



## Our Worship of God

Ronald Bryant

The worship of God is an activity of the greatest significance. Every aspect of worship is ruled by deep reverence and intense adoration. It is a high and holy occasion ruled by the realization of coming into the presence of God and ruled by a genuine desire to express pure respect, adoration, and gratitude. In the worship of God there is nothing common or insignificant, nor is human taste or preference even given consideration.

It is to be insisted that sorrow multiplies when that which is holy is inappropriately regarded. When any aspect of worship is viewed as unimportant that which is spiritual is impoverished. When any aspect of worship is viewed as merely human performance, or the exercise of personality, the whole is corrupted. The worship of God is corrupted when God or His will and purpose is viewed with indifference. For in such thought and action man is turned away from God.

In our day and age, God is seldom held with intense regard. In the place of reverence, indifference toward God is the spirit of our age. Most people have a casual regard for God. Most religious groups are ruled by a desire to accommodate man, not honor God. Religion is regarded as big business with a multiplicity of religious outlets, serving their clientele. Their focus is upon man, his taste and preference, and is not upon God and His will.

There is a distinct difference between true devotion to God, and man-centered religious activity. When men order the activities and God is but an afterthought it is not possible for worship of God to take place. Indifference toward God and toward His will, is destructive of faith and of hope. Failure to know and honor Him as He has revealed renders every act of devotion as suspect.

Jesus spoke of those who drew near to Him with their lips and honored Him with their tongue, but whose hearts were far from Him. He declared that their worship was empty and void, because they taught for commandments the words of men (Matthew 15:8-9). If that was true while Jesus was walked the earth, it remains true today.

*Continued on page 5*

## Inside this Issue

- 1 *Our Worship of God*  
Ronald Bryant
- 2 *Where the Good Way Is: A Study of Jeremiah 6:16-21*  
Andy Erwin
- 5 *Psalms 23: Words of Encouragement*  
Johnny O. Trail
- 9 *The Work of the Preacher*  
Jackson Erwin
- 11 *"Until Death Do Us Part"*  
Raymond Elliott
- 13 *What Is Truth?*  
John T. Polk, II
- 14 *Update from Worldwide Preacher Training*  
Andy Erwin
- 16 *Christ Wants Us to Die to Ourselves*  
Robert L. Waggoner

# Where the Good Way Is: A Study of Jeremiah 6:16-21

Andy Erwin

<sup>16</sup> 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. But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it*.’”

<sup>17</sup>Also, I set watchmen over you, *saying*, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’ But they said, ‘We will not listen.’

<sup>18</sup>Therefore hear, you nations, And know, O congregation, what *is* among them. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>For what purpose to Me Comes frankincense from Sheba, And sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, or your sacrifices sweet to Me.” <sup>21</sup> 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.” <sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Judah once stood at a “crossroads,”<sup>2</sup> and was instructed to choose their path. They chose not to hearken to God and walk in His way. They chose to continue in their sins. As a result, doom and destruction awaited them (Jeremiah 6:22-30). Given the relatively long span of Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry, and the order in which his sayings are collected, it can be quite difficult to assign

dates to his sermons and the events of his life. It is no different with this passage.

Jeremiah began prophesying to the Southern Kingdom of Judah during the thirteenth year of Josiah, which was approximately 627 BC<sup>3</sup> (1:2). Josiah was the only righteous king Judah had during the ministry of Jeremiah. The Bible tells us that Jeremiah mourned his death (2 Chronicles 35:25). Moreover, it appears that during the reign of Josiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk were also prophesying.<sup>4</sup> During the reign of Josiah, Habakkuk foretold of the destruction of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians (Habakkuk 1:6). Verses 22-30 of this chapter coincide with the message of Habakkuk.

Josiah’s reign is generally accepted to have been from 640-609 BC.<sup>5</sup> The kings who followed Josiah were: Jehoahaz (609);<sup>6</sup> Jehoiakim (609-598);<sup>7</sup> Jehoiachin (598);<sup>8</sup> and Zedekiah (597-586).<sup>9</sup> Thus, Jeremiah’s ministry began during the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign and lasted until the fall of Judah, giving us the dates of 627-586 BC. He prophesied during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah.

Into which of these monarchies do we place our text? We have a period of approximately forty-one years to place

this passage. Where does it belong? Considering that Judah eventually reached a point of no return *during* the ministry of Jeremiah (compare 5:1 and 15:1), we can safely conclude that this sermon belongs closer to the beginning of his ministry than the ending.

“This appears to be an example of Jeremiah’s preaching after – and not necessarily long after – Josiah’s reform...A date in the later part of Josiah’s reign suits admirably.”<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the sermon belongs sometime after 622 BC, in the latter part of Josiah’s reign.<sup>11</sup> At that time, during the reforms of King Josiah, Judah was indeed standing at a crossroads. They could have chosen to take the paths that were followed by kings like Amon and Manasseh, which would have led to their destruction. Or, they could have followed the path Josiah and God’s prophets advocated, which would have led to rest for their souls. However, the people had already had time to choose and to decide, “We will not walk therein...We will not listen.”

Regardless of the date that we place upon this passage,

“The people of Jeremiah’s time understood what he was talking about. They knew about the ancient paths and the good way. It was a good way, not because it was old, but

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 6:16-21, NKJV

<sup>2</sup> NIV; NRSV

<sup>3</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 153.

<sup>4</sup> Hailey and Lewis speak to the likelihood of the prophets prophesying during the reign of Josiah. Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Louisville, KY: Religious

Supply, 1993). Also, Jack P. Lewis, *The Minor Prophets* (Henderson, TN: Hester Publications, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Edward R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), 78.

<sup>6</sup> Thiele, 78.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> John Bright, *Jeremiah*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 50.

