goodness and kindness.

Jesus said, "You shall know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16). Which group has better fruits, those who follow atheism or true followers of Jesus' teaching? You be the judge.

From what I have seen and heard, there is no contest. The fruits of Jesus' teaching are far superior when compared to the "fruits" of atheism.

From a Woman's Perspective

After the "Amen"

Melanie Erwin

If you have ever made a public response to the invitation, you are well aware of the courage and determination it takes to let go of the pew in front of you, make those steps to the front of the church building, and confess your weaknesses or faults to your Christian peers. It is very humbling to reach out to your church family and admit that you can't do something on your own.

For many, our hearts are pounding and our emotions take over as we try to be "tough" but our broken hearts just won't allow us that pleasure. Tears flow no matter how hard we try to hold them in. Sometimes we can feel so broken by sin that we desperately need and seek the love of our church family. We don't like to show our weaknesses, but at that precise moment our guards are completely down and we beg for encouragement and prayers to be said on our behalf.

After a struggling Christian has made a public response, it is a general rule that an elder or preacher pray to God on behalf of that person. We plead with God for courage, forgiveness, strength, protection, or wisdom – whatever the request may be.

What should be our response to our struggling sister or brother after the "Amen"? What is the most effective way to bear the burden of the hurting brother or sister? (Galatians 6:1-2) After the "Amen," one could simply leave and go about their day as though nothing has happened. But, if *you* were the one who asked for prayers, how would you want your church family to respond to you? What if *you* saw your brethren leave without saying a word, would you wonder what could be more important? Would you wonder if they truly cared?

Let us each ask ourselves: If it were *my* spouse struggling, *my* child hurting, *my* mother or father needing help, *my* sibling weeping, would *I* leave without saying a word? Would I be hurt if I went to the front to give someone I dearly loved "hugs and sugars" and turned to see a crowd leaving, without so much as uttering a word of encouragement to them? Are we stopping and putting ourselves in their shoes? Are we "considering one another to provoke unto love and to good works"? (Hebrews 10:24)

As Christians, it is so hard to fight certain temptations and sin at times, but it should be so easy to offer encouragement to our church family. It is okay if we are late to lunch. It is okay if family members wait for us, because of such an event as this. We should never put first the things of this world. If we do, then we have lost sight of what it's all about, and we should repent.

The Bible teaches us to "encourage one another even more so as we see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). This encouragement should not stop at the beginning of the worship service. We should but encourage each other during and after worship as well. It's a continual encouragement.

Let us love one another with a Christ-like love. Every hug and word of encouragement helps to mend a broken spirit. The knowledge of knowing a church family loves and supports you gives more strength than one prayer alone ever could. That is how God designed His church to be. We are each other's support group. But if that support group ever becomes apathetic, it needs to be reminded of exactly what our purpose is here on this earth.

May we always be mindful to take the time to give a hug or say an encouraging word to those who need it most! In return, we will be encouraged and uplifted too.

God's Law of Exclusion

Travis L. Quertermous

The first thing many visitors to the worship service of churches of Christ notice is the absence of instrumental music. And so they will often ask, "Where's the piano?" The basic answer is that the New Testament does not authorize its use, either generically or specifically.

In other words, what God does not authorize is forbidden for us to introduce into our teaching and practice religiously. There are numerous examples and principles in the Bible that lead irresistibly to this conclusion. Nadab and Abihu lost their lives for using "unauthorized fire" (Leviticus 10:1-3, NIV). Likewise, we read, "Do not add to His words, Lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6; cf. Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19). These and other passages teach what we call "the silence of the Scriptures" or what some brethren have called "God's law of exclusion."

But sometimes faithful and well-meaning brethren have misstated the law of exclusion and made a bad argument against instrumental music. I often hear preachers say that since God *specified* singing in the New Testament that automatically *excludes* any other form of music like instrumental music. Oftentimes, the example of Noah's ark is used. They will say that because God specified gopher wood, that excluded any other form of wood, like pine or oak.

With all due respect, that argument is simply unsound and misrepresents God's law of silence or exclusion. Suppose I were to say to you, "I heard the Charlie Dan-

iels Band sing 'The Devil Went Down To Georgia' last night at the county fair." Would anyone *automatically* conclude that excluded Charlie from playing his fiddle? I doubt it! Even so, defenders of the instrument will argue that *sing* does not therefore exclude **playing** an instrument. But we hasten to add that neither does it automatically *include* it! You see, simply specifying one form of action does not automatically include or exclude any other actions.

Let me give you a Scriptural example. In Psalm 149:1, Jehovah commanded Israel, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of the saints." Did God's specifying singing exclude instrumental music under the Old Testament? No, for two verses later He also authorized dancing, timbrels, and harps to accompany their singing. But remember that the only reason such was included was because God authorized them in verse three.

God's true law of silence is this: what He does not authorize in His word is excluded (forbidden) in our doctrine and practice. What excluded pine from being used in Noah's ark was not that God had specified gopher wood, but that He did not authorize pine! In other words, He authorized only gopher wood. In the New Testament, the Lord has only authorized *a cappella* music for the worship of the church. Since He is silent concerning instrumental music, it is excluded and we sin when we bring it in.

Consider Hebrews 7:14 as an example of the law of exclusion. In explaining why Jesus Christ could not be a Levitical priest, the writer said, "For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke **nothing** concerning priesthood." Had Moses said, "Thou shalt not select priests from the tribe of Judah"? No, God had not specifically forbidden such. But the fact that He said nothing about it, that He was silent on it, that He had not authorized it, was sufficient to exclude the men of Judah from being priests. God had sanctioned only the men of the tribe of Levi as priests and thus all the other tribes were excluded. Notice that even the Son of God was bound by the silence of the Scriptures! How much more so are we bound by it?

But notice that the argument of Hebrews 7:14 is **not** that God specified Levi and therefore excluded Judah! What excluded Judah was that "Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood" for the men of that tribe. What excludes a matter is God's silence, the lack of Scriptural authorization. So it is with instrumental music. What excludes it for New Testament Christians is the lack of New Testament authority for its use in Christian worship.

Brethren, let us be sure we stand for the truth, but let us be sure we do so with sound logic. In the words of Wayne Jackson, let us be sure we are not "defending the faith with a broken sword." Such hurts the cause of truth, no matter how good one's intentions are.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00

Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month

Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month

Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month

Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

News & Notes

Obituaries

W.D. Jeffcoat, 84, of Murray, Kentucky, died Saturday, August 2, 2014 at the Murray Cailoway County Hospital.

Brother Jeffcoat preached for many years including considerable radio preaching. He wrote for various brotherhood publications, authored a book dealing with the sin of social drinking, and compiled a songbook for use in worship titled, "Sacred Songs of the Church."

For several years he directed the Freed-Hardeman College Chapel Singers, including both mixed chorus and male quartet, who made personal appearances in many states and recorded for International Gospel Hour, in addition to television appearances each Sunday.

Since 1957 he had written over five hundred sacred songs, many of which have been published in such hymnals as Christian Hymns III, Precious Praises, Songs of the Church, and Church Gospel Songs and Hymns, several of which have been translated into foreign languages. His extensive collection of music material includes over one thousand hymnals, several of which date to the 1700's.

Survivors include his wife Betty Wheeler Jeffcoat of Murray, KY. They married on June 26, 1948 in Fulton, MS, Three daughters, six grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren survive.

Gleanings from the Mission Field

From **Paul Franks** (Kosciusko, MS): For the last 17 summers I have had the opportunity to lead a group of young people to the country of Lithuania to conduct a Christian Youth Camp. We had 15 in our group this summer from Lake Charles, LA, Houston, TX, Cheyenne, WY, Raleigh, NC, and Kosciusko, MS. My father Al Franks, who is the editor of the *Magnolia Messenger*, and my mother were able to make the trip with me this year.

Our group worked with the teenagers. There are two more weeks of camp, one for the younger children and a family camp. In all over 300 people attend our Christian camps each summer.

Through social media, and as I travel and visit many churches, I am more aware of the hundreds and maybe even thousands of people who travel all over the globe to teach the gospel. It is encouraging to see all of the good that is being done. For those who go, I usually see that person's faith grow and mature.

As I think of the work, time, and expense of making such a missionary journey, I sometimes wonder if we are really making progress and is it worth the trouble? Any doubt that I have each year is erased when many of the young people who attend camp at the end of the week, will get up at the last campfire and tell the group how much this camp means to them, and how that many have come from no faith in God to having faith in God and a belief in Jesus Christ to be the son of God. We had four baptisms our week at camp.

I am reminded of the fact that one person's faith in God can change the world. I believe that the seed of the word of God has been planted in thousands of young people's hearts in this country of the former Soviet Union these last 17 years, and I believe that God will give the increase.

Let's continue to pray for the body of Christ in Lithuania and around the world and especially in our great country the United States of America.

Strata Congregation Closes

From **Raymond Elliott** (Prattville, AL): It is with sadness in my heart that I inform you of the 'closing' of the Strata congregation in the Sellers community in south Montgomery County, Alabama. The last assemblies were conducted on Sunday, July 27 according to Brooks Boothe, longtime member and the treasurer of the congregation.

The Strata congregation was begun through the preaching of William McGaughy about 1828 and especially the preaching of Dr. W.H. Hooker beginning about 1840. Among the number of new converts was Mrs. Polly Barnes who was married to Elkanah Barnes. Their son, Justus Mack Barnes attended Bethany College and was taught by Alexander Campell. Following his graduation in 1856, he returned to his home and established the Strata Academy which later became the Highland Home College.

It was reported that at one time there were some 500 members of the Strata congregation. However, with the passing of the years, the deaths of the older members and the moving of younger families to the cities and to larger

congregations, the number of members in attendance grew smaller.

Newest Addition to the Bradd Family



Clinton, IL: *Gospel Gleaner* staff writer **Stephen R. Bradd** and wife **Ranae** were blessed by the birth of a baby girl, Rebeckah RuthAnn. She was born July 2, and was 21 ¼ inches long, and 9 lbs. 15 oz. She already weighs 12 pounds! Her brothers are Adin, Abel, Abram, Amos, & Asa. Her grandparents are Robert & Kathy Bradd (Clinton, IL), and Steve & Rhonda Breeden (East Peoria, IL). Congratulations!

Southwest Increases Enrollment

Austin, TX: The 2014-2015 Academic Year commenced August 11 for Southwest. Five students graduated in July and are beginning their preaching works in Oklahoma, Texas, Taiwan, and Liberia. Twelve students returned to begin their second year of study this August, and they are joined by an incoming class of seven full-time students. Please pray for these efforts to prepare Gospel preachers and teachers!

Upcoming Events

Denver, CO: **The Bear Valley Bible Institute** will be hosting its annual Bible lectureship from September 18-21. The lectures will focus on the book of Ephesians.

Moundsville, WV: **The West Virginia School of Preaching** will host its 20th Annual Victory Lectures October 19-23. Keynote speakers are Denny Petrillo, president of Bear Valley Bible Institute, and Neal Pollard, preacher for the Bear Valley church of Christ. The theme is "The WORD in John." Lectures will cover nearly every text in John's Gospel. For more information, visit our website at www.wvsop.com, or call 304-845-8001.

West Branch, MI: **John T. Polk II** will be in a Gospel Meeting, October 2-5, 2014, with the church of Christ in West Branch, Michigan. Sunday services are at 9:30 AM Bible Class, 10:30 AM Worship, all evening services are at 6:30 PM. The church building is located at 213 South 8th Street, West Branch, MI, 48661.

In Response to the July Editorial

Dear Andy,

You wrote a splendid and fitting tribute to your grandmother. She would appreciate it. Her good works and influence will continue on into eternity. I loved Mary Belle for about 60 years. She was faithful, solid for the truth, and she stood firmly for the Bible. I am thankful for her powerful influence and encouragement of you. I appreciated her help and encouragement for me. I loved and respected her highly.

Enclosed are a couple of articles for you to consider for the *Gleaner*.

Enclosed is a check for the expense of the *Gleaner* and in memory of Mary Belle. She was precious in the sight of God and us – and multitudes.

In Christ,

E. Claude Gardner
Henderson, TN

Dear Andy,

Thank you for what you wrote about your grandmother, sister Mary Belle Bates. The Scripture says, "And it fell on that day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman..." (2 Kings 4:8). I have known, and now know, many "great" women. Two of these include your grandmother Mary Belle Horner Bates as well as your great grandmother Etta Horner. Both of them were close Christian friends, as were their families to Corinne, my wife, and me. The Bible says, "As is the mother, so is her daughter" (Ezekiel 16:44). Your grandmother deserved the gracious compliments which you generously paid to her, but I assure you that your great grandmother also richly deserved the same type of commendation. I wish that the world were filled with the type of Christian women like both of them.

You are richly blessed to have a great heritage. You had a great family and I pray that you will add "luster" to it.

In Christian Love,

Garland Elkins
Memphis, TN

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

September, 2014

Number Nine

Eli's Epitaph

Ronald D. Bryant

Epitaphs, though sobering, even sad, are often instructive. There is deep pathos and much instruction in the epitaph of Eli, the servant of God. The day he died was one of disaster. Yet, his long life was summed up in the following words: "And he had judged Israel forty years." He served by divine appointment, and in many ways he rendered service to the people of Israel. Yet, his death was ruled by more than ordinary grief.

Eli's Leadership of Israel

For forty years Eli was in a position of spiritual service. If he had been faithful to God, the natural effect of his forty years could have been of great value in the formation of the spiritual character of the people of Israel. Yet, all the good that Eli did with one hand, he undid with the other. He was negligent, and his neglect neutralized that which was good. This illustrates the fact that the character of those in leadership impacts those being led, for better or worse.

Was Eli blind to the decline of the spiritual condition of the people and of the priests, including his two sons? There is no evidence that he gave any consideration to his part in that decline. There is no real evidence that he was concerned with the impact of his attitude and conduct upon his own family, or upon the nation.

A weak leader wonders how it is that his words are ignored, that those who look to him for guidance are dissatisfied, even resentful. A weak parent is upset that his wishes are ignored, and his role is not respected. Not a few overestimate the worth of their intentions, while failing to see that it is their own neglect

and their failings either negate or neutralize what little good they do.

Eli's years of "benevolent neglect," led to more than the death of his sons. His years of fulfilling the "duties of office" were ruined by his failure to discipline and to correct his sons. On his watch, the Ark was used unwisely, and then was seized as a prize of battle by the enemies of Israel. Yet, the crisis of failure was marked out long before the Ark of the Covenant was taken into battle and seized by the Philistines. In reality, there are crises of failure in families, congregations, and communities, as well as in individuals. Inconsistent and wrong-headed attitudes and actions pave the way for disaster, preceding the day of crisis.

A Day of Crisis

Crisis came to Eli and to Israel. On that day Eli sat in his official seat at the gate in Shiloh, feeble, almost blind, yet eager to hear of the outcome of the battle. He absorbed the news that his two sons had been slain, yet when he heard that the Ark of the Covenant had been taken by the Philistines, he trembled, then collapsed and died; "suddenly, and without remedy!"

Eli knew that he should have forbidden the improper use of the Ark. He knew that he should have called the people of Israel to repentance. Yet, at the last, he had led so weakly that he possessed no real influence or moral authority. He trembled! He collapsed! He died!

Continued on page 5

Humankind has not only been buried beneath the rubble of destroyed buildings and shattered lives because of the violent nature of the Islamic religion, but for the past several years, we have also been buried beneath a mass of public relation propaganda which would have us to believe that Islam is a religion of peace.

Is this true? Is Islam really a religion of peace? Indeed it is strange to think of Islam as being a peaceful religion. The notion of warfare is so ingrained in this religion that Islam has really never stopped being at war, either with other religions or with itself.

Islamic violence begins with the tactics of their founder, Mohammed, and his teachings which are regarded by Muslims as the inspired word of God. Mohammed and his followers have used religious hysteria to incite political action and to develop a mind of war among the religion's adherents. For 1,400 years the cry of "Jihad" has led to religions, cultures, and civilizations being conquered and suppressed. Presently, some Muslims feel empowered enough to attempt to conquer and suppress the way of life we hold dear.

Today, we are told that this is simply a misunderstanding of the true nature of Islam. We are told that Mohammed only used violence in self-defense. However, even Muslim historians tell us he used war for the purpose of spreading Islamic rule and gaining revenge against his adversaries. On several occasions he rejected offers of surrender from the besieged inhabitants of the town he had in mind to

conquer and killed those whom he could have taken prisoner.

Mohammad was a military leader, no doubt about it. He is heralded as being a master of war and intimidation. The so-called prophet would lay siege to a town, massacre the men, allow their women to be raped, and take the children for slaves. When his men did not want to fight or did not feel it was right to fight, Mohammed would promise slaves and the spoils of plunder if they fought, while threatening them with damnation if they refused.

Mohammed was also a religious fanatic. Not only did he take accounts from the Bible and add his own ending to them (including Job making a vow to beat his disobedient wife with one hundred lashes), but he also used his "prophesying" to promote violence.

The Koran (a book which is about two-thirds the size of the New Testament) contains over one hundred verses which call Muslims to war with nonbelievers. The reader of the Koran will find perpetual commands to chop off heads and fingers, and to kill infidels wherever they may be hiding. Muslims who do not join the fight are called "hypocrites" and warned that Allah will condemn them in hell if they do not fight.

However, Islamic apologists often attempt to compare such passages in the Koran with the Bible, when truthfully no comparison can be made. Each of the Koran's admonitions is perpetual and left open-ended until Islam would reign supremely and all other religions be destroyed through violent means.

Granted, many accounts of warfare can be found in the Old Testament with Israel, but even Israel was told of the time when the children of God would make war no more, beating their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks (Isaiah 2:4). Isaiah was pointing to the coming kingdom of Christ. It was never God's will that His spiritual kingdom should be armed in such carnal conflict and strife.

The borders of Christ's kingdom, unlike Mohammed, are spread through the gospel (Mark 16:15), rather than intimidation. Our war is spiritual, not carnal (2 Corinthians 10:4). Our sword is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17), and it is to be used on the human heart (Hebrews 4:12). Faith is our shield (Ephesians 6:16), salvation our helmet. Our enemy is not our fellow man, but Satan and his forces of wickedness (Ephesians 6:11-12). We are not to render evil for evil (Romans 12:17), but to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). We allow God to take His vengeance on the wicked (Romans 13:4) and gladly commit that judgment into His hands (2 Corinthians 5:10-11; Hebrews 10:30-31).

Islamic apologists will also attempt to answer these scriptures by pointing to the warring ways of the Catholics, and even Protestants like Calvin, and the Church of England. However, not one of these movements is a true or accurate depiction of the Christian faith, and it can be argued that such false forms of the faith are as much of a scourge on humanity as is Islam.

Continued on page 13

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Nine
September, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	James R. McGill
Grady Miller	Owen D. Olbright
David Pharr	John T. Polk, II
Travis Quertermous	Andy Robison
Roger Shepherd	Ron Thomas
Ernest Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com
(256) 627-3215

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *Eli's Epitaph*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *Is Islam a Religion of Peace?*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Is the Bible Credible?*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 6 *The Bible Is a "Christian Evidence" Textbook!*
John T. Polk, II
- 8 *How Long Should a Marriage Last?*
Gerald Cowan
- 9 *The Conversion of A.J. & Lonia B. Harden and Family*
Raymond Elliott
- 10 *Preacher Performance*
Grady Miller
- 12 *Honoring James S. Ward*
James R. McGill
- 14 News & Notes
- 16 Reader Replies

Is the Bible Credible?

Robert L. Waggoner

Sometimes people claim that the God of the Bible does not exist and that the biblical stories of creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah's ark, the tower of Babel, etc. are all fictional, myth, legend or saga. Their claims are not only against beliefs in early historical events in Genesis, but also against many other miraculous events recorded in the Bible. They deny the biblical account of plagues against the Egyptians, the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, the fall of Jericho, the sun and moon standing still at the command of Joshua, and many other declarations made in the Old Testament. They also deny New Testament accounts of miracles, such as Jesus' virgin birth, his bodily resurrection, and a host of miracles performed by Jesus and his apostles. They further contend that the universe is self-existing, that all things that exist (including humanity) simply evolved into their present forms, and that there is no validity to biblical claims.

If they are correct, then mankind has no spiritual nature, there is no such thing as sin, no life after death, no eternal destiny and therefore no need for salvation or reconciliation to God. If they are correct, then what the Bible says is unimportant.

Two Perspectives

Two perspectives conflict – the biblical and the non-biblical. Which is correct? Two issues must be examined. The first focuses on how everything originated – whether by creation as stated in the Bible or by evolution as naturalism contends. If everything evolved from self-existing matter then God is not necessary and Adam and Eve may be regarded as legendary characters; sin does not exist and there was no universal flood during the days of Noah.

The second issue focuses on how everything ends. If everything is natural, then physical death is the end of every life; there is no life after death. If nature is all there is, then there is no heaven – no eternal reward for having lived a good life; there is no hell – no eternal punishment for having lived an evil life; there is no God and no way to define what is good or what is evil.

If morality cannot be defined, then there are no universals or absolutes. Everything is relative.

Consequences to Our Convictions

How people live in the present is determined, in large measure, by how people understand the past and the future, i.e., the origin and the destiny of humanity. If someone believes that humanity originated from nature, then the present life is all that exists. Therefore, whatever pleasures are enjoyed in life must be acquired now because there is no future life after death. However, if someone believes that humanity originated from God as taught in the Bible, then the present life is considered less important than future life after death. Therefore one's purpose in the present life is not to pursue personal physical enjoyment, but rather to serve God and humanity in order to enjoy eternal life with God when this life is over.

If the Bible is true, then everyone will be judged by God for how this life is lived (Acts 17:31). After judgment everyone will be assigned to either heaven or hell depending upon how they have lived in this life (Matthew 25:1-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15). Therefore, from a biblical perspective, a correct belief in whether or not the Bible is true is extremely important.

Denying the Credibility of the Bible

Denial of the truthfulness of the Bible is comparatively recent in history. With the coming of the Renaissance and the development of modern science in the sixteenth century people began to doubt and even deny the truthfulness of everything (including biblical statements) that could not be proven by human knowledge. Then in the last half of the nineteenth century the naturalistic theory of evolution arose to become a major philosophical opponent of biblical beliefs. Since only natural understandings were considered acceptable, then beliefs in miracles and prophecies were automatically rejected.

With these developments, human thinking has been the criterion for making decisions regarding what is true. However, from a biblical perspective, human reasoning is inadequate (Jeremiah 10:23; Psalms 14:1, 53:1).

Denial of the truthfulness of the Bible has generally been on historical and literary grounds. People have denied the historical existence of ancient cities like Nineveh and Sodom, ancient peoples like the Hittites, etc., only to have their denials later overturned by historical and archaeological findings.

On literary grounds, people have denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch because they once claimed that writing had not been invented in his days, only later to learn that writing predated Moses by more than a thousand years. Authorship of other books of the Bible is often based on considerations of literary style, but these arguments are extremely subjective, vary from person to person, and are therefore inconclusive. Human reasoning changes with the passing of time, but God and his word never does (Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25).

With the passing of time, increases in historical knowledge and findings from archaeological digs have served to support the truthfulness of biblical statements. If the Bible is historically and materially true, then should not biblical statements in other categories – God, creation, miracles, prophecies, moral requirements, spiritual values, eternal realities, etc. – be considered truthful?

Before Moses walked from the camp of Israel to climb the mountain to die, he urged the Israelites to choose blessing and life rather than cursing and death (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). When Jesus concluded his famous sermon on the mountain, he said that whoever heard and lived by his sayings was like a wise man who built his house on a rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

If you reject the credibility of the Bible, for whatever reason, are you not like those in the days of Moses who chose cursing and death rather than blessing and life; are you not like those whom Jesus described as building your house on sand rather than on a rock?

Why not choose life? Why not build on a rock? Why not believe in the credibility of the Bible and practice what the Bible teaches?

Continued from Page 1: *Eli's Epitaph*

The ruin which comes to a business, to a family, or to the demise of a congregation, may seem sudden, yet it flows from a source that has been cultivated over a period of time. The weakness of a structure, in a work, or in a relationship, is exposed, not created, by a crisis. Undeniably, the law of the harvest is unbroken (Galatians 6:7-8).

Weak leaders tend to serve nervously; focusing upon and fretting about potential problems, and imagined dangers; being perpetually alarmed about the troubles they fear may come, while doing next to nothing of actual benefit.

They worry about incidentals, fret about their position and personal standing; oblivious to the fact that they create fear, insecurity, and breed resentment. They occupy the role of leader, but they serve not! They do not possess any real courage.

They see the temporary, but not the eternal. They do not possess the ability, or the compelling desire, to prevent spiritual disaster. Knowing their duty they turn aside, they wring their hands, and readily excuse themselves.

They fail to understand that righteousness and truth must be upheld, defended, and advanced! They are oblivious to the fact that faith and repentance abide as perpetual obligations, and that God must be revered and honored, and His will be proclaimed and personified in this present world!

God calls His people to wholehearted commitment and service, to hold fast to the things of God, and serve Him with reverence and godly fear.

In reality, at the last an epitaph will be written for each of us as servants of God. God's estimate of each of us will be final, and we will have an eternity to consider the epitaph written for us by our Father.



The Bible *IS* a “Christian Evidence” Textbook!

John T. Polk, II

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith is based upon “evidence” and it is a solid conviction of “things not seen.” Since “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), then the best “evidence” for faith is “the word of God” and the Creator’s Wisdom to which it points! If not, why not?

The Bible makes statements that point to external data, and that makes it a “Christian evidence” textbook. For example:

1. Every effect must have an adequate cause.

“For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God” (Hebrews 3:4); “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1);

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3). All scientific evidences and facts prove that matter is not eternal and must have had a beginning. The Bible begins with one of the strongest proofs possible that there had to have been The Creator: from nothing came something caused by The Power (“God”) who is the uncaused First Cause!

2. There is magnificent design and order to life.

Jesus pointed to the inherent order in agriculture when He said:

“For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” (Mark 4:28-29)

Such order is impossible without the imposition of law from a Higher Power.

Speaking of the intricacies of human development and birth, David said:

“You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearful-ly *and* wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And *that* my soul knows very well. My frame was not

hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When *as yet there were* none of them.” (Psalm 139:13-16)

The millions of details involved in each human’s normal birth are mind-boggling, and faith-building, indeed. The birth of one human demands an imposing attention to details totally impossible without completing the plan of God, the Maker.

Abraham “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder [Greek, “technician, craftsman”] and maker [Greek, “framer”] *is* God” (Hebrews 11:10). Truly, the “technology” of life is impossible and nonsensical without the All-powerful, All-intelligent Creator God!

3. Life cannot/has not/will not come from non-living matter.

It is the “God, who made the world and everything in it...gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:24-25). There is no construction of material substance that has been brought to life without adding some living components to the experiment. Scientific fact shows that life had to be added to the material earth from an outside source in order for anything living to exist. It is only prejudiced ignorance that would attack Christian faith without dealing with what the Bible, itself, says!

Speaking of “prejudiced ignorance,” one readily thinks of an “atheist,” a word meaning, “without faith in deity,” hence a person who is without faith in God. No one can be an atheist without denying all the evidence for God’s existence and the scientific conclusion that necessitates it as fact. In other words, atheists are known for what they confess they do not or cannot know. “Ignorance” is defined as “the absence of knowledge.” It is practically impossible, then, for any atheist to ridicule a believer’s “faith” because a Bible-believer has evidence for that faith, but an atheist has reduced his or her intelligence to denial! The evidence for God is so abundant that an atheist can believe there

is no God only by closing his/her mind to the factual evidence that would prove otherwise! Atheists have a big void throughout their core intellect, and are as Gentiles, "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart..." (Ephesians 4:17-18).

By willfully omitting God from their consideration, the Atheists have "blacked out" their understanding, "gutted" their rationality, and grope about like blind people who have rejected any assistance they have been offered! Belief in God is a normal conclusion of a natural mind that has been given all the evidence. Atheism is, thus, an unnatural response.

Since God does exist, then His power as Creator justifies His power to: (1) define marriage as one man and one woman united for life (Genesis 2:18-25), and accept no other (Mark 10:2-12); (2) give a day of rest to the Israelites in Moses' Law (Deuteronomy 5:12-15) and not to anyone else; (3) be remembered in our days of youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1), not just "old age;" (4) come to earth as the Christ with total miraculous power over the Creation (John 1:1-18) unlike everyone else who has ever lived; (5) hand over the scroll of judgment against the Jews into the hand of His Son (Revelation 4:1-5:8) which was carried out in the first Century.

Since God, as Creator, can do with His Creation as He wishes ("our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases," Psalm 115:3); and, since no human is Creator (God asked: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding," Job 38:4); then all humans who are created beings ("creature," Mark 16:15-16) will fail to conquer and control the world!

There is no policy, people, or plan that God will allow to take His place as Controller of His Creation (Romans 1:19-25). "Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

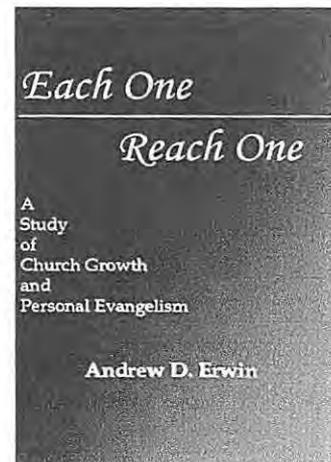


Bible Studies from Andy Erwin



Lectures on the New Testament Church contains 15 lessons in outline form for easier teaching and preaching purposes.

\$6.00 plus shipping



Each One Reach One contains 26 lessons on the theme of church growth and personal evangelism with discussion questions and a personal Bible study.

\$12.00 plus shipping

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

HOW LONG SHOULD A MARRIAGE LAST?

Gerald Cowan

God says marriage should last as long as both partners live. People used to say that in their wedding vows: "Until death parts us." Of course they didn't always mean it. But now many won't even say it.

How long will we stay married? Until the flame goes out and the passion dies. Until boredom sets in – until the excitement is over and the fun's gone. Until someone comes along and makes me happy in ways that you can't make me happy. Until someone comes along who can give me what you can't or won't give me.

For too many people, old as well as young, marriage is just a temporary hookup, not realistically expected to be a permanent relationship. For those who are old-fashioned enough and biblical enough to care, here are a few suggestions – all "C" words – to make marriage last until death.

- **Christ** is the first and most important factor in a lasting marriage, just as he is in all human relationships. He is the Mediator, the one in whom God and man come together (1 Tim.2:5).
- **Contract.** Marriage is a contract made willingly and knowingly by a man and a woman, with God being not only the author of the contract but a fully functioning third party in it. What God has joined together – as husband and wife – let none separate and take apart (Mt. 19:6).
- **Continuity.** Make the marriage a work in progress, a project on which both mates are working. Marriage must be a mutually beneficial relationship. One person cannot make a marriage or a relationship. But it must be a continuous effort, not sporadic or erratic, on and off and on and off again.
- **Community.** Marriage is "we" not "me." It is not "I" and not "you" but "us." It is about sharing, not only what we have but what and who we are. A related word for this sharing is...
- **Communion.** Communion is not just a religious word for "the Lord's supper." The root meaning is sharing, having something in common – togetherness, fellowship. Another related word, more readily understood, is...
- **Communication.** Most think this means talking to each other, but it is more than that. We communicate attitudes, feelings, appreciation, desires and so much more by "body language" as well as words.
- **Care, concern, and consideration** have a lot in common, though they deserve to be discussed separately. Care is affection, true love. Concern is care for what is happening to the other person. Consideration can be an effort to put the other person's welfare ahead of one's own, at least to make it an object of care and concern.
- **Companionship.** This means "I am here for you and not just here with you." It is another of those words that mean sharing and togetherness.
- **Cooperation.** Not operating separately but operating together. Working with and for each other, doing nothing to hinder the other but everything to help.
- **Commitment.** Put yourself, your whole self into it. Contributions can be made without commitment, but when one is committed the contributions come easily and automatically and without grudging. This commitment is not only to each other and to the marriage but also to God and His word, His plan and purpose for all lives but for your own life in particular, in this case your lives together.
- **Conflict resolution.** It is unrealistic to think there will never be any conflicts between properly married persons. The wife and husband are complementary – she is a helper suited to his needs and he is a head suitable for her. Male and female are designed by God to form a unit when properly joined together. But psychology, personality, purposes, and plans may differ considerably and if the conflicts are not resolved quickly and completely the result can be disunity and disharmony where God requires unity and harmony. All the words mentioned so far will be helpful in resolving all conflicts.
- **Contentment** will come if we apply the things we have mentioned, but lack of any of these things is a marriage breaker. If we start and continue faithfully with Christ and with each other, contentment will extend even past death and into eternity.

The Conversion of A.J. & Lonia B. Harden and Family

Raymond Elliott

A.J. Harden was a farmer. He and his family lived in a rural area in the lower part of Dale County, Alabama south of the small town of Newton.

Mr. Harden had the habit of stopping his plowing or whatever kind of farm work he was doing each morning at a certain time so he could go to the house and listen to a radio program conducted by brother Rex A. Turner, Sr. from Montgomery. Mr. Harden was not a highly educated man but he could read and read he did, especially his Bible. He studied the Word of God very diligently and could understand the teaching of our Lord and His apostles as found in the New Testament. The more he listened to the preaching of brother Turner, the more he studied his Bible. Mr. Harden was so impressed with the teaching of brother Turner that he had a great desire to meet him in person. Perhaps it was in the providence of God that he would soon have that opportunity.

It was about the year of 1939 that the Bethel Baptist Church where Mr. Harden served as a deacon, decided to conduct a special meeting on a Saturday night. Because Mr. Harden had been actively engaged in providing transportation for their regular preacher, the men asked him to obtain the service a preacher for the occasion. He quickly agreed to their request because he knew exactly who he wanted to come to the church and preach.

Mr. Harden wrote to brother Turner and explained his desire for him to come and preach at his congregation on a particular Saturday night. Brother Turner replied in a positive manner and informed Mr. Harden that he would bring a song leader with him. The song leader was brother Fitzhugh Ellington, a gospel preacher of renown in South Alabama. Mr. Harden did not inform his congregation that brother Turner was a member of the church of Christ

The church building was filled with members and visitors. Brother Turner requested that they not use the instrument while singing and the permission was given to sing a A Cappella style. Those in attendance remarked how beautiful the singing was as brother Ellington led the congregation in the selected songs.

In his opening remarks, brother Turner informed the congregation that he would only be preaching from the Bible and nothing more or less. When the sermon was finished and the invitation song was sung, twenty-six people responded. Later that night they were immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins in a creek some two miles from the church building.

Among that number were A.J. and Lonia Harden and three adult sons by brother Harden's first wife who had died. They were Floyd, Grady and Johnny. The twenty-six new members of the body of Christ began attending the Christian Home church of Christ near the community of Wicksburg, Alabama.

A.J. and Lonia Harden later had two sons, Clifford and Freddy. Floyd, the oldest son, would eventually serve as an elder at the Park Avenue church in Dothan, Alabama. The youngest son, Freddy, is presently serving as an elder at the Christian Home congregation. The decision made by A. J and Lonia Harden influenced their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Christ is the power to save (Romans 1:16). Jesus Christ commissioned men to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ died on Calvary so we could be saved by his atoning blood (Matthew 28:19, 20; Ephesians 1:7). Brother Rex A. Turner must have preached a 'powerful' sermon that Saturday night to move those twenty-six people to respond to heaven's invitation.

It is interesting to note that brother Turner was born in 1913 so he was only twenty-six years old when he preached in the Bethel Baptist Church building in 1939! The Harden family has often expressed their love for brother Turner over the years because he came and preached the gospel on that Saturday night many years ago which changed their lives forever.

[Note: I am thankful to my dear friends, Freddy and Sonja Harden, for relating to me the facts of this historic event that occurred some seventy-five years ago.]

Preacher Performance

Grady Miller

The young man on the phone was upset. I didn't know him all that well, so I was at first surprised and then flattered he would bring his problem to me and ask for my advice. That pick-me-up to my ego quickly deflated when I realized the young preacher was seeking my input because I am now an "older preacher."

It's true, I guess. After forty-plus years of full-time work in local church ministry I've seen a lot, and I hope I've learned a lot. So when the young preacher explained his elders wanted to install a new system of "performance evaluation" — a fairly comprehensive arrangement that wasn't in place when he accepted that work a few years ago — I could hear the angst and concern the young man felt.

Well, I've been there, and done that. And, you know, I didn't particularly like it. It's just not a good idea to change the rules on a fellow during the game. There's an awfully good reason why cowboys don't swap horses in the middle of the stream!

But apart from the young man's understandable frustration that the terms of his contract were being changed there was an underlying misunderstanding.

You see, he really thought that preachers aren't supposed to be evaluated like other folks. Because a preacher's job performance can't be weighed and measured in exactly the same way and just like a secular employee, he thought a fair "performance review" couldn't be done at all.

He argued that the only things that really matter when reviewing any preacher is whether his teaching and preaching is true to the Book, the time he spends in study and prayer, and if his life bears evidence that Jesus is living in him.

"Welcome to the real world." I told him what one old preacher wrote hundreds of years ago. It's a bit of a paraphrase on my part, but Matthew Henry observed that "preaching is the highest calling and the sorriest trade."

We have no union, of course. There is no uniform, standardized, consistent job description accepted by all

our brethren. A church on the north side of town may expect something completely different from their preacher, than a congregation on the south side expects from their preacher. What the brethren wanted the preacher to do in his old work has little bearing on what the brethren in his new work expect him to do.

And, we have no pension plan. That junior manager flipping burgers at McDonald's has retirement benefits, but our churches don't and won't pay a nickel into a 401(k). Yes, our retirement benefits are out of this world, but you can't spend *that* in this world.

Don't get me wrong. Most of the preachers I know love preaching. We don't do it for the money. We don't think of preaching so much in terms of a "career." Most preachers don't really expect churches to offer the same benefits that secular employment offers. Preaching is a privilege. Preaching is a calling.

And, in many ways the "business" of preaching is not all that different from the business expectations of any other job. It is totally unrealistic to suppose they should be.

I tried to get the young man to see that his brethren are certainly going to evaluate him and his performance, whether he thought they should or not. What's more, his brethren have every right to evaluate him. No, their judgment is not the most important consideration. The man of God answers to a higher standard. The church at Corinth presumed to critique and judge Paul, but the Apostle knew that "it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a court of man...He who judges me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:1-5).

More importantly, the young man was overlooking a unique opportunity and blessing. His brethren were asking for his input as they sought to implement a new procedure. That is welcome news to any preacher! Yes, his elders were determined to codify a new standard for his job performance. But they could just as well come up with a system without his involvement and participation. There are some congregations that take an arbitrary, take-it-or-leave-it posture in their

“negotiations” with the preacher. But his elders had a better spirit and were asking for his ideas and suggestions. That’s a good thing!

So, I gave the young preacher a few ideas of my own. I think they have merit. With the perspective of more than a few years in preaching, I believe they constitute a reasonable and scriptural basis for evaluating a preacher and his work.

• **Speaking the truth in love.** This is Paul’s own inspired description of the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4:15). It points to both style and substance, the message and the messenger. Any man, anytime and anywhere who refuses to declare “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) ought not to be supported by the church of God, “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). That truth must be declared with tender compassion coupled with stout conviction. Telling the truth is essential, but the truth-teller “must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility...” (2 Tim. 2:24ff).

• **Nutrition.** Titus was challenged to “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Some of my brethren seem to think “sound doctrine” has exclusive reference to controversial matters and “issues,” but the literal meaning is “healthy teaching.” In other words, we must preach a well-rounded, balanced, soul-saving and faith-building message. Yes, sound doctrine is first principles, but it’s a whole lot more (1 Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:12-14). It’s not all guilt, but it’s not all feel-good, either (2 Tim. 4:2). It is contending for the faith and warning the unruly (Jude 3), but it’s also comforting the fainthearted, upholding the weak and being patient with all (1 Thess. 5:14).

• **Industry.** Timothy was urged to “make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5, KJV). His admonition may be understood in the sense of “fill it up” or “fully perform.” Preaching is a work. It’s hard work, even for those who love it. Sometimes a preacher all but quits, but he still cashes his paycheck. It’s not so much that the preacher needs to punch a time clock and log his office hours or chart the number of visits he makes. There are more telling signs and indicators when a preacher isn’t hard at work. When his lessons become stale because he relies on recycled and warmed-over outlines; when he quits reading new books, pursuing new studies, and exploring new methods; when his

work bears evidence he is only coasting; then his lack of effort and productivity is evident to all.

• **Morale.** The job description of a gospel preacher is not that of a cheerleader. But just think of the congregations you’ve known that have lost momentum, been knocked off stride, been beaten up, knocked down and given in to defeat and depression. There are churches whose members wince every time the phone rings because some trouble is always being stirred up. Most of the time the preacher is at center stage in that sorry drama. When he isn’t, it’s the elders. Sometimes it’s both! Many a troubled church has found peace and refocused commitment when the preacher has moved on to another work.

• **Effectiveness.** Here’s a tough call. Sometimes the family of God is troubled and it’s everybody’s fault but the preacher’s. Sometimes false doctrine has to be opposed. Weeds have to be pulled and dead branches pruned. Death and disease derails the leadership of a congregation. A down economy cripples the church’s ability to meet the budget and pay the bills. None of that should be blamed on the preacher! But there are times when a preacher’s ability to effectively minister is not as vigorous as it once was. Even Paul knew there were times when he needed to move on and do a good work somewhere else (cf. Acts 20:1-6).

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15).

And thank God for good brethren who support them in their labors for the King and His kingdom!

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

- Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00
- Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month
- Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month
- Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month
- Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

Honoring James S. Ward

James R. McGill

James S. Ward (1867-1959) served the Lord in a great variety of ways, covering a significant part of two centuries of the Restoration Movement. Because of his connection with the College of the Bible and J. W. McGarvey in Lexington, Kentucky, and his association with the Nashville Bible School and David Lipscomb in Nashville, his life seems to reflect the best of both influences.

Upon receiving his medical degree at Transylvania University in Lexington, he returned to Nashville after first doing his internship in Columbia, Tennessee, where he also often preached. He next received his dental degree from the University of Nashville with highest honors—becoming the first person in the state to be both a medical doctor and a dentist.

The Ward Family

Ward married in 1894. The Wards had two daughters and a son. The daughters both married gospel preachers. Robbie's husband, Charles R. Brewer, was the first president of the Nashville School of Preaching. Christine married H. Clyde Hale who was for many years very active in evangelism in Georgia and who, in 1965, was a co-founder of the Nashville School of Preaching. The Ward's son Truman was a businessman long associated with brother A. M. Burton's Life & Casualty insurance company.

When David Lipscomb and James A. Harding started the Nashville Bible School in 1891, it was James Ward's father, J. R. Ward, who, along with Lipscomb and J. R. Dodd, rented the house just south of downtown where the school began. Two years later the same three men purchased property a few blocks over, on 8th Ave. S., where the school relocated. These three men became the trustees of the Nashville Bible School.

Ward Begins Teaching

At this time James S. Ward joined the school faculty, donating his services. His doctor's office was in the Jackson Building on Church Street at 5th Ave. N.,

in the heart of downtown Nashville. He would see his patients during the morning hours and commute by streetcar to the Nashville Bible School to teach in the afternoons.

In 1902, when the school moved again, this time to the Lipscomb farm, the Wards moved onto the campus, where Mrs. Ward was in charge of the girls' dormitory.

After practicing medicine for several years, Ward accepted the position of chairman of the chemistry department at the University of Nashville. At the same time, he headed the science department of the Nashville Bible School. Not only did he teach in the Bible school without pay, he even purchased and donated the laboratory equipment.

Twice President

Ward served twice as president of the Nashville Bible School, first in 1905 upon the death of his good friend William Anderson, the school's second president. Ward served a second time as president in 1913.