<sup>11</sup> J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 260.

because it was the right way – God’s way. Walking in the old paths had always brought rest of soul to the nation. But the stiff-necked and stubborn men of Judah refused the way out of their predicament by saying, ‘We will not walk therein.’”<sup>12</sup>

## COMMENTS

God’s instruction to Judah required that they first **“Stand in the ways and see.”** God was calling upon His people to pay attention to their present circumstances and how their decisions had brought them to that point. The word *roo* from *ra’ah* meaning “to see” is translated thusly here. However, the most appropriate definition for this word in this context may be “to consider,” as *ra’ah*

“can also mean to become mentally aware of, realize, take note of. In these cases the verb refers to perception by means of other senses, e.g., understanding or hearing.”<sup>13 14</sup>

Judah needed to stand in the ways and consider carefully the choice before them. The word *derek* which is translated “ways” (KJV; NKJV) could also be rendered “crossroads” (NIV; NRSV). Keese notes that such a translation of the word underscores that they were at a point in which they had to choose the direction they were going to travel.<sup>15</sup> By translating the word as “crossroads” we also gain a greater sense of understanding the need to

consider the choice before them. Had they stopped to consider their circumstances and chosen wisely, their climactic fate could have been avoided.

**And ask for the old paths.** The old<sup>16</sup> paths are well-worn by the previous generations of God’s faithful.

“There is but one way which has the blessing of the Lord and is the way of obedient faith. True reformers are not those who are advocating new things but those who give due weight to old truths.”<sup>17</sup>

Truly, “The good way is the way God approves. It is the way that is best for us.”<sup>18</sup> This is not merely a coincidence. The way of God has always been best for man. God warns us and forbids us to keep us from danger. He leads us and guides us “beside the still waters.” Is there any doubt the way approved by God is the way which will benefit man the most?

But they said, **‘We will not walk in it.’** Standing at this crossroads, Judah brashly said “No” to the old paths. They would not continue in the reforms of Josiah. They would not return to the law. They would not listen to the prophets of God. Rather, they would choose to walk in the counsels and imaginations of their evil hearts (Jeremiah 11:8; 18:12) and go backward rather than forward (Jeremiah 7:24).

Their decision not to walk in the good way would change them as a

nation. Once known for their special covenant with God and moral uprightness, Judah became a people who were wise to do evil but had no knowledge of doing good (Jeremiah 4:22). Their transgressions would become many, and their backslidings would increase (Jeremiah 5:6). Judah became “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 Lord observed, “Everyone is given to covetousness; From the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely” (Jeremiah 8:10; cf. 6:13). 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).

The people believed they did not need God or His paths anymore and had come to believe, “We are lords;” defying the living God by saying, “We will come no more to You” (Jeremiah 2:31).

The Lord said, **“I set watchmen over you...”** He did so by sending faithful prophets to teach, admonish, and warn His people. Yet, they would not listen. He implored them to “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!” But they said, “We will not listen.”

“God had appointed His prophets as sentinels of the faith (cf. Isaiah 52:8;

<sup>12</sup> C. Paul Gray, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, Beacon Bible Commentary, vol. 4, Isaiah through Daniel (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1966), 351.

<sup>13</sup> Jackie A. Naude, “har” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, vol. 3, ed. William A. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 1007-15.

<sup>14</sup> Naude also notes that the verb can convey (1) the act of seeing/perceiving/watching/looking with one’s own eyes (see Gen. 3:6; 6:2; 12:1; 27:1; 42:1); (2) the sense of becoming

psychologically visionary conscious, seeing in a vision, receiving a revelation (Gen. 12:7; Num. 24:17; Zech. 3:1); (3) the sense of experiencing or an activity or state (Dt. 11:2; Hab. 1:3); (4) the act of inquiring, investigating, or inspecting (Gen. 37:14); (5) the act of taking care of or looking after (Gen. 29:23); (6) to draw attention to a situation (Gen. 27:27); (7) the act of visiting (1 Samuel 20:29); (8) to select (Dt. 12:13, 33:21; 1 Sam. 16:1, 17); (9) to provide (Gen. 22:8, 14); (10) to distinguish (Mal. 3:18); (11) to despise (S of Sol. 1:6); (12) it is used in idioms as well (see Gen. 43:3,5; 2 Sam. 3:13; Eccl. 7:11).

<sup>15</sup> Dayton Keese, *Jeremiah 1-25*, Truth for Today Commentary (Searcy, AR: Resource Publications, 2011), 210.

<sup>16</sup> *owlam* can also be translated “everlasting,” “eternal,” or “ancient.”

<sup>17</sup> Wilbur Smith, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Bible Study Text Book Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1972), 214.

<sup>18</sup> F.B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 99.

56:10; Ezekiel 3:17; 33:7; Habakkuk 2:1) to give due warning of approaching spiritual disaster. The trumpet blast was the signal for taking refuge (cf. 6:1; Amos 3:6), but despite all warnings the people refused to flee from the wrath to come.”<sup>19</sup>

The doom of Judah was not to be suffered because they were not warned. It was to be suffered because they would not listen.

“Like watchmen of a city who stood on a high tower scanning the horizon for the first appearance of danger, so God’s watchmen would constantly be on the lookout for any danger to the continued existence of the nation of Judah. At the first appearance of danger these faithful watchmen would sound the alarm by blowing the trumpet of God’s warning word throughout the land...The hardened people declare that they will not hearken to the alarm of the watchmen.”<sup>20</sup>

“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.”

God is herein calling upon the nations to play the role of covenant witness to the fairness of His coming judgment.<sup>21</sup> Judah was going to suffer punishment, not because God forgot them, but because they forgot God. The same

principle holds true in the Lord’s church today. If we choose not to heed His words, and reject His law, we will suffer punishment of an everlasting nature (Hebrews 10:26-31).