After David Lipscomb died in 1917, the Nashville Bible School was re-named David Lipscomb College.

Among all of James Ward's areas of service, perhaps one of the most far-reaching works in which he was involved was in helping to start the Central church of Christ downtown on 5th Ave. N. in 1925, where he was one of the first elders.

There had been a downtown church of Christ since 1826, but that congregation became involved in the Missionary Society, then later introduced instruments of music into the worship, and affiliated with the Disciples of Christ.

The Radio Program

From the beginning, even in that first decade of radio, the Central church sponsored a daily radio program on WLAC (the station first owned by A. M. Burton's insurance company and later by James Ward's son, Truman Ward).

That was when Hall L. Calhoun became the speaker on the daily radio program. The program had an amazing outreach far beyond Nashville. Many con-

versions resulted. The daily program from the Central church had such an audience that, when that 30-minute program was on, one could walk in downtown Nashville all the way from Church Street to Union Street on 4th Ave. N. without missing a word of the message. Many people who wrote to the Central church in response to the program commented especially on the reverence and humility characteristic of James S. Ward's prayers.

[*Note:* Mrs. Rosalyn Boyd has written an excellent biography of her grandfather: Go to "**James S. Ward**" on the *Restoration Movement* website or go directly to "Dr. James S. Ward."]



Continued from Editorial: *Is Islam a Religion of Peace?*

Only through Christ can we have peace. Christ said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). O' how we need the Savior's word when beset by our enemies! He is the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6), the "Lord of Peace" (2 Thessalonians 3:16), He is our "Peace" (Ephesians 2:14), and the "Author of Peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33). May we always look to Him and endeavor to be peacemakers in this world (Matthew 5:9).

God's kingdom is the kingdom of peace (Romans 14:17). Let us follow after the things that make for peace (Romans 14:19), for God has called us to peace (1 Corinthians 7:15). May the peace of God rule our hearts (Colossians 3:15), and may this fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:22) lead us into a greater understanding of the peace that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7). Only then will mankind experience a true religion of peace.

AE

The Great Eternal God

Gerald Cowan

Before the hills appeared,
 Before the rivers and the seas,
 Before the clouds were formed,
 Before the stirring of the breeze;
 Before a man was born,
 Or any other living thing;
 Before the rain or snow first fell,
 Before the flowers of spring;
 Before the paths of earth
 By mortal men were trod –
 Before it all, from everlasting was
 The Great Eternal God.

When everything on earth
 Decays and disappears,
 As darkness of the night
 Dissolves when daylight nears;
 When all the starry universe
 Burns up and fades away
 With nothing left to measure time,
 No sense of night or day;
 When challengers and skeptics all
 Lie dead beneath the sod –
 Through everlasting there will be
 The Great Eternal God.

The Gospel Gleaner is now on Facebook



News & Notes

Obituaries

From Owen D. Olbricht (Sherwood, AR): Just today, Thursday, Aug. 21, 2014, I received word of **Stanley E. Sayers'** passing into eternity. He was born January 13, 1933. He was a delight as a friend and a dedicated fellow worker and servant of Jesus. He is survived by his wife, Billye Mae, son James, and daughter Elayne Bowman and two younger brothers and five grandchildren.

Stan and I met my sophomore year at Harding in 1951 after someone told me that there was a freshman on campus who was my look-alike. We arranged to travel together to Oxford, Arkansas and other northern Arkansas towns for Sunday preaching appointments, which quickly brought us together as best of friends. Stan dreamed of our traveling in the USA, holding evangelistic meetings and admonished me to not get married so we would be free for outreach efforts. This all ended when he met Billye Mae Burrough, the love of his life, whom he soon married, July 24, 1953.

Stan was fully dedicated to sharing the faith in Jesus with others. As we traveled together he could be in another world dreaming about effective service in outreach. At times like this he could shut out the present and see into future efforts for the Lord. We enjoyed singing the many miles we rode together. One of his favorites was, "One Sweetly Solemn Thought."

An unusual trait of Stan was his ability to concentrate completely on a task, especially his writing book-length term papers, which he kept, hoping for them to be printed. In one long paper for James D. Bales he wrote, around the end, maybe around page 227, "If you read this far, I will buy you a Coke." Only a few days later brother Bales ask Stan for a Coke.

Stan's book for youth, *For This Cause*, became an immediate hit with that age group. Besides this popular book, Stan wrote other books on important topics like prayer, Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit, sin,,

and God's powerful word, all published by Gospel Light, Delight Arkansas (800-308-4511).

Stan will be greatly missed but will always remain in the loving hearts of those who have known him. At this time of sorrow for the family, we pray for their finding comfort in our Christian faith and in the comfort we can give each other in our sharing moments in remembrance of our beloved friend and brother, Stanley E. Sayers.

Moving

Ronald and Susan Bryant will be moving from Gadsden, AL in September. Their new home will be in Prescott Valley, AZ. The move leaves open the pulpit in the Gadsden congregation. The congregation can be contacted at (256) 492-3542 or (256) 547-4611.

Gleanings from the Mission Field

From **Owen D. Olbricht**: Report, Mission Trips July 26-Aug. 13

In July, Arkansas had been cooler than usual, so all looked like a good time for an enjoyable trip and work in Nicaragua and Chia, Colombia. July 26, as usual, Mickey Pierce took me to the Little Rock airport from which I had a good flight to Houston, where Rafael and I met and flew to Managua, Nicaragua.

Nicaragua

On Sunday we went by bus from Managua to Jinotepe from which we went one day each to five mountain towns over rock and dirt roads. We were blessed with 5 baptisms in all.

A great work in that part of Nicaragua has been made possible with the help of the Lord and the work of Benny Baker. Since he began work in Nicaragua in the early 90's, he has arranged a training school which has prepared and encouraged young men to be involved in outreach in surrounding areas resulting in a number of congregations.

Our medical mission team included 39 from Denton, TX, 9 from Sylvan Hills in Sherwood, AR, two from Cuba, and a few from other places.

Chia, Colombia

On Friday, Aug. 1, Benny took me to Managua from which I flew to Bogota, Colombia. Carolyn Windham from Birmingham, AL arrived shortly afterward. We transferred to different buses to get to Chia.

Around 25 men, mostly preachers from the Bogota area, met in Chia on Saturday, Aug. 2 for the lessons I presented on *Men of Influence* based on the book I had written on the subject. During the time we were in Chia, Carolyn and her translator Claudia, and Mario and I had studies in the community during the day. I spoke each evening.

The Lord blessed us with 3 baptisms in Chia. In a neighboring city I spoke our last Saturday evening and taught home studies on Monday. One couple that needed more teaching requested baptism.

I became sick so did not get to speak on Sunday evening. Since returning home I have been recovering from chest congestion and coughing.

As best we can tell all went well both in Nicaragua and especially in Chia. Keep praying for these works.

Note: Brother Olbricht and John Otis of Brookville, PA also have a mission trip planned for September 30 – October, 11 in Chelyabinsk and Miass Russia. The work in Chelyabinsk began August, 1994 and in Miass 1996.

Upcoming Events

Moundsville, WV: The West Virginia School of Preaching will host its 20th Annual Victory Lectures October 19-23. Keynote speakers are Denny Petrillo, president of Bear Valley Bible Institute, and Neal Polard, preacher for the Bear Valley church of Christ. The theme is "The WORD in John." Lectures will cover nearly every text in John's Gospel. For more information, visit our website at www.wvsop.com, or call 304-845-8001.

Dexter, MO: The Dexter church of Christ is hosting a lectureship on Islam from November 14-16. Dave Miller will be speaking.

Memphis, TN: The 39th Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship will be hosted by the Getwell congregation October 19-22.

Marion, IL: The Marion church of Christ will be hosting a gospel meeting October 5-7. The theme will be "Great New Testament Questions." Different speakers will be used throughout the meeting.

Austin, AR: The ladies of the Austin church of Christ will host a ladies day October 25 with Lavenia Jenkins as speaker. They had her last year and the comments in essence were, "she was absolutely great."

Sullivan, IL: The Highway church of Christ will be having a Friends and Family Day on November 16. There is the normal morning service, then a potluck with an afternoon devotional to follow.

Exhibit Evangelism

Exhibit Evangelism at the Illinois State Fair wrapped up last month with Bible study enrollments nearing 400 (through the mail). Additionally, there were 5 Bible study requests for a personal home Bible studies.

Exhibit Evangelism is a cooperative work of the sister churches in the state. It not only promotes the Gospel in the marketplace (vendor's building), but also is instrumental in encouraging young Christians to become more evangelistic minded.

J. E. Miller is the director of the work, under the oversight of the elders at the Highway Church of Christ. Next year is the 50th year of Exhibit Evangelism at the Illinois State Fair.

Helpful Website

Gospel Gleaner staff writer Raymond Elliott is conducting a much needed website addressing current issues in the church.

<http://broraymondelliott.blogspot.com>

Send us your news items!

andywin@gospelgleaner.com

Reader Replies

Andy,
 Your work continues to be good indeed and I appreciate it. The write-up about W.D. Jeffcoat was especially appreciated because he was a friend and former classmate from college. We at the Austin church (Austin, AR), recently purchased his "Sacred Songs of the Church." It is a great book and we are enjoying it. I saw him last about five or six years ago when he attended a meeting I was preaching in Kentucky. I talked to his wife just a few weeks before he died. Truly, we are "going down the valley one by one."

Jerry Noblin
 Cabot, AR

Brother Andy,
 I continue to enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner*. I especially appreciated the fact that you sent it to me on-line while we were in India for five months. I remain humble that you see fit to publish the articles that I write when there are so many writers who can and actually do a better job than I. Again, thanks for editing such a fine publication.

Ernest Underwood
 Doraville, GA

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

October, 2014

Number Ten

Honoring God or Using God

Ronald D. Bryant

What are we to understand regarding worship? Biblically speaking, the worship of God stands at the center of our existence, as the servants of God. Whatever else the church does, it worships.

Worship is adoration of God. In worship the people of God call to mind and proclaim God's love and mercy, power and purpose.

At the heart of Christian worship is the Lord's Supper, which unites the redeemed in remembering the most significant event in all of history, Christ's sacrificial death. In partaking of the emblems, each Christian acknowledges the presence of Jesus Christ and yields to Him, the head of the church.

Christian worship is God-centered, not man-centered. If it is self-centered and self-serving it is not worship offered to God. Worship subordinates our hearts and minds, our feelings and concerns, to God and to His claims upon our lives. God-centered worship delivers us from the limits of our abilities and emotions, and delivers us from human illusions about reality.

Worship instills awareness that we are not to place our faith in self or in things which we can manage. Our faith and our hope are in God, not in our intellect, our efforts, or our experiences. It delivers us from preoccupation with these things.

Historically, true worship has mutated into false worship in two ways: (1) some have chosen to use worship for purposes other than God intended. Viewing God as useful, but not sovereign, they try to use Him to manipulate His power for their personal advantage (e.g. financial, political, etc.). (2) Others ap-

proach God as a being that is to be "experienced." They confuse knowing God with seeking to experience Him personally. This draws attention back to the "worshiper" – to his thoughts, his feelings, and his emotions.

To engage in worship in order to experience something is to make the worshiper central, not God. Such is an effort to use God, to manipulate Him, to get Him to cater to human desire. Some want to experience God. Not a few hold to the view that worship is to the end that they might experience God.

When attention is given to what happens to the worshipers, predictably, attention will turn to that which stimulates and pleases *them*. A multiplicity of devices will be sought out and used to serve that process, for the purpose of producing excitement, feelings, and certain moods. The point of worship becomes that of enabling the worshipers to have a "good feeling," or feel "inspired." The aim is having a "thrilling experience." Religious entertainment and thrilling experiences are conducted as "worship." The purpose of true worship is to pay homage and give tribute to God. Its focus is God; the honor and glory due Him.

This does not mean that worship does not affect the attitudes, dispositions and emotions of those who engage in it. In truth, it is evident that worship often evokes a wide range of emotions, including gratitude, awe, humility, sorrow, and joy. But worship is not for the purpose of arousing or manipulating these emotions, or to produce experiences.

Continued on page 10

By asking the question, "Can God change His mind?" we are essentially seeking to understand better the ways in which God has chosen to respond to the actions of man. The only way we can know about God is through His revelation of Himself. Let us begin by first studying God's interaction with man throughout the Old Testament.

The Flood

In the account of the Flood and the events leading to it, we find the emotions of regret, sorrow, grief, and favor being experienced by God. Again we find emotions which can only be felt in response to another's actions. God responded to the sinfulness of man with emotions of regret, sorrow, and grief. He also responded to the faithfulness of Noah with grace (favor); for "Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:8, 9; NKJV).

God is "grieved" by the sin of the world. The Hebrew word used in this passage is the verb *atsab*, which can also convey the idea of being outraged. As we have seen, man's activities will provoke a response from God – for blessing or punishment. In this case, God was punishing the world in response to their sins. It grieved God in His heart that He had made man.

Yet, in contrast to the world, Noah found grace in God's eyes. The Hebrew word here pertains to divine favor given to individuals. The Old Testament teaches repeatedly that God gives His grace to whom He chooses and in response to their actions (see Psalm 82:11-12; Proverbs 3:3-4; Isaiah 30:19). He can also withdraw and withhold His favor in view of mankind's sin-

ful responses to His will (see Jeremiah 16:13).

At Sinai

We can also learn from God's interaction with Israel in the wilderness. When the covenant was to be extended to Israel, conditions were going to be placed upon Israel by God. Inherent to these conditions was a continued cause and effect interaction between God and Israel. Observe,

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

Here we find an "if-then" clause to God's covenant. The significance of this passage is that it helps us to see how God left the door open as to how He would choose to respond to Israel in the future based upon their response to Him. It would not be long until God was tempted to invoke this clause and utterly consume the Israelites in His wrath. The children of Israel had made for themselves a golden calf and even convinced Aaron to offer sacrifices to it. God said to Moses,

"Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the

land of Egypt!'" And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation" (Exodus 32:7-10).

God would have surely consumed this people and enacted a "Plan B" to fulfill the promises He made to the Patriarchs. But God "changed His mind" (NASB; NRSV) or "relented" (NKJV; ESV) concerning His destruction of these people when Moses interceded for them (v.14).

This freedom of will on the part of God to change His mind according to man's response, is no new phenomenon, but is typical of His interaction with man from the beginning. God reserves the right to change His mind.

The Hebrew word used here is *nacham*. It is the same word that we find in Genesis 6:6-7, "And the LORD was *sorry* that He had made man on the earth...for I am *sorry* that I have made them." We also find this word used in many cases when the Lord changes His mind as a gracious response to human factors and even due to feelings of compassion for a person or a people.

God's anger occurs in response to man's sin. God is love and He is full of mercy (Deuteronomy 4:31). Yet, He can change His mind from being merciful toward man to being angry when provoked (see Judges 2:14).

Continued on page 8

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Ten
October, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	Grady Miller
Owen D. Olbricht	David R. Pharr
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Roger Shepherd
Ron Thomas	Ernest Underwood
Mike Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Associate Editor

James R. McGill

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com
(256) 627-3215

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *Honoring God or Using God*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *Can God Change His Mind?*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *The Bronze Serpent and Jesus Christ*
Stephen R. Bradd
- 5 *Miracles and Providence*
Travis Quertermous
- 6 *Honoring Adlai S. Croom*
James R. McGill
- 7 *Iconic Religion and Truth*
Ron Thomas
- 11 *Thoughts on Brotherhood Controversies*
David R. Pharr
- 12 *The Jesse Miller Family*
Raymond Elliott
- 14 News & Notes
- 16 Reader Replies

The Bronze Serpent and Jesus Christ

Stephen R. Bradd

Although John 3:16 is well known by millions, the two verses immediately preceding it are obscure to many. John 3:14,15 says - "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." When did Moses lift up a serpent in the wilderness, and what does it mean to say the Son of Man must be lifted up?

Let us begin by considering the historical background of Numbers 21. God had already freed His people from Egyptian bondage and made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. However, the children of Israel were a faithless and disobedient group, which led God to punish them with forty years of wilderness wandering before they could enter the land He had promised their fathers. On this particular occasion, the people, due to discouragement at their difficult journey, begin murmuring again. In response, the Lord sent fiery serpents among them. Many people were bitten and died. The people recognized their sin and confessed it. The Lord then instructed Moses to make a serpent of bronze and raise it up on a pole within the camp. When one looked at this serpent after being bitten, he would live (Num. 21:4-9).

With those thoughts clearly in mind, let us consider seven interesting parallels between the bronze serpent and Jesus Christ:

1. The people of Israel were dying when the bronze serpent was made, and the world was dying in sin when Jesus came. Romans 3:23 - "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
2. The venom of the live serpents caused physical death, and the same is true of sin, spiritually. Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
3. The bronze serpent was lifted up on a pole for all to see, and the Christ was lifted up on a cross for all to see. Jesus said in John 12:32,33 - "'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' This He said, signifying by what death He would die."

4. The bronze serpent was helpful, not harmful, and the same can be said about Jesus. The bronze serpent had no venom, and Jesus had no sin. Hebrews 4:15 - "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

5. In that day, there was only one remedy for a serpent bite, and today there is only one Savior for man. Acts 4:12 - "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." If one is going to be saved today, it will have to be through Jesus!

6. God did not remove the serpents but provided a way to overcome them, just as God has not removed the problem of sin but instead provided a way to overcome it through Jesus. The same statement can be made regarding the temptations that all humans face. God will not remove them, but He will provide a way to overcome them. I Corinthians 10:13 - "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

7. The Israelites had to meet God's conditions in order to be saved, and man today must still meet God's conditions in order to be saved. If an Israelite was bitten in his tent by a fiery serpent and refused to go outside and look at the bronze serpent, he would perish. Even if he believed that the bronze serpent could save him, if he refused to actually obey God by gazing upon it, he would die. The same is true today regarding Jesus and sin. Hebrews 5:9 - "...He [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." It is not enough to affirm faith in Jesus and yet refuse to obey Him. Such will not deliver one from the venom of sin.

The Gospel Gleaner is now on Facebook

Miracles and Providence

Travis Quertermous

"Today is a miraculous day. I'm thrilled to be alive, to be well and to be reunited with my family." So said Dr. Kent Brantly after his recent discharge from the hospital after he recovered from an attack of the deadly Ebola virus. Dr. Brantly is a member of the Lord's Church and a medical missionary to Liberia where he contracted the dreaded disease while helping the poor people there. Many of us have followed his story closely as it made national headlines. And doubtless, we are all thrilled and thankful to God for his recovery.

But was it a miracle? In the Restoration Movement, we have a slogan, "Let us do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names." The word "miracle" is one of the most loosely-used Bible words of all. Many people use it to describe anything that is wonderful, unusual, or mysterious. The birth of a baby or a beautiful sunset or even finding a good parking place at Wal-Mart is often called a miracle!

But in Scripture, a miracle refers to a supernatural act of God which transcends natural law. The Greek word rendered "miracle" in our English versions is *dunamis* which literally means "power." In his lexicon, W.E. Vine comments on this word as follows, "works of a supernatural origin and character, such as could not be produced by natural agents and means." In the Bible, we read of "signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 2:4; cf. Acts 2:22). So the birth of a child or a beautiful sunset would not qualify as miracles, since they are natural, not supernatural, events. Examples of Bible miracles would be Moses parting the Red Sea, Elijah calling down fire from heaven, or Jesus walking on water or raising the dead.

Providence, on the other hand, is generally understood to be God working through natural means and agents. Unlike signs and wonders, which were open displays of God's power, His providential activities are unseen, unknown, and invisible. One does not know when, how, or even if, God is actually working as He moves "behind the scenes" of history to accomplish His will. Esther is a prime example of provi-

dence in action. There are no miracles recorded in the book; God's name is not even mentioned in the book! Yet it is clear that He was at work though those involved did not know it. Mordecai said to Esther of her elevation as queen of Persia, "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). So it is with us today. The best we can say is such-and-such an event is consistent with the providence of God.

Now what about Dr. Brantley's recovery? It is certainly scriptural to pray for the sick to get well (James 5:14-17). But was brother Brantley healed instantaneously, fully, and completely of Ebola like the miracles of healing recorded in the Bible (cf. Acts 3:1-11)? No, he was not. Rather, he was cured over the course of several days through the skills of his doctors and the treatments they prescribed for him. Now, God may very well have used those natural means to heal him, but that makes it a case of providence, not a miracle.

There is far too much confusion in the world about miracles, their purpose and duration, thanks to the errors of Pentecostalism. Let us not contribute to that by using Bible words loosely and inaccurately!



Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00
 Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month
 Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month
 Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month
 Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

Honoring Adlai S. Croom

James R. McGill

Adlai S. Croom (1892-1985) was born at Oxford, Arkansas. He was known as a faithful Christian, a preacher of the gospel of Christ, a capable author, and most of all as an outstanding leader in Christian college education.

On November 21, 1912, at age twenty, he was baptized into Christ by L. L. Brigance, a long-time Freed-Hardeman Bible teacher and gospel preacher. Croom had enrolled that fall in the Henderson, Tennessee, school (then known as the National Teachers Business and Normal College) where he remained for two years.

He continued his formal education at the University of Louisville (1915-19) where he received the B. A. degree. During his time in Louisville he also studied Hebrew and Greek at a Louisville Seminary. He received his M. A. degree in mathematics from Harvard, and also attended the University of Chicago.

Gospel Preacher and Author

Croom began preaching in 1914 at Dereno, New Mexico. Over the years, he preached for churches in several states, including California, Washington, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. He remained for the longest periods at Enid, Oklahoma (7 years) and Topeka, Kansas (4 years). Nearest to home for him was his preaching at Batesville, Arkansas.

As an author Croom is perhaps best remembered for his *Early History of Harding College* published by the Harding College Press in 1954, while he was serving as business manager of the College from 1949-57.

Harding's Early Years

Harding College began as a two-year college in 1922 at Morrilton, Arkansas. It was named Arkansas Christian College. Adlai S. Croom was its first president. Croom traveled to Harper, Kansas to negotiate successfully a merger of Harper College and its faculty with his college at Morrilton. The merger enabled the two-year Morrilton college to become a four-year college in 1924, just two years after its beginning.

It was at Croom's suggestion that the name of the school was changed to Harding College. The new

school name honored the memory of James A. Harding, who had recently died in Atlanta. Harding had been a well-known educator. He was the co-founder, with David Lipscomb, of the Nashville Bible School in 1891. He later founded Potter Bible College in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Harding was also an outstanding preacher and a defender of the truth against denominational error in debates.

Croom's Financial Skills

Croom was a fine teacher and school administrator. He also had much needed strength in the area of finance. When Harper College was closing in Kansas, it was Croom who worked out the payment of the outstanding debt of that school.

Through all kinds of financial turbulence, Croom's wisdom and skill were needed, both in the 1920's and in the darkest years of the Great Depression as Harding College was moving to its Searcy, Arkansas, campus in 1934.

In 1922, at age 30, Adlai Croom married Margaret Harris. They had a daughter and two sons. The Crooms were married for sixty-three years.

Adlai Croom died in Searcy where they had lived on East Market Street many years. He died February 16, 1985, just four days before his ninety-third birthday. His wife Margaret died the next month. The couple is buried in Searcy's Oak Grove Cemetery.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE SCHOOL OF PREACHING
& BIBLICAL STUDIES



Evening Classes – Seven Locations

mtsp@clearwire.net
mtsop.net

ICONIC RELIGION AND TRUTH

Ron Thomas

In Jeremiah 6, the Lord appealed to a rebellious people to come back to the "old paths," that is, the ways outlined by the Lord in his words to Moses. In essence, this singular path of the Lord's righteous way was the only path that led to a practical and peaceful physical existence (not to mention an eternal home with the Lord God). If the people refused to hear the Lord in this regard, then what the Lord planned against the people would surely be experienced.

The people responded in their normal way by refusing to hear and obey the Lord (6:10). In the recesses of their hearts they had this false sense of security; "Surely," they thought, "with the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem, the Lord will not allow some infidels to come into this sacred city and destroy us?" This failure to see the seriousness of the spiritual situation did not allow them to remember their history. So, the Lord took a few moments to help them remember when he called to their attention the events that occurred at Shiloh (cf. Joshua 18 and 1 Samuel 4).

False Security: Temple

"Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord" (Jeremiah 7:11, NKJV).

The presence of the Temple in Jerusalem was an icon. Unfortunately, that is all that it seemed to be at the time. In one sort of way, it was a "community center" where much was taking place. The Lord, however, did not look at it as a "community center," but "den of thieves."

What exactly is that? One translation gives a good sense of what is to be understood: "Do you think this temple I have claimed as my own is to be a hideout for robbers? You had better take note! I have seen for myself what you have done! says the LORD." To those who lived in Jeremiah's day, the Lord proclaimed that he was not beholden to a physical structure, even to one that was considered sacred and more permanent (by the people) than the tabernacle of years ago. In fact, he calls to remembrance the time when the Tabernacle was set up in Shiloh, and the sacredness asso-

ciated with Shiloh. The Lord had enough of what Israel regarded as sacred (at that time)! Thus, he brought the Philistines in and they not only defeated the Israelites, but took the Ark of the Covenant as well. A sacred icon removed the Lord from the heart of man.

False Security: Prayers

One of the great comforting avenues of life is the belief that one greater than self (God) will hear when the heart is anguished because of travail. During the days of King Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, the great man of wisdom appealed to the Lord,

"When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is; whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men)" (1 Kings 8:37-39).

At this juncture of their existence, however, the Lord was going to hear nothing from them. In fact, he made himself clear to Jeremiah that not even is he to pray for the people. "Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you" (Jeremiah 7:17). While the avenue is great, the path was blocked and the people did not even know it. As it has been said, "Their prayers went no higher than the ceiling of the room they were in!"

False Security: Truth Exists

Such a false sense of security was the result of their rejection of the Lord; "So you shall say to them, 'This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth' (Jeremiah 7:28, NKJV). Israel was God's covenant nation; to them the

Lord gave commands that set them apart from all the other nations about them. To them the Lord gave the distinct privilege and obligation of being a light in a dark world. Israel, however, desired to be like other nations. Having become like the other nations, they rejected the truth, and consequently truth perished from the land. When the truth of God was cast aside, the godly influence the people had was no longer prominent. As time progressed, they passed the point of no return (as a nation). Since truth was rejected by the nation their prayers were also rejected by him who is the giver of truth and who answers prayer!

Lesson

There is a simple lesson that I want to draw from this. It may be that you or someone you know has a false sense of security. A false sense of security is thinking all is okay when, in fact, it is not okay at all. The people of Judah felt that God's presence (in the physical Temple) would never leave them. They refused to learn from their history and they failed to learn from Jeremiah's preaching/warning. Exactly the same can happen to us.

For many people today the church building where Christians assemble is looked on as a sacred facility. Some won't even allow another to eat inside the building, or have fellowship occasions. The building is just a building; it is either cared for, or not. That which makes the building sacred is not the "brick and mortar," or even the worship offered within. What makes the place important (not sacred) are the saints within, the sacredness of the hearts gathered. The iconic (temple) status of buildings is misplaced because, as we see in Jeremiah 7, the heart and devotion of the people was not right with God.

In Jeremiah's day, some gathered to the icon, while attempting to hide themselves from others. However, the Lord saw it very clearly. It is good for those who are in rebellion to the Lord to be present and hear the Lord's message. On the other hand, it is not good for the rebellious to be present if there is a refusal to hear the Lord and reshape their life. Simply wanting to be present for a little bit of reprieve from the outward stress of life is vain. This is a challenge we need to impress upon all those who gather at what is considered (by some) as a religious icon.

Continued from Editorial: **Can God Change His Mind?**

The Old Testament also teaches that God can turn from His anger and show mercy (Deuteronomy 13:17-18). That God can be provoked is but another indication that His mind or mood can change. God's freedom of will and emotion is demonstrated at such times.

God surely would have destroyed Israel at that moment, but Moses intervened, and God changed His mind. Just as Abraham interceded for the cities of the plain, Moses interceded for the children of Israel. As a result of Moses' intercession, God decided not to destroy the Israelites and begin anew with Moses, the covenant would be given at Sinai, and the people were allowed the promise of entering the Promised Land – for the time being.

Clearly, God responds to man according to man's response to Him. The Lord, therefore, exercises the freedom of His will when it comes to interacting with man. Sometimes in the course of exercising His will, God determines to change His mind – whether to bless man or in order to punish him for his sins. Nevertheless, it is solely according to God's divine prerogative to choose how He will respond to mankind.

King Saul

God's interaction with King Saul (1 Samuel 15) should also be considered in our study. As a result of Saul's disobeying the Lord and sparing the Amalekite king, Agag, the Lord said to Samuel, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments" (1 Samuel 15:10-11). Again we find the Hebrew word *nacham*, which is used in Genesis 6:6-7, Exodus 32:14, and again in v.35 of this passage. The Lord regretted Saul's reign as king over Israel.

Simply stated, God regretted His choice of Saul as king. Samuel told Saul as much, and Saul responded by asking Samuel to pardon his sin, and worship with him. Saul even attempted to prevent Samuel from leaving, tearing his garment.

It is at this point that Samuel says, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent" (vv.28-29).

Nacham is again used here, but this time it is translated *relent* (NKJV); *repent* (KJV); *regret* (ESV); and *change His mind* (NASB). When we understand the versatility of this word, it is easy to see how it can be translated *regret* in vv.11, 35 and *relent, repent, or change of mind* in this verse.

The interpretation of the passage is not that difficult. Samuel was merely stating that the Lord's decision was final and unchangeable, and there was no use arguing. Also keep in mind that a contrast is being made between God and man in this verse. Samuel says that God is not like man in that He does not lie and He does not change His mind. While we have already seen a number of instances when God did change His mind, we have not seen a passage where God *was forced to change His mind*. Herein lies the distinction, we believe. God is not like man in that He is not forced to change His mind as man is often forced to do.

Remember, Saul had grasped the garment of Samuel strongly enough to tear it, which seems to suggest that an attempt to restrain the prophet was made, possibly as a threat to succumb to the will of the king. It is at this moment that Samuel tells Saul that God is not man that He should relent. In other words, it made no difference to God that the king of Israel was unhappy. God did not lie in what He said, and He did not have to change His mind, nor was He going to change His mind. While that kind of behavior might work with men, it would not work with God. God is not like man that He should relent. Nevertheless, "the Lord regretted that He made Saul king over Israel" (15:35).

King Hezekiah

While we are discussing God's changing His mind, in the context of Hebrew kings, let us observe an event that involved King Hezekiah. In 2 Kings 20 we find,

"In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, 'Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.' Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, 'Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'Return and tell Hezekiah

the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: 'I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David'" (vv.1-6).

The most casual reading of this text will lead one to believe that prayer can change God's mind. King Hezekiah was going to die, but God heard his prayer and added to his life fifteen years. The Lord heard his prayer, saw his tears, and decided to heal the penitent king (cf. 2 Chronicles 32:26).

As the story unfolds, we can pinpoint the exact moment when God changed His mind. As Isaiah was walking across the courtyard, God stopped him and had him return to the king and tell Hezekiah that his life had been prolonged. Hezekiah's prayer changed God's mind at that very moment. Only when we understand the nature of God's interaction with man, and the manner in which He exercised freedom of will to respond to man's activities, can this event be understood as it is revealed in the text. Philosophical assertions about God's omniscience and foreknowledge simply do not fit the text.

Nineveh

One last event which should be considered is God's interaction with Nineveh in the book of Jonah. Here we find that God was prepared to overthrow that great city. But as a result of the preaching of Jonah, the entire city repented. "Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it" (Jonah 3:10).

Again we have a case of God changing His mind, which even the most casual of readings will provide. Man responded to God's word with obedience. God responded to man's obedience by changing His mind or relenting from the punishment He was going to inflict.

Throughout the Old Testament we find a cause and effect interaction between God and man. It is no different in the case of Nineveh. The Ninevites had become increasingly sinful and God could stand their sin no longer. Yet, before utterly destroying them, He

sent a preacher with a message of repentance. Nineveh did repent. As a result, the Lord heard their prayers and spared their lives.

Jonah also accepted the possibility of God changing His mind and forgiving Nineveh. Of course the prophet was not all too happy about the Lord's decision (Jonah 4:2 ff.). Nevertheless, Jonah accepted the reality of God's wrath being turned to mercy. The Lord also expressed this idea to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 18:19 ff.).

In Conclusion

Our conclusion is that God did respond to man in the Old Testament according to cause and effect interactions. From the time of the Garden of Eden until the close of Malachi we find God choosing to interact with man by responding to his needs and deeds. God exercised His freedom to interact with man according to man's activities. As man came to understand the righteousness of God, and that he should respond obediently to Him, the foundation for a theology based upon interaction and responsiveness between Creator and creature was clearly solidified.

However, as we see in the case of Job, sometimes God allows suffering to befall the righteous in order to test or prove their faith. Yet, even in such cases man acts in response to his understanding about God, and God counteracts in response to man with blessings or punishment.

God has also taught us how to respond to Him. If we respond unfaithfully, it is not because God did not provide us with proper instructions and clear expectations. When Israel defied God and disobeyed Him, it was not because God had not clearly communicated His will to His people. It was because they chose not to respond faithfully to His will as they knew it.

The Old Testament pictures an all-powerful God who can speak the universe into existence, while remaining open to respond to His creation on a day-to-day, situational basis. As man, the creature, came to understand this aspect of his relationship with God, it affected his prayers, activities, and his overall response to God.

Continued from page one: *Honoring God or Using God*

Not everything that stirs emotion is worship! Feelings prove nothing except the emotional makeup of man. Emotions do not validate one's experience, let alone make it worship. Experiencing emotions in worship are not a means of experiencing God!

True worship means to lose self in that which is greater and grander than self. True worship actually frees one from preoccupation with self by centering heart and mind upon God. It is when we take our attention off self that we will stop asking, "What does this do for me? How does this make me feel? Am I enjoying this?" Free from these thoughts, we can begin to worship, and know its true benefits. As worship is directed toward our Creator, our need to know and honor Him become paramount. In this manner, true worship frees us from the gods of this world – the modern idols of comfort, success and fun. It frees us from the tyranny of the urgent, the focus upon personal preference and desire, and finally fits us for service to the Lord.

All attempts to make worship "relevant" should be dealt with the greatest of caution. In the truest sense worship is relevant; its design is perfect. When men plea that worship be made "relevant," they are asking that human demands and preferences be dominant; that the demands of culture be allowed to determine what is done. Such relevance would require "worship technicians," sound and light specialists, trained performers, and new terms for the exciting, intense and fulfilling activities demanded.

While it is accepted that in a self-centered, fun-seeking, media-dominated society, that some may confuse entertainment with worship, this does not make it less damaging. Leaders, under enormous pressure to appear "open" and "progressive," need courage to resist the relentless demand to be culturally relevant. They would be served well to realize that the demands of culture are fickle beyond measure; what is demanded today will be rejected tomorrow. Fads and trends driven by little real respect for God, may make "praise time" more exciting, and appealing, yet, they serve to trivialize the faith and to impoverish the life God calls us to in Christ.

AE

Thoughts on Brotherhood Controversies

David R. Pharr

Controversy is not in itself wrong. It is sometimes necessary (Eph. 1:3; Phil. 1:17, 27; Jude 3). But, it is always wrong when, as often happens, disagreements give rise to personal hostility and rancor.

One should not become a heretic in the way he opposes heresy (cf. Matt. 7:1f). "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but "woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble" (Luke 17:1f, NASB).

These "little ones" are those whose faith may be crippled by the influence of others. The faith of some has been destroyed by fatal errors in doctrine (Rom. 16:17f, Matt. 7:15). Others have given up in frustration over what they see as ungodliness in brotherhood disputes. "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15).

Consider the Issue

In the first place we need to realize that there are big issues and issues that are not so big. There are herb matters and there are weightier matters; there are gnats and there are camels (Matt. 23:23f). There are times to advance to battle and there are times to hold our ground.

For example, there could be unity in diversity when circumcision is a personal choice (Acts 16:3), but no small dissension and disputation when it is advocated as law (Acts 15:2). The point is that every issue should be evaluated as to its impact on the fundamentals of faith and practice.

Some issues need to be resolved within the judgment of autonomous congregations. We preach autonomy, but sometimes think we know more about situations than do the local faithful. Which would be worse, a mistake made by sincere elders trying to apply their best judgment, or a self-appointed hierarchy judging by long distance.

No, local error is no less error, but the Lord must have had a reason for appointing elders to be only over

the flock which is *among them* (1 Pet. 5:2, emphasis added).

Truth Not Victory Is the Goal

In any controversy our purpose should be truth, not victory. When folks are preoccupied over who wins a debate, truth will fall victim to personalities. Every disputant will say his only concern is that the truth will win, but this is not always what is perceived by others. Arrogance on the side of right is nonetheless arrogant. Personalities must not prevail against principles.

Integrity demands that there be no misrepresentations of the positions of others. It should be remembered that misrepresentations typically expand each time they are repeated. To illustrate: brother "A" states that the issue in baptism is not who performs it, but whether the one being baptized understands and is obeying the truth. Brother "B" hears this and says to brother "C" that he fears this might be interpreted as endorsing denominational baptism. Before long brother "D", who is zealous for brotherhood gossip, is spreading the charge that brother "A" endorses denominational baptism. He knows this is correct because he was told by brother "C" who heard it from brother "B"! Sincere slander is no less slander (Lev. 19:16). A lie is a lie regardless of who first told it.

There will always be issues over which wise and good men will disagree. This does not mean that incompatible viewpoints can all be right. There is only one truth on any matter. That honorable people cannot come to a consensus does not in itself justify compromise, but it ought to make us more careful about the certainty of our opinions.

We can know the truth and live by it. At the same time, we realize that some disputes have remained unsettled since the time of the apostles.

We are tempted to ask in regard to certain questions why the Lord did not give a more precise answer. Likely, the answer is precise, and it is one's mind that is clouded. Yet, the fact remains that wise and good men will continue to disagree.

The Jesse Miller Family

How an Act of Compassion by a Congregation Led to Multiple Conversions in One Family

Raymond Elliott

My family and I moved from Ozark, Alabama to the small town of Elba, which was located about thirty-two miles west of where we were living. I began preaching for the church in Elba on Sunday, May 31, 1964. We met some of the sweetest of God's people and we were well received by the congregation. We worked with this group of Christians for five years. God richly blessed the labors of love by our brothers and sisters and the church grew numerically and spiritually.

I want to relate to you the impact that the compassion of this group of Christians had on a family which was in dire need of the necessities of life; and, how a door of opportunity was opened for brethren to lead this family to Christ by teaching them the gospel of Christ in their home.

Jesse and Magalene Miller and their three children lived on 'Plant Hill' north of downtown Elba on the Troy Highway. Jesse had worked for the State Department in the building of bridges. One day a steel beam, while being unloaded from a truck, struck Jesse in the chest and his left arm. His arm was almost severed near his elbow. Because of that terrible accident, Jesse was no longer able to work.

It was during the month of December, 1964 that brother Roy Fuller learned of this family and their dire situation, financially speaking. He reported their condition to the brethren and immediately the members responded out of compassion for this good family. Brethren Roy Fuller, Harris Winston, and I began showing the Miller family the 'Jule Miller Filmstrips' and teaching them the gospel as found in the Word of God. It was good that we were studying with a family whose hearts were honest and receptive to the teaching of the Bible.

The town of Elba in Coffee County is located in the extreme Southeastern section of the state of Alabama, commonly called the 'Wiregrass Area'. On Saturday night, January 29, 1965, the temperature dropped to 5 degrees! The temperature had only risen to 15 degrees

on Sunday morning, January 30, 1965. It finally warmed up that day to 24 degrees.

It was on that extremely cold Sunday morning when Magalene Miller and her three children responded during the singing of the invitation song. The children, Linda and Brenda (twins) and Jerry, along with their mother expressed the desire to be baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins. Mere words cannot convey the joy and happiness in the hearts of the Christians assembled to worship God on that frigid morning.

Because of his physical condition and the extreme cold weather, the baptism of Jesse Miller was postponed until the following Tuesday morning. A brother in Christ assisted me in immersing Jesse. I wrapped his left arm (which was bandaged) in plastic bags to prevent it from getting wet. I remember as I lowered him into the water, his left arm floated due to being wrapped in the bags, so I had to reach over and push his arm under when I immersed him. Later, a part of Jesse's left arm had to be surgically removed.

The Miller family became very active in the work of the Lord as members of the Elba congregation. In time, Jesse was appointed as one of the deacons of the church. He served in that capacity until his death in June of 1972. Interestingly enough, part of his duties was cleaning the church building. He always said that, when his time came, he hoped he would be in the worship assembly. Though it was not during an assembly on the Lord's Day, he did die on a weekday while the family was cleaning the building. Later, the family moved to Troy, Alabama and began worshiping with the Collegedale church of Christ. Magalene (Mary) served faithfully in the day school for about ten years that the congregation operated. God has continued to richly bless this devout Christian lady by permitting her to live for eighty-three years!

Now I want to mention the descendants of Jesse and Magalene Miller and the influence exerted upon them by the decision that was made by this couple in

January, 1965. The children, Jerry, Brenda and Linda eventually married. The following is a summation given to me by their son, Jerry Miller that I want to share with you.

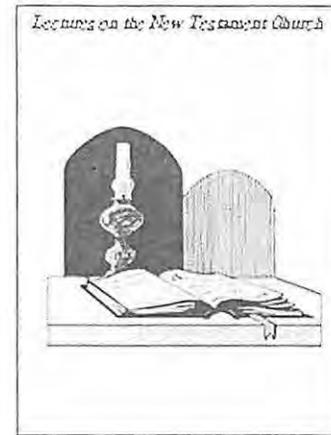
“That totals 3 children, 8 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren (with another one on the way) and a total of 10 spouses. The spouses of the three children, all the grandchildren and spouses and 7 of the great-grandchildren (all that are 12 or older) are baptized believers. It is very sobering and extremely gratifying to see it on paper like this. Obviously, we can't thank you, Roy Fuller and Harris Winston (among many) enough for reaching out to us in a time of need so many years ago. We certainly got so much more than the physical help we needed with the spiritual blessings that followed. Recounting the story continually reminds me that what we often consider tragedy is just God working something much better for us. As tough as that time in our lives was, I cannot and do not want to imagine the path our lives would have taken had it not happened. I am sure my father would agree. God has truly blessed the family of Jesse and Magalene Miller!”

On Sunday, June 1, 2008, I preached for the church in Brewton, Alabama. I want to include in this article what I wrote in my journal later that night.

“I met a young man whose name was Barron and I asked his parent's name and he told me James and Linda Barron of Troy, Alabama. I was pleasantly surprised. I informed him that I had baptized his grandparents, Jesse and Magalene Miller, along with his mother, her twin sister Brenda and brother Jerry when I preached for the church in Elba, Alabama in 1965. His daughter was standing by him and I hugged her and told her of my relationship with her grandparents and great-grandparents. It is humbling to think of my influence for the Lord in the lives of people. All praise belongs to God and the Lamb of God.”

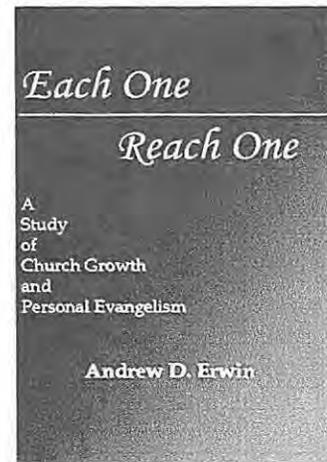


Bible Studies from Andy Erwin



Lectures on the New Testament Church contains 15 lessons in outline form for easier teaching and preaching purposes.