**“Your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, or your sacrifices sweet to Me.”** Judah was not going to be able to prevent God’s righteous indignation by offering a few superficial sacrifices – regardless of the cost. The Frankincense came from Sheba, and sweet cane from a far country, perhaps as far away as India.<sup>22</sup> No doubt, these items would have been very expensive. But “...it was a waste of money and energy, as far as God was concerned.” For,

“The people were guilty of offering the sacrifices in a purely ritualistic way and without sincere devotion toward God. Neither sincere love for God nor genuine repentance was involved in the service. The Jews were merely going through the ceremonies at the temple and then going back to their wicked ways. Thus, the rituals became a sham and a pretense before God, and He refuses to accept them.”<sup>23</sup>

“The deed (of the sacrifice) was not the problem, but their disposition of heart as they did it.”<sup>24</sup> Their elaborate external rituals were divorced from personal holiness, morality, and spirituality.<sup>25</sup> Their sacrifices were not heartfelt, but superficial, empty rituals.

“Sacrifice with heart-rendered obedience is worthy of acceptance, but sacrifices without obedience are

shams (Amos 5:21-27; Hebrews 13:15, 16)”<sup>26</sup> and “will never be pleasing to the Almighty (Isaiah 29:13-16; Hosea 6:6-11; Matthew 15:7-9).”<sup>27</sup>

**“I will lay stumbling blocks...”**

While these obstacles are not defined, we can assume three possibilities: (1) they could have been obstacles of their own making; (2) their own apostasies; or (3) the threatened invader.<sup>28</sup>

What was God’s purpose for placing these stumbling blocks? Quite simply, Judah was not going to succeed, they would not prevail, and God was going to see to it. “Human efforts cannot stop what God has brought down upon them.”<sup>29</sup> It really is that simple. God would not let His people’s rebellion endure. The nations of the earth as well as Judah would know assuredly that God was against them.

## LESSONS GLEANED

What applications can we draw from this passage today? In the first place, every man must consider carefully his spiritual circumstances. If one sees that he is not on the right path, he should be humble enough to repent. Christians must remain tenderhearted and receptive to every “thus says the Lord.”

Secondly, when we find ourselves standing at a crossroads, with a crucial decision in mind, we should first concern ourselves with knowing God’s will on the matter. Anytime we do something for God, or something that affects our relationship with Him, we

<sup>19</sup> R.K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-varsity Press, 1973), 82.

<sup>20</sup> Wilbur Smith, 215.

<sup>21</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, New International Biblical Commentary

(Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 66.

<sup>22</sup> John A. Humphries, *The Book of Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Truth Commentaries (Bowling Green, KY: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 2003), 73.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Dayton Keese, 214.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>28</sup> J.A. Thompson, 262.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Boadt, *Jeremiah 1-25*, Old Testament Message (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982), 58.

should seek to have the greatest possible understanding before we act. We should realize that the pathway paved by the will of God is the only one that leads to a resting place.

It is foolish for us to believe we can substitute our wisdom for His, our ways for the Almighty's. While our ways lead to death (Proverbs 14:12), His ways lead to life (John 14:6). Whenever and wherever man believes *his* way is better and more beneficial than God's way, similar results will inevitably occur. Nations, communities, churches, families, and lives will be destroyed. Truly, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Moreover, we must learn that sacrifice without personal commitment is vain – regardless how elaborate the ritual may be. Everything done for God must be done from a sincere heart and according to His will (see John 4:23-24; Romans 6:17; Joshua 24:14).

Lastly, we must realize that if we are so brazen and brash to say "We will not" to the commandments of God, we will not succeed. Every wicked soul will eventually be overthrown by God.

God has always and will always lay stumbling blocks before the wicked to prevent the ultimate success of their schemes. The letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2-3) provide a clear application of this principle for the church today.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). We must remember that the one who hears and does not do the sayings of the Savior, will have a house to fall and great will be the fall of it (Matthew 7:27). Truly this passage has much to offer the child of God. It is for our

learning (Romans 14:10). We should learn from it and take heed lest we fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

---

**Continued from page 1**

### ***Our Worship of God***

It is easily illustrated, with simple questions. Such as the following: How many candles are we to light in adoration of God? How often do we burn incense, or bow down to an image? Which image to we bow down to? How many leaders do we bow down to or exalt in our worship?

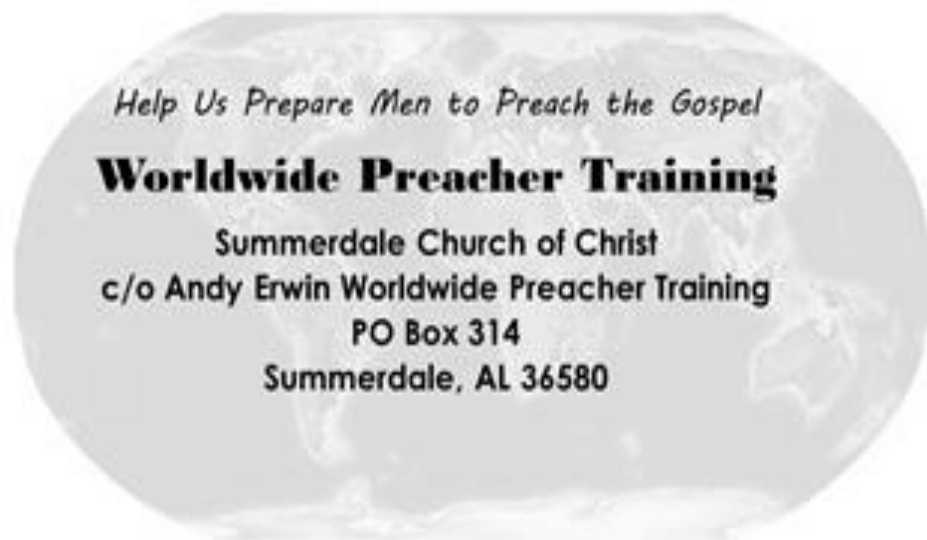
Why does anyone accept such actions as God-honoring? Additionally, how often are we to listen to and express adoration to a human authority or leader, even bowing to them as we do God?