\$6.00 plus shipping



Each One Reach One contains 26 lessons on the theme of church growth and personal evangelism with discussion questions and a personal Bible study.

\$12.00 plus shipping

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com



Gleanings from the Mission Field

From Andy Erwin: Recently I had an opportunity to meet and talk with **Christopher Herd**, an evangelist from Australia, who is raising funds for his move to New Zealand. I was very impressed with him, his soundness, and his good family. New Zealand is a mission field that is in need of solid preachers. Christopher tells me that the church faces some of the same problems in that country with liberalism that we face here.

The Elkmont congregation in Elkmont, AL, is helping to raise funds for him in the States. The contact person at Elkmont is Lester Smith (one of their elders). You can reach him at lsmith18332@gmail.com or

Lester Smith
PO Box 151
Elkmont, AL 35620

You can also learn more about Christopher Heard from his website: sermonhome.com.

From Ronald Gilbert: From August 4-September 2, 8 Christians were involved in a mission trip to Zambia. This trip resulted in 53 baptisms and 109 restorations. Brother Gilbert tells us that crowds of 802, 918, 1,012, 1,084, and 1,315 gathered at various times and places to hear the gospel preached.

The brethren also taught classes at the Zambia School of Biblical Studies in Livingstone. In addition to this tremendous success, they were able to deliver Bibles and 36 bikes for local preachers.

The individuals who went on this trip were Rusty and Laura Stark of Chicago, Barry Gilreath, Jr. of Florence, AL, Barry's daughter, Hannah, and his nephew Seth Weaver, Charlie Hannah of Pikeville, TN, and brother and sister Gilbert.

To learn how to support this good work, visit his website at www.ICOTB.org

Upcoming Events

Mechanicsville, VA: From October 10-November 2, the Cold Harbor Road church of Christ will be hosting the annual **Cold Harbor Lectures**. This year's theme is "Christ's Beautiful Bride: Lessons on the Lord's Church."

West Palm Beach, FL: From November 6-9, the Palm Beach Lakes church of Christ will be hosting the **South Florida Lectureship**. The theme will be "Part of the Family."

Bowling Green, KY: On November 8, Potter Children's Home will host a **100th Anniversary Banquet**. For more information call (270) 843-3038.

Florence, AL: Mars Hill Bible School will be having their annual "**Punkin' Day**" on October 25. There will be plenty of food, crafts, and games for the kids. Activities are from 10-4 pm.

Preachers Needed

Moss, TN: The Oak Grove church in Moss is looking for a preacher. The average attendance is about 90. They have a preacher's house. Their current minister, Gary Wilder, is retiring after 22 years.

Contact: Bill White: (931) 258-3376 (evenings) or (931) 258-3490 (daytime)

Franklin, TN: Jones' Chapel in Franklin is looking for a preacher. They do not provide full time support. Their website is joneschapelchurchofchrist.org.

White Bluff, TN: Chapel Hill in White Bluff is looking for a preacher. They have about 175 members. Contact them at todd@cocchapelhill.org.

Nashville, TN: Adam Faughn has accepted the pulpit role at 9th Ave in Haleyville, AL. Which means the pulpit at **Lebanon Road** in Nashville will be opening. Their website is: www.lebanonroadchurchofchrist.org.

Winchester, TN: The Winchester church is looking for a preacher. You can learn more about this 350-400 member congregation at www.winchurchofchrist.org.

Dyersburg, TN: Chris Fry is leaving the West Dyersburg church to work with Latin American Missions. To learn more about West Dyersburg go to www.westdyersburg.com.

Longmont, CO: Twin Peaks in Longmont is looking for a preacher. They run about 75 in attendance. To learn more visit: www.twinpeakscoc.com.

Lake Dallas, TX: The Lake Dallas congregation is looking for a preacher. They average 150 in attendance. To learn more about them, visit their website at www.lakedallaschurchofchrist.org.

Lincoln Park, MI: The Lincoln Park congregation is looking for a minister. Their average attendance is 175. You can learn more about them by visiting their website at www.lincolnparkchurchofchrist.org.

Brookhaven, MS: The Brookway congregation is looking for a minister. They have about 80 members. Contact Donny Lawson at (601)757-5721.

Nashville, TN: The Whites Creek Pike congregation is looking for a minister. This is a part-time position. Contact Hubert Raines (615) 832-7458.

Southwest School of Biblical Studies

Austin, TX: The first academic quarter of the 2014-2015 school year is drawing to a close for the Southwest School of Bible Studies in Austin, Texas. The students will be completing their final exams by the last week in October and taking a well-deserved break prior to the start of the second quarter on November 3. Southwest has a strong enrollment in both the first- and second-year classes, with new enrollees expected to begin the program in November. Also, Southwest already has students admitted to begin their collegiate studies in August 2015. The faculty and student body wish to express their gratitude to all who pray for, encourage, and support this full-time ministry program.

Gospel Gleaner News

From Andy Erwin: Beginning with this issue our readers will see that **James R. McGill** has accepted the work of Associate Editor for the paper. There is no one I trust more for this work. Brother McGill has a Ph.D. in English from Vanderbilt. His dissertation was on the topic of the readability of the King James Version. He taught English and directed the English Department while also teaching Bible at Freed-Hardeman College. He has served as Dean of Graduate Studies at Tennessee Bible College. And, he directed the Nashville School of Preaching to an all-time high in attendance – a mark that still stands today! He now works with the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies. He has also been the minister for the New Hope congregation in Nashville for the past 12 years. We are thankful for Jim McGill and all that he has meant to the Lord's church for over sixty-five years as a gospel preacher.

Our readers will also see that **Mike Underwood** has been added as a staff writer. Mike is the son of fellow staff writer Ernest Underwood. He is the minister and an elder for the Chestnut Drive congregation in Doraville, Georgia. Welcome, Mike!

Send us your news items!

andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

Reader Replies

I really enjoy reading the *Gospel Gleaner*.

Lennis Walton
Rogersville, AL

Thank you for the chance to let the brotherhood know what we are doing in Austin. There are so many good works taking place and it is encouraging to share and to see the great things being done.

Richard Brumback
Director of the Southwest School of Biblical Studies
Austin, TX

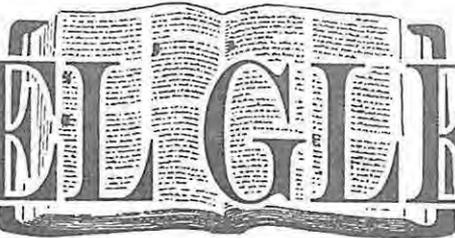
I have found the Gospel Gleaner to be very helpful in understanding the scriptures better.

Mark Sherfield
Gaylord, MI

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

The GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 26

November, 2014

Number Eleven

God Waits to be Trusted

Ronald D. Bryant

“For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil” (Hebrews 6:16-19).

For any serious person, the taking of an oath is always a significant event. Yet, God taking an oath before man is of greater significance.

The Significance of God’s Oath

Three times the Hebrew writer declares this very happening. In chapter three, he spoke of God's oath in His wrath, “They shall not enter into My rest.” In chapter four he set forth Christ’s appointment as High Priest, and declared that it was confirmed with an oath. Then, in this passage, he urged God’s oath as the basis for strong encouragement in the expectation of God’s promise. The apparent reason is that confidence in God alone will enable the Christian both to endure and serve faithfully.

God calls mankind to faith. The fact that God longs to be trusted is seldom given proper regard. Faith is a desire for God and a dependence upon Him, or it is nothing. God calls us to trust Him, and to depend upon Him to accomplish that which He has purposed.

God's purpose is infinite in its high and holy blessedness. God is faithful to do His work, and the point set forth in this text (Hebrews 6:16-19) is that He is faithful to keep His promises.

God’s Purpose for His Children

Yet, it is only as we personally open our hearts to God, and surrender to Him, that He will do His work. His purpose in us cannot be fulfilled until we trust in Him, and until trust in Him comes to control our hearts.

Faith in God is designed by Him to bring us to deep humility and dependence, to meekness and patience, to yield to His will and to the fulfillment of His purpose. Genuine faith works to open our hearts and to fill us with love and hope. It is only as we trust God that He is free to work in us. Trusting God enables us to honor Him, and “he who honors Me, him will I honor” (1 Samuel 2:30). The question is: When will we learn that the one thing that God asks is that we trust Him fully?

To this end the inspired penman declared: “God is willing to show more abundantly to the heirs of salvation the immutability of His counsel.” These words should stir our hearts. God is willing to demonstrate the power and strength of His purpose in blessing us, if we will only let Him. If we will only trust Him, He will work in our hearts and lives.

God is willing to provide more abundant proof that we may take more abundant heed, and remove the possibility of doubt. For this reason He confirmed His promise with an oath.

The original documents of the Scriptures are commonly called "autographs" and the handwritten copies of these documents are usually referred to as "manuscripts." The extant manuscripts and manuscript fragments of the Greek New Testament now exceed 5,000 in number. The text of the Bible is better preserved than the writings of Homer, Plato, or Aristotle.

The Importance of this Subject

The manner in which we consult and collate these ancient manuscripts will determine the kind of Greek text we have and the basis for our translation of the New Testament into English. The formation and end result of the text is of utmost importance. If the text is inaccurate, even the best translation rendered will be inaccurate.

Biblical scholars realize the importance of the text to the translation process, and thus the topic of "weighing" manuscripts is often debated. Scholars are right to debate this issue. The subject demands close scrutiny. The text of the Bible is worthy of our attention and demands our respect.

It is because scholars want to get it right, that the difficult and tedious science of textual criticism is employed. The science of textual criticism is by no means new and is ever evolving. As the science produces new results based upon new evidence, the text of the Bible undergoes changes.

In this study, we shall observe three standard Greek texts which have evolved throughout the last five centuries. In observing the evolution of these texts, we will

evaluate and critique the philosophy behind each effort.

The Textus Receptus

The story of the Greek text that came to be known as the Textus Receptus (Latin for "Received Text") 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 Testament consisted of parallel columns of Greek on the left and his own Latin translation on the right. Erasmus revised his Greek text four times (1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535). It is believed that both Luther and Tyndale used the 1522 edition for their respective translations.

Robert Stephanus revised this text on four occasions (1546, 1549, 1550, and 1551). By the time of Stephanus' third edition, verse divisions were included. It was also this third edition which was used as the text for the New Testament of the Geneva Bible in 1557.

Theodore Beza (1519-1605) followed Stephanus and revised the Erasmus text on four different occasions from 1565-1604. It is believed that he published at least nine editions in his lifetime. During his revisions new manuscripts were collated into the text.

The Elzevir brothers, Bonaventure and Abraham, published a small edition of the Greek text in 1624. Their text was primarily Beza's 1565 edition. In 1633 they produced another edition in which the text was corrected of errors which appeared in the earlier edi-

tion. The preface of this edition claims that most minute mistakes had been corrected. The preface also states it is, "the text which is now received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted." This remark gave birth to the text being designated as the Textus Receptus or "Received Text."

The Textus Receptus as it appeared in Erasmus' 1522 edition was the Greek text and basis for the early English translations of the New Testament, beginning with William Tyndale's translation of 1526, including the King James Version of 1611. Revisions of the Textus Receptus continued after the KJV was published and as new information was discovered.

Brian Walton revised the text in 1657 with the discovery of the Codex Alexandrinus. We know from the appendix of the sixth volume of this work that at least fifteen different sources were consulted.

In 1675, John Fell edited the 1633 text which had been slightly revised by the Elzevir brothers. In the apparatus he claims that he collated 100 manuscripts and versions.

In 1707, John Mill published an edition using Stephenus' text. It is believed that he had seventy-eight manuscripts at his disposal. Kuster (1710), Wells (1709-19), Bentley (1720), and Mace (1729) continued revising the text throughout the eighteenth century.

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.

Continued on page 8

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Eleven
November, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	Grady Miller
Owen D. Olbricht	David R. Pharr
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Roger Shepherd
Ron Thomas	Ernest Underwood
Mike Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Associate Editor

James R. McGill

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com
(256) 627-3215

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *God Waits to be Trusted*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *The Text of the New Testament*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *How to Rejoice Always*
Stephen R. Bradd
- 7 *Love Does Not Rejoice in Iniquity*
Raymond Elliott
- 11 *Truth Does Not Change*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 13 *The True Plan of Salvation*
E. Claude Gardner
- 14 *The "Syndrome" Syndrome*
Travis Quertermous
- 15 News & Notes
- 16 Reader Replies

How to Rejoice Always

Stephen R. Bradd

God desires that His children be joyful – always. In fact, He commands it. “Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Adequately putting the concept of “joy” into words is a challenge. Nevertheless, consider the following definition: Joy is a positive attitude of contentment that results from understanding and remembering the fundamental spiritual truth, namely, that God loves us.

The fact that God loves us is the most elementary divine truth (John 3:16). Observe:

(1) God loves us so much that He created and sustains us. (2) He loves us so much that He gave us free will. (3) God loves us so much that He implemented a plan of salvation which centers upon His Son's sacrificial death at Calvary. (4) He loves us so much that He is longsuffering and merciful toward us. (5) God loves us so much that He desires our eternal salvation, and (6) He loves us so much that He saves us “in Christ.”

These six points are basic truths pertaining to divine love. When one strives to understand just how much God loves him, and continually reminds himself of that marvelous love, he ought to be able to permanently (i.e., “always”) maintain a joyful disposition, even when the physical circumstances of his life are not pleasant. Let us now contemplate:

JOY with HAPPINESS

Ideally, all Christians would like every moment of their lives to be filled with joy and happiness, but such is only a fantasy. Happiness is a temporary feeling that results from pleasant physical circumstances; joy is independent of such.

A faithful disciple should always have joy, though he will not always be happy. This is the case because one's physical circumstances will not always be pleasant. It should be noted that God never instructed His followers to be happy continually, but He did command them to “rejoice always.” Let us now consider:

HAPPINESS without JOY

There is only one type of individual who possesses happiness without joy – that is, one who has been deceived into emphasizing the physical over the spiritual. Many with a worldly mindset, though they have no concept of true joy, will experience happiness just as a faithful child of God does (truly, God “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good” – Matthew 5:45).

When one indulges his fleshly desires, he will be happy as long as he is in the midst of pleasure, but such is only temporary. It is impossible to be immersed in pleasant physical circumstances indefinitely, as every mountaintop has a valley.

Followers of Christ should be happy when their physical circumstances are pleasant, but they should not expect to be happy always. They should focus their efforts on being spiritually content no matter what may befall them physically. Let us now ponder:

JOY with SORROW

If joy is understood to be a positive attitude of contentment, then it is certainly possible to be joyful and sorrowful simultaneously. This paradox is illustrated when a faithful brother or sister in Christ dies physically. Although one will certainly mourn the loss of his Christian friend, there is joy in knowing that heaven is the eternal home of God's faithful ones (Revelation 2:10).

Sorrow, like happiness, is also a temporary feeling, but it results from unpleasant physical circumstances. It is possible for a child of God to be sorrowful about something and yet still preserve a joyful attitude if he can maintain a proper spiritual perspective.

How can such a perspective be preserved? The key is mentally to “step back” from the sorrowful situation and reflect upon the fundamental spiritual truth. In the darkest hour of mortal grief, one's foundation of joy will not crumble as long as he is cognizant of the far-reaching extent of God's awesome love. No matter

what tragedy may strike a Christian, there is nothing that can overwhelm or erase the joy to be realized in this truth. One must "count it all joy" when he falls into unpleasant circumstances, knowing that the testing of his faith will produce patience (James 1:2-4)! And, may we never forget "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Let us now reflect upon:

SORROW without JOY

Tragically, sometimes a child of God will allow his joy to be overtaken by sorrow. This happens when he loses proper spiritual perspective (by forgetting the fundamental spiritual truth) and becomes overwhelmed by unpleasant physical circumstances. An example of this pitiful case is seen when a Christian turns his back on God after losing a loved one. A Christian with rock-solid faith will not allow sorrow to extinguish his joy.

Those of the world, because they are living in sin, waste much of their God-given time in sorrow without joy. This is not surprising since sorrow and unpleasant physical circumstances are natural effects of living in rebellion to God's will. Let us now contemplate:

JOY with PERSECUTION

The apostles and faithful Christians of the first century were persecuted continually, yet they were able to maintain their joy despite suffering greatly. Logically speaking, since persecution is dependent upon unpleasant physical circumstances, it is a subset of sorrow. Thus, all persecution is sorrowful, but not all sorrow is a result of persecution (cf. 1 Peter 3:17).

2 Timothy 3:12 should be a great source of encouragement when one finds himself suffering for the Lord, whether the persecution arises from the world or from false brethren. Herein, Paul declares that "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." That's a pretty broad statement. For the faithful, persecution is not a matter of if, but when! If one never suffers persecution for the Lord, could the reason be that he is not living the kind of godly life that God expects? Let us now consider:

PERSECUTION without JOY

Unfortunately, some Christians allow the sorrow of persecution to overwhelm them and cause them to abandon their joy. They begin by living faithfully to the Lord, but when persecution grows strong, they lose their proper spiritual perspective (see Matthew 13:20, 21); that is, they forget about the fundamental spiritual truth and focus on their suffering.

When a Christian stops reminding himself of the depth of God's love, he will be tempted to forsake the Lord in order to escape the suffering caused by persecution. Let it never be forgotten that "if God is for us [and He is, -SRB], who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Although earthly persecution can complicate life and leave physical and psychological scars, it cannot quench the joy that is founded upon God's love and love for God – not even if one is persecuted to the point of martyrdom. No person or thing can extinguish the joy of a Christian because no person or thing can separate the Christian from the love of God except, of course, himself!

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35, 38, 39). Let us now ponder:

INDIFFERENCE

Besides considering joy, happiness, sorrow, and persecution, some attention should be given to the subject of *indifference*, especially since a significant portion of humanity is aptly described by this term. To be indifferent is to be cold or numb; it is to be devoid of feelings.

Joy and indifference cannot co-exist. A child of the devil is indifferent when he is neither happy nor sad. He merely "exists."

A child of God is indifferent when he gives up his spiritual fight because he just doesn't care anymore. It is hard to imagine such a thing ever happening to a

Christian who is continually mindful of the infinite manifestations of God's love for him.

Let us reflect upon some examples in the book of Acts which show godly individuals rejoicing even in the midst of adversity:

- **Acts 5:40-42** – "...and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

The apostles rejoiced in physical beatings and the suffering of shame for their Lord!

- **Acts 13:49-52** – "And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

The disciples did not allow persecution or the expulsion of Paul and Barnabas to ruin their joy!

- **Acts 16:23-25** – "And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

Paul and Silas, even after being severely whipped and imprisoned, still had joy in their hearts that they expressed in worship to God!

- **Acts 20:22-24** – "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of grace of God."

Paul would not be deterred no matter what terrible fate awaited him; he determined to finish his life and work for the Lord with joy!

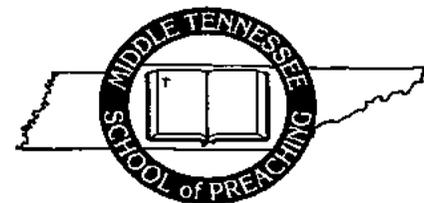
IN CONCLUSION

Friends, maintaining an attitude of joy is challenging because of the sin-filled world in which we live. Satan is doing his best to get us to give up the joy we have in the Lord. However, I firmly believe that – like our salvation – Satan cannot take our joy away, but he will try to get us to give it up (cf. John 16:22; 10:28).

The devil has many "wiles" (Ephesians 6:11). He tempts us with sin (i.e., he strives to shift our focus to personal pleasure and self-gratification). He blasts us with sorrow and pain (i.e., he tries to direct our attention toward self-pity and despair). He pours persecution upon us (i.e., he labors to make us aware that we could escape persecution if we would forsake the truth by compromising or by failing to proclaim the whole counsel of God). And, of course, he hopes that he can make us cold and indifferent (i.e., he endeavors to get us to give up the spiritual fight by making it difficult or seemingly unimportant).

We know that we are to pray for wisdom, but why not pray for joy also ("in faith, with no doubting" James 1:5-6)? May we learn to rejoice always, in spite of people, in spite of circumstances, and in spite of things which cause the world to worry – rejoice!

MIDDLE TENNESSEE SCHOOL OF PREACHING & BIBLICAL STUDIES



Evening Classes – Seven Locations

mtsp@clearwire.net
mtsop.net

Love Does Not Rejoice in Iniquity

Raymond Elliott

God is love and love is of God. God is more than love, but one of the great attributes of God is that He loves mankind and He desires that all men and women be saved (1 John 4: 9-11; 2 Peter 3:9). And if the love of God dwells within us, we love one another (1 John 4:12).

While love has many positive characteristics, there are some negative characteristics of this God-like love. One is that love does not rejoice in the wrong doing of others.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4, 6 we read that "Love... does not rejoice in iniquity." The idea conveyed in the word "iniquity" is that of being "wrong," "wrongdoing," "evil" and "unrighteousness."

The church of God at Corinth needed this lesson concerning the characteristics of love. In chapter five we read of a brother who was living with his father's wife (step-mother) and the church was not doing anything about it. Rather, some were puffed up about the matter and seemed to enjoy the situation existing in the congregation.

The apostle Paul wrote them a rather stern rebuke and instructed them to deal with the problem in a scriptural manner. This they did, and the brother was restored to fellowship with God and the church (2 Corinthians 2). The love of God in the hearts of the Corinthian disciples would have prevented their attitudes from being what they were toward this brother and all the family involved.

Permit me to present an example of what I have written concerning the Christian's attitude toward a brother or sister who may be guilty of a public sin in their lives. Several years ago while working with a congregation, a brother in Christ became involved in an illicit relationship with a woman. This brother was married and had a family of his own. This ungodly relationship went on for some time before members of the local church learned about it. When this adulterous relationship became known to the brothers and sisters of the local church, hearts were broken because all the members loved this brother. It was a very personal matter with me because he was one of my clos-

est friends and a dear brother in Christ and I loved him very much. Do you think that any of us rejoiced in this brother's sin? Of course we did not delight in his wrongdoing. Rather we wept openly and begged this brother to repent of his sins which he eventually did and was restored to full fellowship with the Lord and the church.

I have intentionally reserved until now mentioning two translations of 1 Corinthians 13:5, 6. Phillips translation is as follows, "It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people." The New English Bible reads: "does not gloat over other men's sins."

For example, a Baptist preacher in a nearby city has been accused by law officials of sexually molesting children. Should we gloat over his sins simply because we may differ with him and his denomination over some biblical subjects? It is a proven fact that scores of Catholic priests are pedophiles. Should we gloat over this immoral situation because we cannot accept the organization of this religious entity as being acceptable to God?

How are we to deal with the terrible news that a sister in Christ has killed her husband for whatever reason? Shall we weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15), or shall we delight in this horrible tragedy? Shall we accuse the church collectively for her action? The difference in how we treat this unfortunate tragedy will depend on whether or not the love of God dwells within our hearts.

William Barclay, in his commentary on the letters to the Corinthians, writes the following concerning the passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians 13:

"'Love finds no pleasure in evil-doing.' It might be better to translate this that love finds no pleasure in anything that is wrong. It is not so much delight in doing the wrong thing that is meant, "as the malicious pleasure which comes to most of us when we hear something derogatory about someone else. It is one of the queer traits of human nature that very often we prefer to hear of the misfortune of others rather than of their good fortune. It is much easier to weep with

them that weep than to rejoice with those who rejoice. Christian love has none of that human malice which finds pleasure in ill reports.”

Individuals that gloat over the mistakes and sins of other people because of religious prejudice, or for any other reason, are not acting like disciples of the Lord. To be a Christian is to be Christ-like, and to be Christ-like is to have the love of God in one's heart. And that measure of love in one's heart prevents him from rejoicing in iniquity, delighting in evil, and from gloating over another's sins.



Continued from Editorial: *The Text of the New Testament*

In the 1830s, Johann Martin Augustin Scholz (1794-1852) published his *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Scholz included 616 new minuscule (lower case) manuscripts and three uncial (upper case) fragments. Scholz also divided all New Testament manuscripts into five families: Alexandrian, Western, Asiatic, Byzantine, and Cyprian.

In 1881, Frederick Scrivener (1813-1891) collated the *Codex Sinaiticus* 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 of 1611. The translators of the KJV 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 KJV translators. Thus, the Scrivener text properly belongs to the family of *Textus Receptus*. While there is no single Greek manuscript that represents the *Textus Receptus*, since the more than thirty varieties of the *Textus Receptus* were all eclectic texts formed by incorporating variant readings, it can be rightly said that Scrivener's text was the best and most recent update for his time.

The Text of the New King James Version

When the decision was made by Sam Moore and Thomas Nelson Publishers that the King James Version needed 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 revision would be called the New King James Version.

Dr. Arthur Farstad, who served as the Executive Editor of the NKJV, provided the following reasons for returning to the *Textus Receptus* in their revision. In the first place, they did not want to do as Wescott and Hort did with the English Revised Version of 1881. The ERV was promoted as a revision of the KJV. However, as we shall later observe, Westcott and Hort used an entirely different text for their New Testament translation. This decision was not well received by all. In fact, many criticized Wescott and Hort for using their Greek text, rather than keeping the *Textus Receptus*.

The NKJV translators did not want to repeat this mistake. If the NKJV was going to be a revision of the KJV, then the same textual basis for the KJV would have to be used. However, it is worth noting that the edition of the *Textus Receptus* used by the NKJV translators was not the same as was used by the KJV translators. The NKJV committee chose to use Scrivener's more accurate revision of the text, which also included the Sinai Codex.

In the second place, they did not believe that the Byzantine family of manuscripts should be completely disregarded. As we shall see in our observation of the Critical Text, the oldest manuscripts are Alexandrian in origin, but there are relatively few of these. On the other hand, the Byzantine manuscripts, although later in date, number over 2,700 of all available manuscript evidence. The *Textus Receptus* is largely based on these Byzantine manuscripts.

In the third place, the *Textus Receptus* reflects the readings of eighty percent, and very frequently close to ninety-five percent, of all extant manuscripts. Thus, the translators of the NKJV chose to use the text with which the overwhelming majority of available evidence agreed, and observe any differences in other texts in their marginal notes. The NKJV is the only modern version which decided to return to the *Textus*

Receptus as the basis for its translation of the New Testament, and with the NKJV the line of the Textus Receptus ends for now.

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 (capital letters) Alexandrian and Old Latin manuscripts. Lachmann's work was the first to break from the Textus Receptus which was based largely upon Byzantine manuscripts.

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. Again, his text differed from the Textus Receptus because it was based upon the oldest available evidence, and not the agreement of the majority of all available evidence. Tischendorf's text was also based upon the Alexandrian family of manuscripts, rather than the Byzantine family of manuscripts.

In 1881, two Cambridge University scholars, 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.

As stated, Westcott and Hort titled their work, “The New Testament in the Original Greek.” However, it should be noted that they did not have any evidence dating earlier than the fourth century AD. Moreover, neither Westcott nor Hort ever actually collated a single manuscript but worked completely from published material. The Westcott-Hort Text served as the textual basis for the English Revised Version (1885) and the American Standard Version (1901).

Like the Received Text, the Critical Text underwent revisions. In 1886, Richard Francis Weymouth (1822-1902) first published “The Resultant Greek Testament,” which was the basis for his New Testament translation known as The Modern Speech New Testament published in 1903. Bernhard Weiss (1827-1918) also continued in this work of revision from 1894-1900.

In 1898, Eberhard Nestle (1851-1913) published his *Novum Testamentum Graece*. This text was published first by the Wurttemberg Bible Society in 1898 and its fifth edition was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1904. Once accepted by these Bible societies, Nestle's text became the standard Greek New Testament for scholars and schools.

Nestle arrived at his text by comparing the texts of Tischendorf and Westcott-Hort. When the two texts differed, Nestle consulted Weymouth's text for his earlier editions, and Weiss' text for his later editions. The agreement of two editions determined the text, while the third reading was placed in the apparatus. The 25th edition of the Nestle Text differs from the Westcott-Hort Text only 558 times (less than once per page). It differs from the Tischendorf text only 1,262 times.

In the late 1940s, Erwin Nestle (1883-1972) employed Kurt Aland (1915-1994) to assist in revising the Nestle Text, which would become the 21st edition of 1952. By the time of the 26th edition, the text would be known as the Nestle-Aland Text. This text is now in its 28th 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. The text for the Nestle-Aland Text and the GNT is identical. Scholars who support this textual tradition maintain that the most reliable portions from all manuscripts (Byzantine, Alexandrian, or Western) including the most recent papyri discoveries have been used to formulate this text. However, even Aland stated the label of eclecticism is not strictly appropriate, for the eclectic method was not always employed, realizing that each New Testament text requires its own individual treatment with a fresh consideration of not only

the external but of the internal factors as well.

The GNT and the Nestle-Aland Text serves as the standard Greek Testament for scholars and schools today. It has also served as the textual basis for English versions since the 1950s.

The Majority Text

The "Majority Text" is not the *Textus Receptus*. The Majority Text is derived from the agreed reading of all existing Greek manuscripts; but because most of these manuscripts are late medieval manuscripts, there is a family resemblance between the Received Text and the Majority Text. They agree with one another much more than either of them agrees with the Critical Text. One should know, however, that the text and apparatus of the Majority Text are based entirely on evidence supplied in other editions of Greek texts (similar to the methodology of Westcott and Hort), rather than on a first-hand study of the manuscripts.

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.

While Aland believed this effort to be an anachronism, such a lighthearted attitude toward this text should be avoided. For, in theory, the effort put forth was noble and plausible. Two premises underlie the methodology for the Majority Text:

(1) Any reading overwhelmingly attested by the manuscript tradition is more likely to be original than its rival(s) and therefore, "a reading... found only in a small number of other manuscripts, is not at all likely to be a survival from the autograph" (see Preface). It is maintained that the readings found in the largest number of manuscripts are most likely to trace back to the earliest copies. The earliest manuscripts would have had time to multiply the most.

(2) Most of the earliest manuscripts would have been sent to the area which had the most "early" churches. This area would have been the areas of Corinth, Achaia, and Asia Minor. Of course, this area would later become part of the Byzantine Empire from whence the majority of manuscripts have originated.

Of the basis of such plausible premises, one can hardly dismiss as flippantly as Aland did the notion of a Majority Text based upon the reading of all available manuscript evidence. Such a text would be a true eclectic text. Moreover, as we have previously stated, 80-95% of all available evidence agrees with the Majority Text/ Received Text. However, for those who believe the oldest manuscripts are closest to the original, the vast majority of manuscript evidence is of little importance, seeing that the vast majority is of a later date.

In Conclusion

As the field of New Testament textual criticism stands today, the overwhelming number of scholars, schools, and even Bible translations are fixed firmly in the camp of the Critical Text. The 300 year dominance of the Received Text has come to its end and for the last century we have been in the midst of a prevailing dependence upon 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. However, the true spirit of the Received Text and the Majority Text is to consider all the available evidence as it comes to light, while holding to the criteria of allowing the majority of all available evidence to stand. Yet, this criterion does not set well with many scholars. Some vehemently oppose the idea of a majority reading of all available manuscript evidence. Others hotly contest the idea of allowing two or three manuscripts the privilege of determining the text.

Hence, the debate continues – sometimes with quite inflammatory language. One must sift through the prejudice and look for the facts; facts which cannot be ascertained by studying only one side of the issue. Indeed, prejudice avails and prevails in many instances throughout this field of study. One can only hope to be balanced and fairly weigh all the testimony before reaching a conclusion. One must think for himself.

With that being said, we still have approximately 80% agreement between the three textual traditions. 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. Others deem such an answer unsatisfactory and believe the issue is much deeper than that. These maintain that every word of God must be represented in the Bible and that not one jot or tittle should be removed.

We must also realize that the use and defense of the Majority Text or the Received Text does not make a scholar any less scholarly. His use of this text and translations from this text does not necessarily mean he is "King James Only" or that he embraces everything that camp teaches.

ical Text, or a translation derived from that text, does not necessarily mean that he is a theological liberal. Dialogue and study is what is needed most in this particular field of study.

With that in mind, let us continue to study this issue and listen to the points that are made on both sides of the issue. Usually one can find the truth somewhere in between.

AE

On the other hand, just because a man uses the Crit-

Truth Does Not Change

Robert L. Waggoner

Until recently, a consensus existed in our society about the meaning of truth. Truth did not have to be defined. Everyone recognized truth for what it is.

Contrasting Descriptions of Truth

Truth was generally described in terms such as fixed, unified, absolute, objective, exclusive, universal, eternal, knowable, discoverable, consistent, and whatever corresponds to reality.

That description of truth continues to be required in some aspects of our lives, such as law, medicine, physics, mathematics, and various scientific endeavors. However, in the late twentieth century, some people began to promote the idea that in many other categories, such as philosophy, religion, ethics, social contexts and various academic disciplines, truth could be described as flexible, variable, relative, subjective, inclusive, local, temporal, unknowable, created, inconsistent, and not necessarily corresponding to reality.

These concepts of truth may be illustrated by what some people say, such as, "What is true for you may not be true for me." Or, "What I consider acceptable moral behavior may be true for me but not for you." Some people therefore believe that truth is changeable in some areas of life.

Questions to be Answered

Because a flexible understanding of truth has achieved a strong presence in our culture, certain questions should be asked and answered. First, "What does a flexible understanding of truth signify?" When the concept of truth is considered as absolute and fixed, then truth is a single over-arching standard applicable in all aspects of life. However, whenever truth is considered flexible or relative, then truth either masquerades as multiple standards or as no standard at all. If ethical truth is varied among people in a society, then there is no moral consistency and society gravitates into moral chaos. Acceptance of pluralistic standards for truth results in transforming a uniform society into a diverse society. Such a society is like a dysfunctional family wherein children are allowed to behave without a uniform standard. Families and societies that allow diverse behavioral standards become confused and end ultimately in dissolution.

Second, "Can truth rightly be considered fixed or absolute in some categories and flexible (i.e. relative) in others?" Because people sometimes differ in what they may consider to be true does not mean that truth is non-existent. From a biblical perspective, the source of all truth is God. He is truth personified (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 31:5; 33:4; 86:15; Isaiah 65:16; John 3:33; 17:3; 1 John 5:20). His word is truth (2 Samuel 7:28; Psalm 119:160; John 17:17) whether related to facts or moral principles. Since God

is consistently the same (Hebrews 1:12, 13:8), then truth is always fixed and absolute, never flexible or relative. This means that any truth is always consistent with every other truth.

Third, "What has caused an acceptance of flexible or relative standards for truth in some categories?" Reasons why truth is now often considered flexible and relative may not be fully understood but two reasons seem very likely. One is that our society has been changing from being God-fearing to becoming secular and against God. That is, our society has been turning away from thinking in terms of Godly moral behavior and eternal destiny and now thinks more and more in terms of material comforts and temporal pleasures.

When people turn away from God they also turn away from truth because God is the source of all truth. This was noted by the ancient prophets who pleaded with people to return to God (Isaiah 59:4, 14-15; Jeremiah 5:1; 7:28; 9:3, 5; Hosea 4:1).

Whenever a culture departs from God's justice, righteousness, and mercy it thereby opposes and suppresses truth (Romans 1:18, 25; 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12-13; 1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 2:18; 3:7-8; 4:4; 2 Peter 2:2).

Another reason why many have begun to consider truth relative relates to the rising influence of postmodernism. Over the last several centuries, many people came to consider human reasoning (not revelation from God) as the primary foundation for seeking truth. This type of thinking is associated with the philosophy of modernism.

However, our society is moving away from modernism and is now adopting postmodernism, which discards both God and reason as means for seeking truth. Although both believers in God and believers in modernism accept the reality of truth, postmodernists actually deny the very existence of the concept of truth. For postmodernists, irrationalism might seem to be the better standard for human thinking and behavior, but that is not quite correct either because postmodernism claims to be without any foundation whatsoever.

Summary of Differences

To summarize differences in beliefs about truth, postmodernists claim that there is no truth, whereas the existence of truth is recognized by both modernists and believers in God. Regarding the concept of truth, the primary difference between modernists and believers in God relates to deciding how truth is determined, i.e., whether by human reasoning only or by God's revelation and human logic.

Implications

If truth is changeable, relative, or non-existent, then no one can claim that what others believe is either true or false about anything because everyone determines for themselves what is or is not true. Again, whenever people believe that truth is changeable or non-existent, teaching others becomes extremely difficult if not impossible because whatever is taught may or may not be considered accurate to those who are being taught. More specifically, teaching the Word of God to others is more challenging because many will not accept the message of the Bible as anything more than beliefs of the people who wrote it. Many people therefore consider the Bible not applicable to themselves.

What therefore can we expect in the future as we try to teach the Word of God? The postmodern position will fall because it has no foundation (Matthew 7:26-27). While many people have adopted the position that truth is knowable only by reason, the modernist position appears to be weakening. There are still many who will accept truth as unchangeable. Therefore, the absolutist position may return with the passing of time and become more readily accepted.

Our Task

Because the Bible has been largely discarded in our society, many are not familiar with its message. The task for Christians is to broadcast the biblical message in order that everyone may know not only that truth does not change, but also that the truth of the gospel can save their souls.



THE TRUE PLAN OF SALVATION

E. Claude Gardner

“The ‘Sinner’s Prayer’ is the road to salvation,” most of the religious bodies teach. It is commonly stated for the sinner to pray for salvation as follows (or similar words):

“Holy Father, we are sinners and hopelessly lost without Thy forgiveness. We pray for salvation through Christ. We believe that Jesus is our Savior and we ask that He save us as we pray.”

Two objections are raised: (1) In the New Testament, the example of conversion by the “sinner’s prayer” is not included. (2) God’s true plan of salvation is set forth in the New Testament (Acts 2:38).

Often, sinners are told to pray as they mourn over their sins. If, after fervently praying, their answer is not given that they did not “come through.”

When my wife was in a denomination, she went forward with others to the “mourner’s bench.” After she poured her heart out, she did not “feel anything.” Then she was told that she “got it” but did not know it. Soon she learned the truth and the necessity of obeying the gospel.

The great restoration leader, Barton W. Stone, said the right thing when he found a large number of sinners praying and being anxious about salvation. It came to his mind to tell these sinners the same thing Peter told the sinners on Pentecost. He stood before them and quoted Acts 2:38 (*Autobiography of Barton Stone*).

They were so steeped in the false way that they were not receptive. Stone was stunned by their response and he did not pursue the true plan of salvation for a time. Yet, Barton W. Stone was right in urging them to do what 3,000 did on Pentecost.

Some years later, Walter Scott, an ardent and excitable man, though naturally timid and vacillating, came to the conclusion that the Bible plainly set forth the idea that baptism was for the remission of sin. One historian tells us, “He had studied long about the discordant and confused ideas relating to conversion” and in spite of all he could do “baptism seemed to present itself as in some way intimately connected with the

personal enjoyment of the blessings of the gospel,” but he “was unable to perceive its exact position... in relation to other requirements.” (*Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, Richardson)

Once he tentatively spoke in a sermon of baptism as “designed to be a pledge of the remission of sin.” Being very much given to the analysis and arrangement he soon placed the “various items of the gospel” in a consecutive order that appealed to him as scriptural: (1) faith; (2) repentance; (3) baptism; (4) remission of sins; (5) reception of the Holy Spirit. This arrangement, he said, seemed to him almost like a “revelation.”

He longed to present this “clue to the labyrinth in which they were involved in relation to conversion,” but his timid nature made him fear to introduce more disorder. At length he ventured to do so, and though his efforts met failure at first, he was surprised at his second invitation to receive a candidate for baptism in the person of William Amend, who on November 18, 1827 was baptized by immersion at New Lisbon, Ohio, “for the remission of sins.” From then on biblical baptism became a general theme in the Western Reserve of Ohio.

The Bible plan of salvation is too clear to miss it. Peter’s inspired answer in Acts 2:38 and the command of Jesus in Mark 16:16 are plain to a sincere seeker of salvation.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00
 Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month
 Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month
 Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month
 Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

The “Syndrome” Syndrome

Travis Quertermous

The concept of sin has all but disappeared from modern society. We have become quite skilled in justifying our sins. It seems we can always find an excuse or a scapegoat to blame for, and excuse, our bad behavior. One of the most popular ways to do this nowadays is by dismissing our disobedience by blaming an addiction or syndrome of some kind. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Third Edition, Revised) lists the following “disorders”:

- ❖ **Conduct Disorder:** “a persistent pattern of conduct in which the basic rights of others and major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated.”
- ❖ **Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD):** “a pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behavior.”
- ❖ **Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD):** “a pervasive pattern of excessive emotionality and attention-seeking.”
- ❖ **Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD):** “a pattern of irresponsible and antisocial behavior beginning in childhood or early adolescence and continuing into adulthood.”

I myself suffered from all of these so-called disorders at times when I was a child. Yes, I was a bit of an O.D.D. child sometimes! Nor did I know my parents were such master psychologists! They knew just how to cure my “conduct disorder” and it usually involved the liberal application of my dad’s belt to my bottom! That was also a guaranteed cure for my H.P.D. and A.P.D. too!

Now none of this should be taken as a criticism of legitimate psychiatry, especially when it is done from the perspective of a Christian counselor. Nor do we deny that mental illness is a real medical problem. But we do deny humanistic, evolutionary psychology which denies sin and human responsibility for the same! And all too often that is just what happens. People are told they are not truly responsible for their sinful choices; they are sick or have an addiction or a syndrome of some kind. The bogus disorders listed above are an example. In other words, we have a “syndrome” syndrome!

The Bible exposes such self-serving lies about human sinfulness. The apostle Paul declared unequivocally, “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Since “sin is the violation of the law” (1 John 3:4, KJV), and every accountable human being has violated God’s law, then we all stand condemned as spiritual criminals in the court of heaven! The punishment is eternal condemnation in hell (Rom. 6:23).

Adam and Eve tried to blame each other, God, and the serpent for their sin, but God would not listen to their excuses and punished them accordingly (Gen. 3:8-19). Aaron (Ex. 32:21-24), King Saul (1 Sam. 15:13-15), and the Jews in Babylonian Captivity (Ezek. 18:1-3) all likewise tried to play “the blame game” and pretend they were victims instead of sinners, but they too had their objections overruled by the Almighty and were judged by Him accordingly.

God said through the prophet Ezekiel, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Ezek. 18:20).

The apostle Paul taught, “For we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). On that great day, God will no more accept our excuses than He did any of the others mentioned above.

The only cure for sin is the blood of Christ and His divine prescription is written in the Bible. “For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the LORD God, “Therefore turn and live!” (Ezek. 18:32). To those convicted of their sins by the gospel and who cried out to the apostles asking what to do to be saved, the Bible declares, “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...’” (Acts 2:38)

Let each of us take responsibility for our sins and seek the mercy and forgiveness of our Maker. Let us not play the blame game with God nor become victims of the “syndrome” syndrome!



News & Notes

Obituaries

Donnie Hilliard, 64, died on October 8, 2014. He was preceded in death by his father, Benedict Hilliard. He leaves behind his loving wife of 35 years, Sherrie (McFarlin) Hilliard; son, David Ray Hilliard; daughter, Sarah Roberts (Alan); grandson, Wells Ray Roberts; Mother, Sarah Grace McTaggart; brother, Barry Hilliard; sister, Carol (Hilliard) Cederdahl.

Donnie was born on July 23, 1950. He had been a part time minister and a full time professor at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama where he taught Marriage & Family and Bible. He performed premarital counselling for over three hundred couples.

Jimmy Jividen died on Oct. 2, 2014. He is survived by his wife Shirley, their three children, many grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

For 60 years, Jimmy and Shirley served congregations in Texas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Colorado, Nebraska, and California. While contributing to the brotherhood in many ways, Jimmy was always devoted to the work of congregations where he preached.