The danger of such practices abides in the fact that they do not create devotion to God, or reverence for God, but produce indifference toward God. Additionally, indifference toward God, toward His will is destructive of faith, hope, and love. Such is destructive of the very concept of worship of God. To fail to know Him as He is revealed is to

fail to honor Him and the faith that He came to enthrone.

Divinely authorized acts of worship demand far greater attention, even measured attention to their sacred nature. Jesus emphasizes the fact that God is spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Our worship of God is to arise from the deepest level of our being and is to be guided by His revealed will. Yet, how often do we focus upon Him, His will, and His purpose in us as a His people?

Is our worship of God a casual matter or an intensely spiritual exercise? What is our primary concern when we come into the worship assembly? What is our purpose? How often do we give attention, even prayerful regard to that purpose? Do we ever focus upon the fact that we are not the audience, but that God is the object?





# *Psalm Twenty-Three:* *Words of Encouragement*

Johnny O. Trail

Most people who know the Bible are familiar with Psalm 23. It is one of the most widely quoted Old Testament passages in the Christian religious world. Many preachers read or quote the twenty-third Psalm in funeral settings. Sadly, that is where the text of this passage is most remembered—at the grave of a deceased friend or loved one.

When one examines the text of Psalm twenty-three, it becomes evident that it has more relevance than to offer comfort at the time of one's passing. The promises made in these passages are relevant in Christian living and at the time of one's departure from this life. The words of David need to be examined to consider the promises that are made.

The Old Testament still has relevance under the New Testament dispensation. Paul makes this point to his audience. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Thus, the principles of the Old Testament ring true and pertinent to this very day.

Psalm twenty-three makes several points that should provide Christians with hope, confidence, and reassurance. This Psalm assures one of God's presence (Psalm 23:1a), His provision (Psalm 23:1b), His pathway (Psalm 23:2-3) His protection (Psalm 23:4), and His promise (Psalm 23: 6).[1]

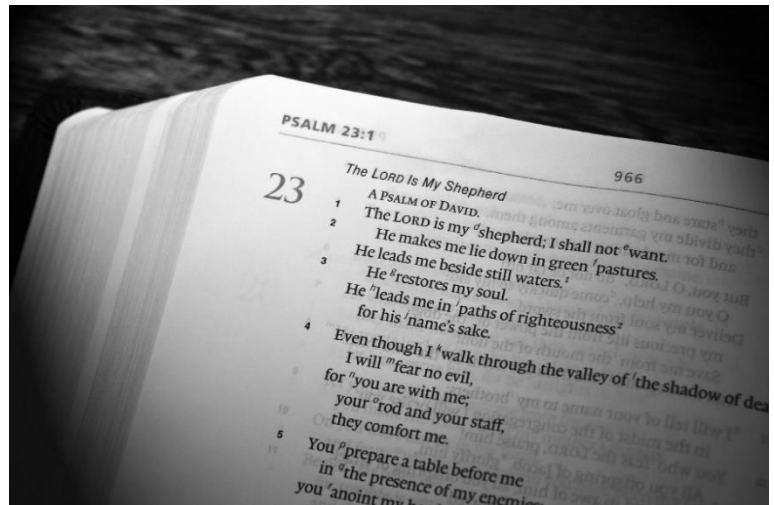
Psalm twenty-three reassures God's people of his presence. It says, in verse one,

"A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." Shepherd-ing was widely understood in the age of David and the time of Christ. Jesus understood the close relationship that existed between sheep and their shepherds. Contemplating this knowledge, Jesus used some of the same imagery to describe his role as the "Good Shepherd."

Jesus said in John 10:3-4, "To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." This intimate relationship between the Good Shepherd and the sheep was visible to David and enacted by Christ for those who would be His followers.

Consequently, this same idea should be understood by men who serve as elders. A shepherd should have more than just a casual knowledge of those under their care in the Lord's church. Elders should have a great knowledge of each person who had entrusted their shepherds with the care, direction, and protection of their soul.

The Twenty-third Psalm also makes one aware of God's provision. "I shall



not want." A good shepherd makes sure that his flock has its needs met. Of course, these needs varied according to the situation that a shepherd faced. Nonetheless, shepherds were up to the task of caring for sheep and defending them from thieves, beasts, disease, injuries, and malnourishment.

Moreover, David was skilled in caring for sheep and understood the personal risks that were involved. 1 Samuel 17:34-36 says "But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.'" Jesus uses this as the litmus test for what a true shepherd was—One who was willing to lay down his life for the sheep and not flee at the first sign of trouble.

Jesus says, in John 10:11-13 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the

wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.” Unlike what many would have us to believe, God does not leave His people in times of trouble or need (Hebrews 4:15-16).

By the same token, good elders are willing to live sacrificially for others. They are willing to stand firm on the truth and not abscond at the first sign of trouble in the flock. It might be easier to walk away from problems, but that is not what a good shepherd does. He stands and contends (Jude 3) with the gainsayer to protect the flock and defend the truth. Titus 1:9 says, “Holding fast the faithful word as he [an overseer] has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

The twenty-third Psalm makes one aware of God’s pathway. Sheep are not the brightest of mammals in the animal kingdom. Furthermore, their eyesight is very poor.[2] Psalm 23:2-3 makes these things clear. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake.” This being the case, Shepherds are responsible for providing safe, clear passage for those under their care.

To that end, God has provided us with His word. It is interesting to note that the Good Shepherd is the word incarnate that directs our pathway (Psalm 119:105). John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” While the pathway is “straight and narrow,” it is well defined by its nature (cf. Matthew 7:13-14).