Gleanings from the Mission Field

Jimmy Gee and his wife, **Trina**, along with eight of their children, have moved back stateside to Titus, AL. For ten years, the Gees worked in Tanzania with the Andrew Connally School of Preaching. We do not know who his replacement will be in that work.

Jimmy will now be preaching for the Rockford, AL congregation, where Robert Waggoner has been preaching. Jimmy has been a minister of the gospel for twenty-two years. He has worked as a full-time evangelist with local congregations in Alabama, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

David Lipe Retires

Knoxville, TN – David Lipe has decided to retire from his work as director of the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies (formerly East Tennessee School of preaching). His retirement will be effective at the end of the year.

The Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies is a work of the Karns church of Christ. In February 1971, the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions was established under the direction and oversight of the elders of the Karns church of Christ. Clyde Findley, a former missionary and director of a Christian school, was selected as the first director.

Prior to coming to Southeast, David Lipe taught at Freed-Hardeman in Henderson, TN for over 20 years. He continues to direct the FHU Bible Lectureship each February.

Upcoming Events

Lakeland, FL – The **Florida School of Preaching** will be hosting their 40th annual lectureship January 19-22, 2015. The theme will be the Sermon on the Mount.

The Florida School of Preaching began in September 1969 as a work of the South Florida Avenue church of Christ in Lakeland with support from other churches and individuals.

Gospel Preacher in Need of Prayer

Mike Scott, preacher for the Mt. Vernon church, Prescott, Arizona, is recovering from the removal of a brain tumor. He is now being treated with radiation and chemotherapy. Mike has been the speaker on the television program "What Do the Scriptures Say?" for 18 years.

Send us your news items!

andywin@gospelgleaner.com

Reader Replies

I recently (Sept.21-24) conducted a gospel meeting with the great church in Sylacauga, Alabama where my dear friend and classmate at Freed-Hardeman Mike Kiser preachers as well as serves as one of the elders. Although we had no baptisms or restorations, the gospel was well received.

In 48 years of preaching this was my first time to preach in the great state of Alabama. This meeting was especially dear to me, since my great, great grandfather (James Young) was a Gospel preacher from Florence, Alabama.

I recently (Sept.21-24) conducted a gospel meeting with the great

I want to also highly commend you in having brother James McGill serve as the Associate Editor of *The Gospel Gleaner*. Brother McGill continues to be a tremendous source for truth throughout the world. Our work continues to go well in Rowlett, Texas.

Yours in the One Faith,

Ivie Powell
Rowlett, TX

I worship with the Fraley's Chapel church on Kendrick Road in Alcorn County, MS. We receive the *Gospel Gleaner* and I enjoy it very much....It is an excellent paper.

Ralph Lambert
Michie, TN



Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 County Road 33
Killen, AL 35645

The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 26

December, 2014

Number Twelve

Sanctify God in Your Hearts

Ronald D. Bryant

We believe in God, in Jesus Christ, in the gospel, in redemption, and in the resurrection! These words express strong conviction and confidence. They come forth in confession and praise. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

In order to live the Christian life one must possess a high and holy view of God. One who does not possess strong conviction and confidence in the truth of God should not attempt to proclaim the gospel! Those that do not truly believe the gospel will not live it, nor make it known to others. Love for God and loyalty to Him lead to His being exalted in the believer's heart.

Peter directed, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Peter 3:15). To *sanctify*, literally means to make holy. In the absolute sense it is not possible for any person to make God sanctified, or holy. It is only in a lesser sense that man can even attempt to exalt God. We may endeavor to offer exalted praise to God, but we cannot actually exalt Him. However, it remains essential that God be exalted in our hearts and minds; that He be given the highest place in our lives. It is in this sense that the words of this text are to be understood.

Peter directed the people of God to hold to the most exalted view of God. His nature, power, will, justice, goodness, and truth are to be held in the highest and holiest regard. In the believer's heart, the Lord God Almighty is to be viewed not only as separate from everything earthly, but as superior to it. Nothing earth-

ly attaches to Him! All that is of this world is temporary; the Lord God Almighty is eternal. He is holy and He is exalted; and He stands forever above even our highest estimate of Him.

It is imperative that we acknowledge Him as Holy. We are not to ascribe human passions or programs to Him; to do so would dishonor Him. Nor can we confine Him in, or to, our view of Him. His attributes are infinite, and we are finite. While we will never fully comprehend His majesty or His infinite attributes, we are compelled to yield to Him and seek to honor Him, for He is the Lord God Almighty.

The pagans create gods, and then impose limits which they have devised, even upon their greatest gods. Not a few deceived believers, with their personal decrees, attempt the same with the Lord God Almighty. Yet, it remains that He is not bound by the thoughts or the decrees of man.

In his response to the Lord, man is to embrace and exalt the Lord God in His goodness, for every possible state of perfection belongs to Him. Man must never ascribe any measure of ill-will to God; nor ascribe to Him any work, purpose, or decree that is inconsistent. Such would corrupt the truth about God, and would serve to confuse and corrupt even the thinking of those who seek to know Him.

Continued on Page 12

The book of Jeremiah is a rich and complex assortment of poetry, narratives, and sermons. It reveals to us God's utter disappointment with His people at a most crucial time in their history.

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry as a messenger of Jehovah began during the sweeping religious reforms of the good King Josiah. Yet, these reforms did not endure – not even for a generation. Jeremiah's ministry as a spokesman for the Lord would continue through the deplorable reigns of the final four wicked kings of Judah – Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

A Point of No Return

As longsuffering as He is, there comes a time when God will stand evil no longer. Judah had reached that point. Jeremiah was not even permitted to pray for their good fortune (Jeremiah 14:11).

The Lord said, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people" (15:1; all references are from Jeremiah). Truly, the sins of Judah were written with a pen of iron (17:1). Indeed, the harvest had past, the summer had ended, and they were not saved (8:20).

To be clear, Judah did not reach this point of no return overnight. God had sent a number of messengers to them. He warned them time and again of the consequences of their actions. He pled with them saying, "Return to Me" (3:1), and called for them to amend their ways and their doings (7:3). God's people would not listen; they would not obey.

He commanded for them to obey His voice – "Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward" (7:24).

Therefore, the Lord decided to allow their wickedness to correct them and their backslidings to rebuke them (2:19); but not before He offered them one last opportunity to repent.

Deceived by Lying Words

The people of Judah had allowed the word of God to be taken from them, their families, and their nation. They were a godless people because His word was taken from them and replaced by the false teachings of their smooth speaking prophets (12:6), idolatrous priests, and wicked kings.

Judah was being led astray by false prophets and "lying words that cannot profit" (7:8). The Lord said, "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" And, "Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: 'You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,' says the LORD" (23:1-2).

Observe the shame of the house of Israel: "As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets" (2:26).

Judah was walking in the counsels and imaginations of their evil hearts (11:8; 18:12). They were

going backward and not forward (Jeremiah 7:24). They had turned back to the sins of their forefathers who went after other gods to serve them (11:10). They clearly were not walking in the way of the law (32:33). In fact, as we shall soon call to your attention, they brashly said, "We will not walk therein" (6:16). They had developed an attitude that was revolting and rebellious in their compromises with false religion (5:23). The people had come to believe "We are lords," and they defied the living God by saying, "We will come no more to You" (2:35).

Correction Rejected

"But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you'" (7:23). And again, "Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God" (11:4). Yet, "...they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me" (16:11-12).

Jeremiah was speaking to "...a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth" (Jeremiah 7:28).

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

Volume 26 / Number Twelve
December, 2014

*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

Staff Writers

Stephen R. Bradd	Bill Brandstatter
Ronald D. Bryant	Gerald Cowan
Raymond Elliott	M.W. Kiser
James R. Lewis	Grady Miller
Owen D. Olbricht	David R. Pharr
John T. Polk, II	Travis Quertermous
Andy Robison	Roger Shepherd
Ron Thomas	Ernest Underwood
Mike Underwood	Robert L. Waggoner

Associate Editor

James R. McGill

Editor

Andy Erwin

The Gospel Gleaner is published monthly by the Gospel Gleaner Company. It is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of New Testament Christianity.

Subscription rates begin at \$10.00 per year for individuals. Bundles are also available upon request.

Correspondences, news and notes, and article considerations can be sent electronically to andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com. Gospel Gleaner Publications reserves the right of discretion in deciding which correspondences, news, and articles to publish.

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
www.gospelgleaner.com
(256) 627-3215

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 *Sanctify God in Your Hearts*
Ronald D. Bryant
- 2 EDITORIAL *A Prelude to Apostasy*
Andy Erwin
- 4 *Before You Throw the Flag*
John T. Polk, II
- 5 *America's Roots*
Robert L. Waggoner
- 6 *Worshipping in Communion*
James Meadows
- 8 *Word Study: Baptize, Baptism*
Gerald Cowan
- 10 *When Will Saints Enter Heaven?*
Owen D. Olbricht
- 14 News & Notes
- 16 Reader Replies

Before You Throw the Flag

John T. Polk, II

According to the rules of football, some players may be disqualified (rejected, thrown out of the game) if they show an unwillingness to follow all of the rules. Some things show a serious violation of football rules, such as: helmet-to-helmet tackling; "spearing," or tackling by leading with the helmet; stomping on a downed player; or fighting after the whistle has blown. Who has the right to tell any player he cannot play, except those who are designated to enforce the rules? There is no fear of being disqualified as long as one plays by the rules.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, he taught them (and us!) how not to be thrown out of the Christian life ("disqualified"): "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you are disqualified. But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5-6).

To "examine yourselves" meant for Christians to look into their own heart, individually, and determine whether they were "in the faith" or not. "In the faith" refers to the rulebook God has given, the Bible (Old and New Testaments). Our own judgment of ourselves, however, is not enough, for Paul had written, "For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:4). God is the One who applies the rules, but each person must be honest with himself and determine whether or not he has followed those rules.

To "test yourselves" meant a detailed examination, like one would with some metal (gold, silver, etc.). This surely takes this self-examination beyond merely our opinion of ourselves, but going through the details of who we really are. This should take place every first day of the week in the Lord's Supper, for Paul had written:

"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy

manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

No one should think he is "worthy" of Jesus Christ, not John the Baptist (Acts 13:25) nor the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:9). However, Christians can (and should!) "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory" (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Paul wrote to Philippi, "let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God" (Philippians 1:27-28). The Lord's Supper should always be taken by those who feel unworthy of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, and grateful that He has prepared the Way by which we are enabled to "walk worthy."

No one is qualified to follow Christ who has not played by the rules. Paul wrote, "And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules" (2 Timothy 2:5).

No one is a Christian who has declared their sins already forgiven before being baptized, for it is in baptism that one is saved. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:4-6).

No one is a Christian who, though once baptized into Christ, has gone back into the ways of the world. It was to Christians that Paul wrote: "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you

know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them" (Ephesians 5:3-7). If a child of God becomes disobedient once again, there is NO promise of salvation, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

No one is a Christian who worships God according to their wishes, rather than as God directs. "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using--according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Colossians 2:18-23).

Christians can be cheated out of their reward who don't offer the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7); who disregard the unity of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:17-27); accompany their singing with instruments other than their hearts (Ephesians 5:19); give grudgingly to the Lord (2 Corinthians 9:7); pray for publicity with symbols and prayer mats (Matthew 6:5); make a great outward religious showing with their clothing, ceremonies, and titles (Matthew 23:1-10); convert people to the wrong way of serving God (Matthew 23:15).

Before you throw the flag on other Christians and the churches of Christ, take the Holy Spirit's word and "examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." The only rule a Christian should follow is the word of Christ; the only pattern to imitate is the example of Christ; the only comfort is in the love of Christ; and the only reward is in the judgment of Christ. "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; Try my mind and my heart" (Psalm 26:2).

America's Roots

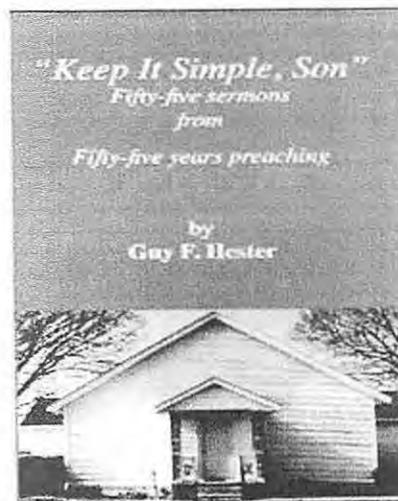
Robert L. Waggoner

President Abraham Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg about a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." Those expressions come from the General Prologue of the Wycliffe Bible translation of 1384. Centuries before Lincoln was born, it was written there that "the Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

Sharing the platform with Lincoln at Gettysburg, the renowned Edward Everett declared, "All the distinctive features and superiority of our republican institutions are derived from the teachings of scriptures."

When Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, an unruly mob gathered on Wall Street in New York City. A preacher, later to become President, James A. Garfield, quieted the mob, read from scripture, then commented, "Fellow Citizens, God reigns, and the government in Washington still lives.

In those days people understood that their American way of life was rooted in the Bible.



"Keep It Simple, Son"

Fifty-Five Sermons for Fifty-Five Years of Preaching

Guy Hester

\$10.00 plus shipping

Order from Gospel Gleaner
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645

Worshipping in Communion

James Meadows

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper because He wanted to be remembered. It shall be our purpose in this article to ask several questions about the Lord's Supper (or communion) and let the Bible answer them.

What Are the Proper Names?

The Lord's Supper is never called the "Eucharist." It is never called the "sacrament" which is derived from the Latin *sacramentum* meaning oath, solemn engagement. Moreover, "mass" is not the proper name. Roman Catholics believe "the mass is the same sacrifice as the sacrifice of the cross..."¹; and "...is a dramatic re-enactment in an unbloody manner of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary."²

The Hebrew letter teaches that Christ was "once offered to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28) and "by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

The Bible refers to the Lord's Supper as the "bread" and "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:26, 29); the "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42, 20:7); the "communion" (1 Corinthians 10:16); the "Lord's table" (1 Corinthians 10:21); and the "Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians 11:20).

What Are the Proper Elements?

Observe, "and as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it" (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23). The bread used in observing the Passover was unleavened bread and it is safe to assume the Lord used the same in instituting the supper. The bread represents the body of Christ since Jesus said, "... this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). Such expressions were common among the Jews (cf. Genesis 40:12; Matthew 13:38)

Second, "and He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it. . . I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine..." (Matthew 26:27, 29). The "cup" refers to the contents, and not to the container. The antecedent "it" is the cup which they were to drink and the "Fruit of the Vine." The "cup" represents the blood of Christ "For this is

my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

The Roman Catholic church holds "... that there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood which the Catholic Church calls Transubstantiation."³

This cannot be true because Jesus was still there in body when He spoke of the bread and He called the "cup" the "fruit of the vine" even after He blessed it showing there had been no change (Matthew 26:26-29).

What Are the Purposes?

First, it is a **communion**. "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16)

The Law of Moses was sealed and dedicated by the blood of animals (Exodus 24:6-8; Hebrews 9: 28-32) and those under it were benefited and blessed by the blood of animals as they lived according to the covenant sealed by that blood. The new covenant is sealed by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:15-17) and we enjoy this communion and these benefits only as long as we live according to this covenant that is sealed by Christ's blood.

Second, it is a means of **spiritual nourishment**. Proper physical health depends on food, rest, exercise and shelter. In the same way spiritual health depends on certain conditions. The Lord's Supper can build us up spiritually, but an improper observance results in weak, sickly, and dead Christians (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Third, it is a **memorial**. "And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

"And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you;

this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when He had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24-25).

Fourth, it is a **proclamation**. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The death and suffering of Christ are cardinal facts of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). As one observes the Lord's Supper, he not only proclaims what Christ did, but also loudly confesses his belief in that event.

Likewise the second coming of Christ was a great part of the apostles' doctrine (Acts 1:10-11; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The Lord's Supper is a regular reminder to the Christian of the Lord's promised return. The Christian also proclaims to the world that Christ is coming again and his belief in that truth.

How Often Is It Observed?

Some say God has left the decision of when to partake of the Lord's Supper in the realm of human judgment, but, if so, it's the only memorial He has so left (cf. Exodus 12:3-6; Leviticus 23:15, 16).

By advancing step by step, the time of observation can definitely be established. First, the early church assembled. Paul and Barnabas assembled a whole year with the church at Antioch (Acts 11:26). It was a practice of the whole church in Corinth to "come together in one place" (1 Corinthians 14:23). The Hebrew Christians were admonished not to forsake the assembling (Hebrews 10:25).

Second, the early church assembled on a stated day which was called the Lord's day. The church at Troas came together "upon the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7). The church at Corinth assembled "upon the first day of the week" (1 Corinthians 16:2). The first day of the week is "the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10); the day Christ was raised (Mark 16:9); the day Pentecost came (Acts 2:1); the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2); the church was established (Acts 2:1, 47); and the gospel was preached as a fact (Acts 2:1-47).

Gus Nichols wrote, "It is fitting that the 'church of the Lord' (Acts 20:28, ASV) should assemble around the 'Lords table' (1 Corinthians 11:20) to eat the

'Lord's supper' (1 Corinthians 11:20) 'upon the Lord's day' (Revelations 1:10)."

Third, the early church met upon the first day of every week to observe the Lord's Supper. One of the stated purposes of the saints assembling upon the first day of the week was to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20). The Corinthians assembled on the first day of the week for this purpose (1 Corinthians 11:20; 16:2). The church at Corinth came together (1 Corinthians 14:23); they came together on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2); they came together to observe the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). Since every week has a first day, then the early church partook of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.

Five Directions of the Lord's Supper

Frank L. Cox used to say that the Christian should look in five directions when observing the Lord's Supper. We look upward in gratitude as we give thanks (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). We look backward in memory of the suffering of the Son of God. "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). We look outward by declaring to the world the Savior's undying love. "For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death" (1 Corinthians 11:26). We look forward in anticipation, "Till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). We look inward in self-inspection. "But let a man examine himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

1 New York Catechism

2 John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions* p. 382.

3 The Crede of Pope Pius IV.

Gospel Gleaner Subscriptions

Yearly for Individuals - \$10.00
 Bundles of 10 - \$10.00 per month
 Bundles of 25 - \$25.00 per month
 Bundles of 50 - \$30.00 per month
 Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

Word Study: Baptize, Baptism

Gerald Cowan

Someone called to my attention a footnote on Luke 11:38 in the New American Standard Bible. A Pharisee was surprised that Jesus had not washed before eating a meal. The NASB has expanded the translation to read “ceremonially washed” and added in the footnote that it is “literally baptized.”

A check of the Greek text shows that the word is EBAPTISTHĒ, an aorist passive form of the verb BAPTIZŌ. This raises a question: is baptism only an immersion, and does it involve the whole body, or can it mean simply to wash or apply water to some part of the body? You can see what implications that might have for the doctrine of Christian baptism. We cannot change what the text actually says, but we must make sure it is translated correctly if our doctrine is to be valid and defensible.

THE MEANING OF THE WORDS

According to standard lexicons the root meaning of BAPT is immerse, dip, wash, cleanse. It can be a literal or figurative immersion, dipping, etc. But how can it be distinguished as an immersion rather than simply washing or cleansing? The distinction is clear in the Greek text, not by the verb form, but by the inflected form of the noun. Greek nouns are classified as male, female, or neuter. These are not gender associations such as would be the case in English where nouns are names of persons, places, or things but only persons or animals are assigned male or female gender. This makes it awkward for English speakers, but not for others who speak a language with gender-classed nouns, such as Spanish, French, and many more. Noting the gender assignment of words is critically important for understanding the Greek text.

Notice, in the case of baptism, that the feminine form – BAPTISMA – is primarily an immersion. This is the form used in all references to the baptism administered by John and also what we can term Christian baptism (see for example Mark 1:4, Luke 7:29, Acts 1:22, Acts 19:3, Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21) and to the figurative baptism mentioned in Matthew 21:25 and Mark 10:38. Whether it is literal or

figurative, the feminine form is an immersion. Nothing less than complete immersion satisfies the meaning.

But the noun also appears in masculine form – BAPTISMOS – which means washing or cleansing, dipping implied but not necessarily included. Examples of the masculine form of the word can be found in the washing of cups, pots, vessels, and tables (Mark 7:4), the washing of nets (Mark 7:8), the doctrine of baptisms (plural, Hebrews 6:2), and various washings commanded of the Jews in the Old Testament (Hebrews 9:10).

There are other words for wash which do not imply immersion, though they do not exclude it. The most common of these is LOUŌ – bathe, wash or cleanse, with what is to be washed specified as face, hands, body part or the whole (Hebrews 10:22). APOLOUŌ – means wash off, wash away (Acts 22:16). We get our word ablution from this. But even “taking a bath” or “washing the body” does not imply or require immersion. Notice that both BAPTIZŌ and APOLOUŌ appear in Acts 22:16 where Paul was told to “be baptized and wash away your sins...”

The baptism of Acts 22:16 is immersion and the figurative washing away of sins is in apposition to baptism, a result included in and therefore inseparable from the baptism, not a separate action. One may wash or cleanse any item by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion; but the washing away of sins requires the immersion commanded by the Lord (Matthew 28:19).

The traditions of the Jews (not commands of God in scripture, but acts prescribed by Jewish lawyers and religious teachers) included ritual or ceremonial washing and cleansing. Washing the hands, not the whole body but just the hands, before eating was one of these “traditions of the elders” (see Matthew 15:2-9 and 20, Mark 7:3).

The reference in Luke 11:38 is to the ceremonial ritual, and not to a literal cleansing. Why then is BAPTIZŌ not translated “baptize” in this place? Because the washing in view here was a traditional one,

done in a special way as prescribed by rabbinic tradition (note Matthew 15:1-2 and Mar 7:2-3). It was not simply washing dirt from the hands, but rather a ceremonial ritual cleansing that had nothing to do with dirt. The translator uses wash rather than baptize here, because it is only the hands, not the body, which were to be dipped or washed. It could be confusing to say "why was he not baptized before he ate?" The question is, "Why did he not wash his hands?" The fact that the verb BAPTIZŌ is used in Luke 11:38 merely indicates that the washing was a ritual dipping of the hands in water.