The twenty-third Psalm also makes God’s people aware of God’s

protection. Verse four says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” The fact of the matter is that God protects His children when they are imperiled.

While there are similarities between provision and protection of sheep, there is a distinct difference. The rod and the staff that they shepherd carried allowed him to fight offensively against any creature that was predatory in nature. Previous mention was made of David and his ability to fight off the animals that sought to kill and devour his sheep. It appears that David did some of this with his bare hands, but most shepherds would have used their rod and staff to ward off vicious animals. Smith writes,

“There was comfort in the shepherd’s presence but also his armor. His rod was a symbol of strength used to defend the flock against wild beasts or dangerous thieves. The staff enabled the shepherd to pull sheep out of holes, or to pry them loose from thickets or to remove whatever obstacles stood in the narrow path. It, too, was a symbol of power and the protection he was dedicated to giving his precious sheep.” [3]

Indeed, shepherds in the Lord’s church need to have their armor (cf. Ephesians 6:9-17) available to protect against those who are described as ravenous wolves. Acts 20:27-29 says, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Finally, the twenty-third Psalm leaves God’s people with a promise. Psalm 23:6 says, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.” When sheep dwelt in the house of the shepherd, they were in complete and total safety. It was not unusual for sheep to stay in the homes of their masters. This underscores the closeness of the relationship and the protective comfort that shepherds offered their sheep.

God’s provisions are in this life and ultimately realized in the form of eternal life. John 14:2-4 says, “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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” There is not greater place to be than in the presence of the Chief Shepherd.

His blessings are in the here and now. These blessings are material and spiritual in nature for God’s people. Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” The promises and hope that we have in Him are guarantees made to the faithful.

Hopefully, we will always view Psalm twenty-three as a source of encouragement. While it is reassuring to reflect upon these passages at the time of a person’s death, they hold support for God’s people in the life we are currently living. What a blessing God’s word is!

## Endnotes

[1] Bailey, Floyd M., Jr., Howell, Mark A., and Webster, Allen (1993). *Great Texts of the Bible Revisited*: Faulkner University Lectures. "Psalm 23: The Shepherd Psalm," Billy Smith. Faulkner University, Montgomery. Most of these main points were taken from this lecture as delivered by Billy Smith. The writer is appreciative of the fine classes Billy Smith taught while he was a student at Freed-Hardeman University.

[2] Abel, Carmella (2022). "What Sheep Can See: Color Spectrum, Range of Vision & More." What Sheep Can See: Color Spectrum, Range of Vision & More – Savvy Farm Life "Sheep have blind spots where they cannot see directly in front of or directly behind themselves. Sheep have horrible depth perception due to their rectangular pupils. Sheep can only see at a distance of around 20 feet."

[3] Bailey, Floyd M., Jr., Howell, Mark A., and Webster, Allen, pg. 73



MARS HILL BIBLE SCHOOL

## Presidential Search

Mars Hill Bible School is searching for the next President to lead the education of Mind, Heart, Body and Soul of its more than 750 students. Mars Hill Bible School is a private, co-educational school that encompasses TK-12th grades and a robust preschool program. The mission of MHBS is to encourage academic excellence and raise up committed, Christ-filled servant leaders who will make a difference in their own neighborhoods and around the world. MHBS operates with full accreditation from the Alabama State Department of Education and Cognia.

**For job description and application instructions:**  
searchcommittee@mhbs.org

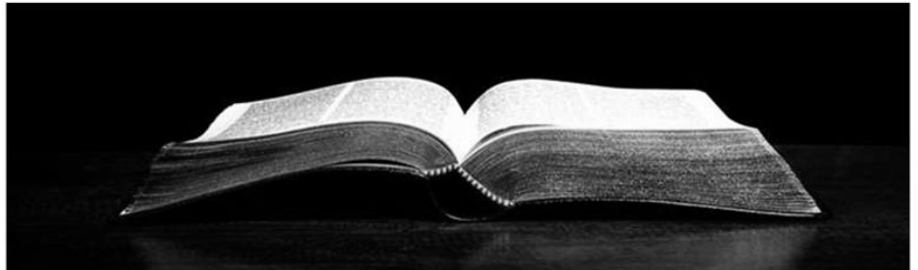
OR

Lori Tays at 256-767-1203 ext. 2008.

Visit [mhbs.org](http://mhbs.org) and [visitflorenceal.com](http://visitflorenceal.com)  
for information on MHBS and the Shoals area.

## Middle Tennessee School of Preaching

Evening Classes ~ Seven Locations



## NASHVILLE SCHOOL OF PREACHING AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

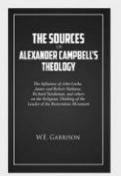
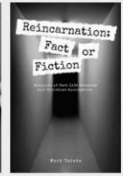
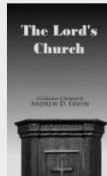
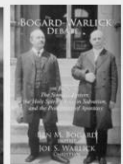
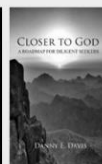
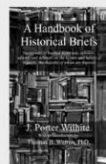
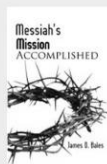
A MINISTRY OF THE CRIEVE HALL CHURCH OF CHRIST

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

## COBB PUBLISHING

MAKING BOOKS WORTH READING

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





# The Work of the Preacher

Jackson Erwin

In the previous issue of the *Gleaner*, I discussed the current problem of congregational organization among some of our churches revolving around the work of elders. Scripture is clear in detailing for us the nature of that work. Elders are not mere directors, dictators, or delegators. They are shepherds, teachers, guides, visitors, and servants. A healthy church is one which patterns itself according to the word of God, and if we see a congregation with elders serving in these capacities, we need to encourage them and thank them for their faithfulness to Christ.