TYOLOGICAL OR FIGURATIVE BAPTISMS

We may sometimes use the word figuratively: to be immersed in thought, to be covered up in work or duties, to be overwhelmed by pain, fear, etc. The baptism of suffering is alluded to in Mark 10:38, Luke 12:50, and Matthew 20:22 where Jesus is referring to the particular ordeal He was facing, an immersion in suffering that would end in His death.

John the Baptist alludes to a baptism of fire and a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). Being baptized into Moses in the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:4) means being committed or pledged to and somehow identified with Moses as leader. There is a necessary connotation of the same in being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3), into the body or church of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), and of or into the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Acts 1:5).

An important note: baptize and baptism are not religious words. They are ordinary words that are transliterated rather than translated in common English versions of scripture. Both words can be given a religious application, but in every proper use both the subject and the element must be specified, or at least understood by necessary implication and inference. So, one can immerse an item or object, or one's hands or the whole body. But what is being immersed must be specified.

Immersion is not limited to one certain element. One can immerse or bury a person or a thing into many elements – water, oil, milk, sand, or even soil. Both the subject and the element must be specified. When the context indicates it refers to Christian baptism, the baptism of one who is to be saved, washed

from sin, identified with Christ and placed into his spiritual body the church, it is not always necessary to specify the subject or the element. Sometimes the subject and element are specified when it is obviously Christian baptism, as for example in Acts 8:36 and Acts 10:47 where water is the particular element for immersing the persons obeying the Lord's requirement and command. This allows us to infer water as the element in any and all references to baptism in obedience to Christ, as for example in Acts 8:12-13 and 18:8.

Since most readers of the New Testament do not read or understand Greek we sometimes have to trust the translator to indicate whether it is immersion or a mere washing, whether it has any reference to becoming a Christian, and whether it is literal or figurative. We could wish the translators were consistent, but sometimes they are not. In the KJV of Hebrews 6:2 and 9:10, why is the same word rendered "baptisms" in 6:2 and "washings" in 9:10? Sometimes the footnote or cross reference is confusing rather than helpful, as in the present example from the NASB of Luke 11:38.

One thing we should have learned from this study is the need to know both the form of the word (in this case masculine or feminine nouns) and the context so that we do not allow translators or theological manipulators to tell us that the baptism (immersion) required for becoming a Christian can be accomplished by a mere washing (by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion of some body part) such as one would give to objects for a non-spiritual cleansing.

We have not touched here on the purposes for the baptism commanded by Christ and the apostles, but that is a different topic for a different essay.



Learn more about the staff of the *Gospel Gleaner* by visiting us on Facebook.

WHEN WILL SAINTS ENTER HEAVEN

Owen D. Olbricht

Jesus taught that those who have died still exist by stating "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). By saying this, He affirmed that their (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) souls are still alive, even though they are dead.

The apostle Paul taught the same, for he wrote, "For if the dead do not rise, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished" (1 Corinthians 15:18). Positively stated, they will rise because they have not perished.

According to Paul, we have a body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:23). The soul, Greek *psuche*, does not die when the body dies (Matthew 10:28). The soul leaves the body at death (Genesis 35:18). It returns to the body if the person is resurrected (1 Kings 17:20, 21). Some versions have "life" in the above two verses instead of "soul," as translated in the KJV, which is the most used rendering of the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

The spirit, Greek *pneuma*, leaves the body at death (Ecclesiastes 12:8; Matthew 28:50 ["ghost" KJV]; James 2:26) and returns to the body if a person is resurrected (Luke 8:55).

Not Yet in Heaven

Two terms are used in the Bible of the place where dead people go, which include the Hebrew word *sheol* translated "grave," "pit," and "hell" in the Old Testament and the Greek word *hades* translated "grave," "hell," and "Hades." *Sheol* and *Hades* are the same place (Compare--Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27, 31; KJV incorrectly has "hell" in both passages). "Hell," "pit," and "grave" are not the best translations of *sheol* or *hades*, which should be understood as the place where all dead people go (Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 30:16; Isaiah 14:13), unless figuratively used as in the Old Testament (Psalms 86:13; Jonah 2:2).

Hades and heaven are two separate places. This is evident from David's statement that if he ascends into heaven or makes his bed in Hades, he cannot escape God's presence (Psalm 139:8). The dead go to Hades, not to heaven, where they wait for their resurrection.

Jesus' statement to the Sadducees shows that those who die are in some sense alive (Matthew 22:23, 31, 32), as do Old Testament passages. Jacob felt he would go to Sheol to be with Joseph (Genesis 37:35; KJV has "grave"). Surely he did not mean he would be buried in the same grave with Joseph, for he did not know where Joseph had gone.

Samuel appeared to Saul and told him that he and his sons would be with him tomorrow (1 Samuel 28:19). Samuel did not mean that they would be in the same grave, but that they would be together, thus in Sheol. David could be comforted knowing he would go to be with his son who died (2 Samuel 12:23). These died but none of them went straight to heaven, for Jesus said, "And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven" (John 3:13).

Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration (Matthew 17:2-4; Luke 9:29-33), showing that they had not perished. Saints came from their graves when Jesus died on the cross and entered Jerusalem after His resurrection (Matthew 27:52, 53). Their bodies were still in the graves, but when they came back to life their spirits reenter their bodies, for the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26).

According to Peter, even after Jesus went to heaven, David had not yet ascended into heaven (Acts 2:34). If Jesus took people into heaven when he ascended (Ephesians 4:8), as some assert, it seems strange He did not take David with him.

Souls of the Dead Not in Heaven

When Jesus died, His soul left His body and went to Hades (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27, 31), the place where even lost people go (Luke 16:22, 23). Jesus' spirit, as does the spirit of all the dead, departed into God's keeping when He died (Luke 23:46; Ecclesiastes 12:7), but did not go to be with God in heaven, for Jesus did not at that time ascend into heaven (John 20:17, 18).

Jesus promised the criminal, who was dying on a cross that he would be with Him in Paradise. Jesus did not mean that Paradise (Luke 23:43) was heaven, for He told Mary Magdalene, "I have not yet ascended to My Father" (John 20:17, 18), which ascension was 40 days later as described by Luke (Acts 1:9, 10). Jesus used Paradise of a place of rest and comfort, not heaven, but Hades where His soul went at death and from which it returned to enter His body when He was raised (Acts 2:27, 31).

Enter Heaven on the Last Day

Jesus taught that "the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth" (John 5:28, 29). This raising of the dead will take place on the last day (John 6:40, 44, 54), which truth Martha may have learned from Jesus (John 11:24). Jesus will judge the world on that day, the last day (John 12:48; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10).

"Day" is used in the New Testament of Jesus' day when He will return, will raise the dead, judge the world, and when the heavens and earth will be burned up. The day when this will happen is described with three terms:

- Day of judgment (Matt. 11:22, 24; 12:36; Rom. 2:5, 16; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7; Jude 6).
- Day of the Lord (1 Cor. 1:8, 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:10, 12).
- That day (Matt. 7:22; 24:36; Mark. 12:32; Luke 6:23; 10:12; 17:30; 1 Thess. 5:4; 2 Thess. 1:10; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:8).

On that day, Jesus' day, the day of judgment, Sodom and Gomorrah, thus Old Testament people, and rebellious angels will be present (Matthew 11:22, 24; Jude 6). Those who are righteous will be rewarded (Luke 6:23; 2 Timothy 4:8), Jesus will be glorified in the saints (2 Thessalonians 1:10). He will say to those who do not do the will of God, depart from me (Matthew 7:21-23). God will show His wrath and will punish the disobedient (Romans 2:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Peter 2:7) and the universe will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10, 12),

The day when all this will take place had not come when Paul wrote the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 2:2), but will come as a thief at night when no one ex-

pects His coming (Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

The last day is when Jesus will raise all the dead at His return (John 5:28, 29), which will be followed by the end (1 Corinthians 15:22-24), the day of the Lord when the universe will pass away and be no more (2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 20:11; 21:1).

If the dead saints are now in heaven, then they are still in their unchanged earthly bodies, for all will be changed at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:44, 51), when Jesus returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

Heaven and earth still exist. The last day has not come, the judgment has not taken place, and the dead saints have not yet entered heaven.

Conclusion

As of now, dead saints are not in heaven. Their bodies are in graves and their souls are in Hades. The living will not enter heaven before those who have died but both will be caught up together to be with Jesus when He comes again (1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Hades will give up the souls of the dead that are in it when Jesus comes to sit on His throne and judge the world (Revelation 20:11-13).

When will saints enter heaven? On the last day when all will be raised, changed, and judged (John 6:44; 12:48).

MIDDLE TENNESSEE SCHOOL OF PREACHING & BIBLICAL STUDIES



Evening Classes – Seven Locations

mtsp@clearwire.net
mtsop.net

Continued from page one: *Sanctify God in your Hearts* by Ronald Bryant

God can do no evil, or oppose righteousness. He does not despise those whom He made in His own image. Those who suppose that God condemns certain ones, before they are born, to everlasting perdition, dishonor God. The Lord God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation those who fear Him and work righteousness are accepted of Him (Acts 10:34-35).

To sanctify the Lord God is to regard Him as perfect, and as separate from all that is imperfect. He possesses wisdom without error; power without limits, truth without deviation, love without hatred, holiness without malevolence, and justice without capricious regard. God can neither be, say, purpose, or do, that which is not infinitely just, holy, wise, true, and gracious.

He hates nothing that He has made. Out of love for mankind, He gave His only-begotten Son to die that they might not perish, but have everlasting life. Let your heart be ruled by these truths; sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and you will then be ready to give a rational explanation of the hope that is in you. Yet, be warned, religious systems and creeds that are founded on misconceptions about the Lord God, are not capable of rational explanation, and they cannot provide the necessary answers or desired answers.

The bane of religious systems devised by man has ever been man's determination to change God. Men want to be religious on their terms, and they want a god they can manage. Such men have ever worked to fashion a god after their own likeness! It is essential that we know God as He is and be ruled by His perfect will and holy purpose.

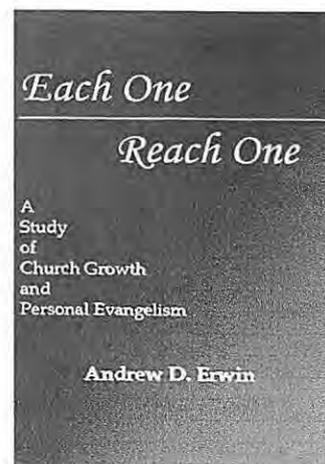
Even at this very moment, we stand under the obligation to sanctify the Lord God in our heart; that we exalt Him in our hearts in His true nature, even as He has made Himself known in His holy word. This task will continue to require of us our greatest determination, consistent self-examination, ceaseless prayer, much time, and much of the grace of God.

Bible Studies from Andy Erwin



Lectures on the New Testament Church contains 15 lessons in outline form for easier teaching and preaching purposes.

\$6.00 plus shipping



Each One Reach One contains 26 lessons on the theme of church growth and personal evangelism with discussion questions and a personal Bible study.

\$12.00 plus shipping

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 CR 33
Killen, AL 35645
andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

Continued from the Editorial: *A Prelude to Apostasy* by Andy Erwin

Sin Had Changed Judah

This people once known for keeping the law had become a people who were wise to do evil, but had no knowledge of doing good (4:22). Their transgressions were many, and their backslidings increased (5:6). The Lord observed, "Everyone is given to covetousness; From the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely" (Jeremiah 8:10). Moreover, "Everyone will deceive his neighbor, And will not speak the truth; They have taught their tongue to speak lies; They weary themselves to commit iniquity" (Jeremiah 9:5).

Be sure of this: sin will change a person. Sin will change a family. Sin will change a nation! If we give the devil an inch, he will take a mile. Allow him to affect just one aspect of our personality, and he will change our entire frame of mind. This is why we must resist the devil steadfastly in the faith (1 Peter 5:9). If we refuse to give that inch, the Bible tells us he will flee from us (James 4:7).

Rather than learn from their sins, and accept the Lord's mercy by returning to Him, Judah chose to harden their hearts, and refused to listen. This decision led to their destruction.

Judah's rejection of God's pardon left Him but one decision. "Therefore hear, you nations, And know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people— The fruit of their thoughts, Because they have not heeded My words Nor My law, but rejected it. For what purpose to Me Comes frankincense from Sheba, And sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, Nor your sacrifices sweet to Me." Therefore thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people, And the fathers and the sons together shall fall on them. The neighbor and his friend shall perish" (6:18-21)

The fall of Judah and the reason for their fall would be seen and heard throughout the nations (see 9:13-16). The Lord would destroy Judah and Jerusalem, as well as all of the idolatrous nations surrounding Judah. Yet, he would not make a "full end" of them as a peo-

ple (4:27). After seventy years Judah would be allowed to return (25:12). God's plan all along was "To root out and pull down, To destroy and to throw down, and To build and to plant" (1:10). A remnant would return from Babylon (see 32:37-44). It is through this remnant that the Christ would come (23:5-6). However, His throne would not be in Judah (22:30), and His covenant would not be written on tablets of stone (31:31-33).

CONCLUSION and APPLICATION for TODAY

A great many lessons can be learned from the book of Jeremiah, but none is clearer than the picture of apostasy presented by rebellious Judah. To read of Judah reminds us of rebellious and apostate brethren, and disgraceful nations. In fact, Jeremiah almost reads like today's newspaper.

Truly, God is mindful of His people. He says, "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes" (16:17).

God is righteous and holy and requires holiness and faithfulness from His people. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD (9:23-24).

If we are being deceived by lying words, changed by sin, or find that we are guilty of rejected correction, let us repent before we too pass a point of no return.



SOUTHWEST

Southwest School of Bible Studies

FACULTY

Rick Brumback
director
Dewayne Bryant
Alfonso Macias
John Moore
Don Walker

Southwest graduates serve as preachers, authors, campus directors, missionaries, and school leaders on five continents. Whatever your passion, with strong academics and hands-on training, our collegiate program will empower you to serve Christ and His church.

- Two year full-time program for men and women
- Well-respected Bible faculty
- Verse-by-verse study of the entire Bible
- Training in expository preaching
- No tuition
- Living expense assistance available
- Studies in Biblical languages



"To know Jesus and...
make Him known"

swsbs.edu



News & Notes

OBITUARIES

Fayetteville, TN: **Winford Claiborne**, age 88 of Fayetteville, passed away Tuesday morning (Nov. 18) at his residence.

He was a native of Portland, TN, and the son of the late Marvin and Susie Dillahay Claiborne. In October 2002, brother Claiborne and his family suffered the loss of Molly, his wife of 53+ years.

As of February 2014, brother Claiborne had been preaching the gospel for 71 years. He was a graduate of both Freed-Hardeman College and Murray State University. His academic work also included graduate studies at Harding Graduate and University of Georgia.

While serving as a gospel preacher for numerous congregations, he's had other experiences as well, including high school teacher, business owner and college professor. In the last 71 years he's been the pulpit minister for congregations in Kentucky, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee.

After teaching at Freed-Hardeman for 14 years, he retired in 1993 and moved to Fayetteville where he began preaching full-time for the West Fayetteville congregation.

In August 1995, brother Claiborne took over the International Gospel Hour radio program. The operation of the International Gospel is under the direction of the Elders at the West Fayetteville Church of Christ.

Survivors include two sons, Doron (Kathe) Claiborne of Murfreesboro, TN and Danny (Gina) Claiborne of Murray, KY, grandchildren Hannah and Mark Claiborne, Wesley (Heather) Claiborne, brothers and sisters Edger Claiborne, Lucien (Ellen) Claiborne, Charlie (Paulette) Claiborne, Wilma (Irvin) Hill, Garvin (Beverly) Claiborne, and brother-in-law Chester Hill. He was preceded in death by brothers and sisters William, Ethel, Nadine, Raymond, Douglas and Laura.

Courtesy of brotherhoodnews.com

Montgomery, AL: **Winston Colie Temple**, 74, of Montgomery, passed away on Friday, November 14, 2014.

Brother Temple served as a Professor at Christian Colleges and Training Institutions for over forty years. He trained hundreds of ministers, missionaries and laymen to understand and apply the Holy Scriptures to their lives and those they influence.

Winston Temple was distinguished as a scholar in Old Testament Theology, Languages, History and Ministerial work. He spoke and preached in over 30 states and all around the world. He taught students from every continent around the globe and was always admired as one of the best Professors who ever taught in higher education. His students have included: Doctors, Lawyers, Congressmen, Military Leaders, School teachers, Missionaries, Media Personalities, Public Servants and some of the nation's top Ministry Leaders. Yet, Dr. Temple really loved and served "common folk." He gave away most of what he earned. He reached out to those who struggle the most. He showed unparalleled compassion to those in need to his family, friends and the man holding a card board sign on the side of the road. He loved and served them all.

He was preceded in death by his son, Mark Bradley Temple; parents Oma C. and Zora E. Temple; sister, Zora Jean Martin. He is survived by his loving wife, Valeria A. Temple; son, Mitch (Rhonda) Temple; daughter, Greta (Greg) Schumacher; seven grandchildren, Kevin Temple, Hannah Wintersteller, Ben Temple, William Temple, Audrey Temple, Katie Payne, Nathan Schumacher; one great grandchild, Laeana Wintersteller; sister-in-law, Hilda Silcox ; brother-in-law, Jessie Stewart.

Murray, KY: **Lexie B. Ray**, age 82, of Murray, Kentucky, died Sunday, November 23, 2014 at his home after a short battle with cancer.

Brother Ray was born in Graves County, Kentucky on September 19, 1932 to the late Onyx B. and Ola (Seay) Ray. In addition to his parents, Lexie was preceded in death by one brother, Dr. Rex E. Ray; and by a sister, Joyce Faye Ray. He is survived by his wife, Zann (Patton) Ray of Murray, whom he married on July 19, 1953 in Murray, Kentucky; two daughters, Karyn Ray Kozel and husband Mike of Nashville,

Tennessee, and Tish Ray Elrod of Searcy, Arkansas; one grandson, Alan Elrod; as well as two nephews and one niece.

Brother Lexie served as a gospel preacher in Florida, Tennessee, and Kentucky. He began preaching in 1950 at the age of 17. He preached in nineteen states and in two countries. Brother and Sister Ray were given lifetime honorary memberships in the Tennessee PTA for their work done in Union City, Tennessee. Lexie Ray retired as a pulpit minister at the Fairdealing church of Christ at the age of 81.

New Radio Program in East Tennessee

The **Oneida Church of Christ** is starting a teaching effort on Radio Station WECO, Wartburg, Tennessee, beginning Monday, November 24. The 1-minute lessons, entitled, "Words of Wisdom," will be studies from the Bible for our current times. The lessons will be aired Monday-Friday following the Noon News on AM 940 (all religion) and FM 101.3 (Country). The station streams over the Internet at:

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

The speaker will be **John T. Polk II**, preacher for the Oneida church of Christ. (The time zone is Eastern)

Gatlinburg Radio Station

Beginning in 2015 the Gatlinburg church of Christ will be broadcasting 24 hours a day on 101.1 WJFS-FM. The congregation is currently awaiting programming from the Gospel Broadcasting Network. Rod Rutherford is the preacher for the Gatlinburg church of Christ.

New Books Expected in 2015

In 2015, look for a book of memoirs to be published by **Artie Collins**. Artie has been a faithful gospel preacher for the last 50+ years. He is now teaching and preaching occasionally for the Pleasant Valley congregation in Killen, AL, and by appointment.

Gospel Gleaner Publications will be reprinting Max Miller's book of sermons titled, *Book Chapter and Verse Sermons*.

Also, look for a book detailing the history of the Montgomery Bible College down to present-day Amridge University to be written by *Gospel Gleaner* staff writer **Raymond Elliott**. Brother Elliott was a student at MBC and now serves on the board of directors for Amridge.

Churches Looking for Preachers

Hopkinsville, KY: The Hopkinsville church of Christ is currently looking for a pulpit minister. They are a congregation of 125 led by 2 elders and 4 deacons. Hopkinsville is a city of 33,000 located in western KY, about 1 hr. north of Nashville, TN. Contact Kirk Bull (270) 484-4551 for more information.

Charleston, SC: The Essex Village congregation is looking for a preacher. Attendance is around 120. They have 3 elders, and 9 deacons. For more information call (843)766-7727.

Falls of Rough, KY: The Yeaman church of Christ is seeking a full time pulpit preacher. They are located in the northwestern corner Grayson County, KY. The preacher's home is located adjacent to the church building. The congregation requires scripturally sound sermons and lessons. They have approximately 45 people attending Sunday morning service. For more information call (270) 879-8492.

Decatur, AL: The Priceville congregation is seeking a full-time preacher. They average 60-70 in attendance and have a newly remodeled preacher's house. Please call Milton Hollis for more information (256) 476-6601.

Rogersville, AL: The Cedar Grove church of Christ is seeking a full-time minister. They average 80-90 in attendance and have a preacher's house. For more information visit their website or call (256) 247-3533.

<http://www.cedargrovechurchofchrist.org>

Send us your news items!

andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

Dear Andy:

Thank you for your excellent editorial entitled "The Text of the New Testament" in the November 2014 issue of *The Gospel Gleaner*.

It is a well-written and well researched study. You have taken a complex subject and presented it in a very simple way. I'm putting it in my files. It will be very useful.

I continue to appreciate the great job you are doing as editor of *The Gleaner*.

Rod Rutherford
Gatlinburg, TN

My friend and brother,

You are doing an outstanding job with the *Gospel Gleaner*. I really enjoy the paper! Congratulations on naming Jim McGill as your associate editor.

I am sending the names of four friends I would like to send them subscriptions. Keep up the good work!

AT Pate
Nashville, TN

I read *Gospel Gleaner* regularly. I thought the entire November issue was the best ever. It has been a long time since I've had any brotherhood magazine be this good.

Wayne Burger
Denver, CO

The
GOSPEL GLEANER

Gospel Gleaner Publications
3778 County Road 33
Killen, AL 35645