However, it is also necessary for our churches and elders to understand the work of preachers, also known as evangelists—since they are bringers of the Good News. In 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul urged Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist.” While the following verses do not explicitly answer what the “work of an evangelist” is, the nature of this office is scattered all throughout Paul’s writings.

Why is it important for us to know more about this work which thousands of our brethren labor in each day? There are several reasons to note: First, many of the disagreements which exist between elders and preachers arise from a confusion about what his task entails. Preachers are not called to be secretaries, janitors, ecclesiastical CEOs, monks, landscapers, or employees. His call is not to take upon himself the entire teaching, visitational, or pastoral ministry of the church. While he can take on some of these responsibilities if he so desires, it is not the core of his service. Second, so long as we keep expanding the preacher’s work, we will continue to see ministerial burnout, congregational decline, and the mistaken perception of preachers as “pastors.” Most importantly, we need to know the biblical position so that we can organize our churches in a way that is

pleasing to God. The Lord knows the best way to run His church, not us. The Lord knows how churches should be structured to grow and thrive in the unity of the Spirit. Any attempt on man’s part to go his own way will ultimately end in disaster. Therefore, we need to know what the Bible says on these things because the heart of the believer is a heart of submission to God.

While we could offer many more ideas, hopefully these five expositions will sufficiently answer the question, “What is the work of an evangelist?”

First, an evangelist is someone who brings good news—namely, the gospel of Christ. Since Christians have already received the good news, the title itself implies that a large part of a preacher’s work centers around preaching to the lost. Even a quick word study on the term “preach” will suffice to show that this is the case.

In Scripture, preaching is generally seen as bringing the gospel to a lost audience, while teaching takes place among the saved. One preaches to bring about the salvation of a sinner (Rom. 1:16), while others teach to bring the faithful to maturity in Christ. Because preachers are to spend a good amount of their time among the lost, it is important for a church to have elders who are “apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). While evangelists are out in the mission field, holding meetings and revivals, and having Bible studies, elders can fill the vacancy for however long he is out (and preferably even when he is present).

Preachers are also called to equip the next generation of preachers (2 Tim. 2:2). While a university education is useful (and highly recommended) in training men to preach and teach, it can only go so far. Ministry is a spiritual discipline that exercises a man’s mental, emotional, and spiritual faculties. Very few occupations can rival the

stress that comes with a faithful and hard-fought ministry. Because of this, anyone who seeks to enter this service needs a mentor—a guide—to help prepare them for what lies ahead.

The preacher has a unique opportunity to invest in the faithful men of his congregation who aspire to this work. While our university professors can only invest so much time due to the vast number of their students, a preacher might have one or two men in his congregation who are thinking about ministry. He should invest great time, effort, and possibly even portions of his own library for the training of these potential evangelists.

A third, and largely neglected, work in the context of the local church has to do with the appointing of elders. Paul told Titus, another evangelist, to lead the way in appointing elders in the churches (Tit. 1:5). Perhaps inattention to this stems from a fear of confusing the evangelist as the pastor of the church. Perhaps it comes from our cultural view of churches as being democratic in nature. But why should preachers be involved in the appointing of elders? For starters, he would be helpful in that, as someone who studies the Bible every day, he would be more acquainted with the qualifications required of elders. Additionally, being in a leadership position himself, he might also have an eye for potentially good leaders in the church. We could also add that his experience in preaching to the lost has revealed to him the nature and effects of true conversion.

It is bad enough for a church to have unconverted members. It is a much more terrible thing for a church to appoint unconverted people as elders of God’s flock. An evangelist’s experience with churches and people can help prevent such a tragedy from happening.

Preachers are not just evangelists. They are ministers to the church (Rom. 15:16; Eph. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7; 4:7). He is not the “boss,” nor are the elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3). The only one in charge of the church is Jesus Christ Himself (1 Pet. 5:4). Rather, elders are servants in the sense that they oversee with tender compassion the souls of their people. Paul tells Timothy that those in teaching positions are the Lord’s servants (2 Tim. 2:24) and that they “must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.” Such service might involve visitations, being hospitable, self-sacrificial, or giving one’s time and possessions to others. His example should inspire others in the church to a lifetime of service, as this is descriptive of the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-8).

Lastly, preachers are called to teach the church God’s word (1 Tim. 4:11-16). However, it must be made clear that this work should be done alongside the teaching ministry of the elders—not just delegated by them. He should never be the sole expositor of God’s word simply because the work of ministry will sometimes send him away for a time. Furthermore, if something happens to him (sickness, death, etc.), the church will not have to sacrifice its teaching ministry. When error or internal problems arise in the church, the minister and his elders should be prepared both to work and teach through them together. Why? Because they will all be held accountable to the Chief Shepherd on the last day. Elders have been charged to “feed the flock of God” just as much as the evangelist (Acts 20:22-32), and in the same manner he also will be held accountable to his teaching of God’s word when he passes over into the next life (Jas. 3:1; 2 Tim. 4:2; 3:14-17).

The work of elders and evangelists is not easy. Both require great sacrifice, labor, and study. We need to be vigilant and active, not just in the raising of preachers, but in the raising of elders. Those seeking these works seek something that is good. May we all encourage, edify, and strengthen the

good and godly men who occupy our pulpits and classes. Rather than laying on our elders and ministers “burdens which are

hard to bear,” let us all adhere solely to what Scripture requires of them so they can make a full use of their ministry.

## Help Needed in South Africa

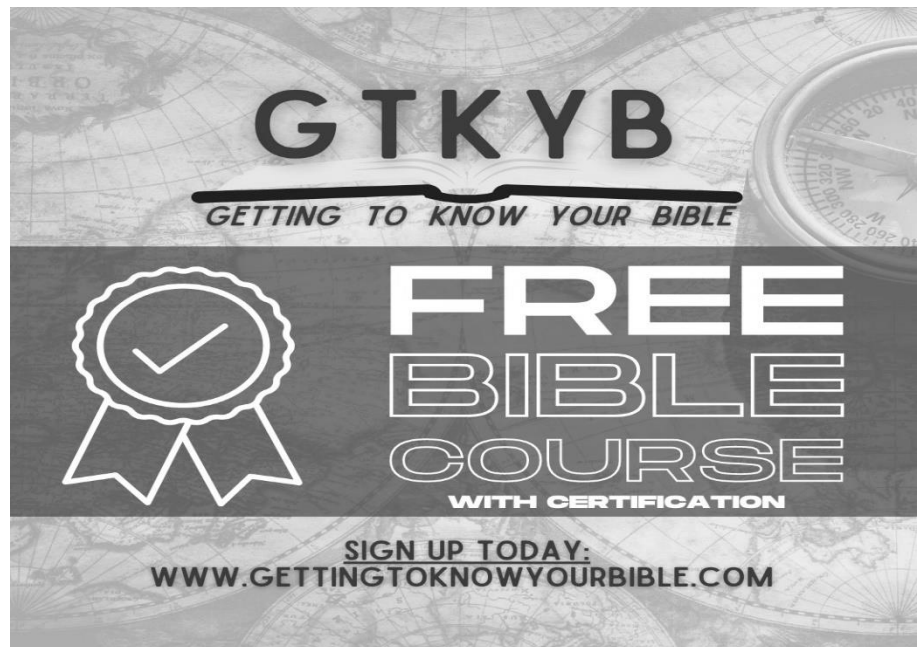
The Somerset West congregation in South Africa has a huge problem in providing care for their needy elderly. After many years of prayers and planning, an area adjacent to the church’s building came into the market. After discussions with the Crieve Hall eldership, a negotiated purchase price was agreed and a deposit was paid by the Crieve Hall church.

The church in Somerset West is working hard to collect the remaining \$300,000 to finalize the transaction. With interest rates close to 10%, loaning money is a difficult proposition in South Africa. We are asking our brotherhood to help us buy this property.

The Crieve Hall church has done work here since 1984 with Paul Gerber, a local missionary. A school of preaching has been started here with the help of the late Tom Holland in 2010.

Please contact Paul on email address [pg13mweb@gmail.com](mailto:pg13mweb@gmail.com) or the elders of the Somerset West at [paulseashley@gmail.com](mailto:paulseashley@gmail.com). A local contact from Crieve Hall is Johnny Guthrie at [john.guthrie@comcast.net](mailto:john.guthrie@comcast.net) or mobile phone (615) 456-4153.

**To all youth ministers/leaders** looking for a great project: we are collecting slightly used Bibles for use in Africa. Please contact Johnny Guthrie for more information.



**GTKYB**  
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR BIBLE

**FREE  
BIBLE  
COURSE**  
WITH CERTIFICATION

**SIGN UP TODAY:**  
[WWW.GETTINGTOKNOWYOURBIBLE.COM](http://WWW.GETTINGTOKNOWYOURBIBLE.COM)

# *“Until Death Do Us Part”*

Raymond Elliott



These words, “Until Death Do Us Part” were in the vows that Virginia Slaughter and I made on a very warm evening in the church of Christ building in Wildwood, Florida. That was on Friday, August 19, 1955, 67 years ago! When we made the vows to one another, neither one of us knew that God would bless us to live together until Friday, August 19, 2022.

Virginia and I were twenty years old when we were married, and now we are eighty-seven years old. How blessed we are to have one another all these years as we grow older and nearer to eternity. We were taught by our Bible teachers and preachers as well by our teachers in Christian schools and in a Christian college that divorce should not be considered when we got married. This teaching was based on the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:31-32; 19:4-6.

When we were growing up, divorce seldom occurred in the church and in our Christian schools. To young people who are Christians, I would say that it is most important that you choose a person who would have the basic Christian beliefs as you do, and one who would help you to go to heaven.

## **TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH**

I really do not have a magical formula for a successful marriage. I cannot write these are the steps 1,2,3,4, etc. to take for your marriage to last for a lifetime. However, I will list some basic thoughts and reasons that have contributed to the longevity of our marriage for 67 years.

Besides my mother loving me, I never dreamed that another woman could love me as much as my beloved wife (Titus 2:4)! How I could not but love her (Ephesians 5:25)! Love must be the basis for a successful marriage. “The greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). My wife and I have our differences. Ours is not the ‘perfect marriage,’ whatever that means. She is an individual with different tastes, likes and

habits than me. She likes to shop for two hours and not to buy anything. I have had to learn ‘how to wait’ during this time. She is always in motion while I am on ‘cruise control.’ But in so many ways she is much stronger than I. We have had to be forgiving when one of us hurt the other. It is hard to say, “I am sorry” but it is love for each other that motivates us to reconcile our differences (Ephesians 4:26). Our love for one another is stronger than ever as we grow older together.

## **FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE, FOR RICHER, FOR POORER**

My bride to be knew that I did not have any material things to offer her when we were to be married. I had just finished my sophomore year in college and had but a few dollars. In fact, I had to borrow additional money and a borrowed automobile to make the trip from Montgomery, Alabama to Wildwood, Florida where the wedding would take place. I borrowed money to purchase a very small (28’x8’) old trailer that would be our first home.

When I parked it on the campus of Alabama Christian college on Ann Street in Montgomery next to the Home EC. We had to use the bathroom in the building because we did not have a bathroom in the trailer. We attached a hose to a faucet at the building for our water.

I made very little money from part time jobs and very little for preaching for a small congregation. Virginia got a job to help while I continued my education. But, when she had to quit her job a year later because she was expecting our first child, things got worse for us. There was a time when I did not have money for groceries. Brother Rex Turner said we could eat in the dining hall until things got better for us.

We have had to live frugally on the salary that the brethren paid us for most of the

years where I preached, but God has always provided for us.

Young couples should not expect to possess all their parents presently have after many years of marriage. Financial problems can cause a separation unless the husband and wife can agree to live within their means.

As we look retrospectively over the years, God has cared for us in His Providence. I would encourage young couples to believe in and live by what Jesus promised in Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Also, Proverbs 3:5,6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding, In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” The attitude expressed in these verses should become a part of the lives of young Christian couples.

## **“WHERE YOU GO, I WILL GO”**

These were words that Ruth said to her mother-in-law, when Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to remain in their country instead of following her to the land of Judah (Please read this account in the book of Ruth, chapter 1).

In today’s world we have become a mobile society. Very few people remain in the area where they were born. People move because of various reasons. Some move because of their jobs and/or because one or more of the marriage partners are in the military, etc.

I personally believe that the wife contributes more to a lasting marriage than

perhaps the husband in this matter. She must be willing to go, even when it would not be her personal desire. It is very hard on a family, especially when there are children involved to relocate, sometimes to a different city or even another state. It is often a very crucial time in a marriage, but both the husband and wife must lean on one another to make such an important decision.

I began preaching 'full time' in June 1958 following my graduation from Alabama Christian College (Faulkner University). I remember well when a couple of brothers helped me to load a rental 14-foot truck where we lived on Maryland Street in Montgomery, Alabama. It was very difficult for my wife to get into the cab because she was heavy with our second child. That was our first 'big' move because we were moving some 100 miles to a town where I would begin preaching for a small congregation. Since that time, I have preached for various congregations. My wife has never complained, although the older we have become, it has become more difficult. We are now living where we will remain unless there must be a change because of failing health.

### **MY WIFE HAS BEEN MY CONFIDENT, MY ENCOURAGER, MY LOVER AND MY FRIEND**

Young men should read carefully the admonition that is found in 1 Peter 3:7: "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." My wife and I have become "one."

Husbands and wives each must give 100% to their marriage as God would have it. While the husband is the 'head' of the family, he is not to be a dictator! He will not be, if he loves his wife. My wife has listened to my feelings, my thoughts, my concerns, and my worries over the years. She has always encouraged me as a gospel preacher through the problems I have faced as a preacher, or when I have become discouraged.

Our "marriage bed" has been "undefiled" in God's sight (Hebrews 13:4). To have enjoyed our sexual relationship has truly been a blessing from God. And truly, Virginia has been my friend!

I love the song, "YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND" sung by the late Don Williams. I had our children sing it at our 50th Wedding Anniversary, and most recently at our 67th Wedding Anniversary by three of our close friends. Here are the lyrics:

"You placed Gold on my fingers, You brought love like I have never known. You gave life to our children and me a reason to go on. When I need hope and inspiration you're always strong when I am tired and weak. I could search this whole world over you'd still be everything that I need. You're my bread when I am hungry, You're my shelter from troubled winds, you're my anchor in life's ocean, but most of all you're my best friend."

I am richly blessed!

### **"WHERE YOU DIE, I WILL DIE, AND THERE I WILL BE BURIED"**

We have bought burial plots in the city where we now reside. We do not know what we face in the future but being our age, we know that death is nearer for us because of our advanced age. We have placed our trust in our Heavenly Father, knowing He cares for us as His children. We have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God and our hope is the precious promises of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said as recorded in John 11:25,26: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die, Do you believe this?"

Trusting in Him as being the Son of God who died for our sins, we believe! Our God has seen us through the 'valleys' of life and has blessed us with 'mountain tops' of joy and happiness. It is our desire that all of God's children would experience years of true happiness in their marriage as long as He would permit them to live together in this life.

## **TOGETHER STILL**

Let me hold your hand, as we go  
downhill,

We've shared our strength, and we  
share it still,

It hasn't been easy to make the climb,  
But the way was eased by your hand in  
mine.

Like the lake, our life, has had ripples  
too,

Ill health and worries, and payments  
due,

With happy pauses along the way,

A graduation, a raise in pay.

At the foot of the slope, we will stop  
and rest,

Look back if you wish, we've been  
truly blessed,

We've been spared the grief of being  
torn apart,

By death or divorce, or a broken heart.

The view ahead, is one of the best,

Just a little further, and then we can  
rest,

We move more slowly, but together  
still,

Let me hold your hand, as we go  
downhill.



# What Is Truth?

John T. Polk, II

“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ (John 18:37-38 NKJV)

Pilate, representing government, had lost sight of what is truth. Though he was face-to-face with Jesus Christ, who is truth (John 14:6), he had lost his bearings of how to determine truth, like many today, it seems. Truth suffers at the hands of humans.

Some ask: “What is your truth?” But this question acts as if truth is subjective, determined by every individual’s heart. Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate as an “evildoer.” Jesus claimed His kingdom was “not of this world” and to “bear witness to the truth.” “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ (John 18:29-38). Pilate’s decision was, “I find no fault in Him at all.” Pilate’s decision was based upon “the truth.” “The truth” did not depend on whose heart it came from, but from absolute facts. “Have I not written to you excellent things Of counsels and knowledge, That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, That you may answer words of truth To those who send to you?” (Proverbs 22:20-21). Each person does not determine their own “truth.” Don’t ask, “what is YOUR truth,” but ask, “have you learned “the truth?”

## Truth in, truth out.

Do people try to protect us from the truth because we can’t handle the truth? Do you believe “the truth,” or what someone has told you as truth? Jesus told a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well what her life had been like, and she perceived that He was “a prophet.” She told her fellow citizens what had happened. “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, ‘He

told me all that I ever did’ (John 4:39). After Jesus taught them for two more days, “many more believed because of His own word.

Then they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world’” (John 4:41-42). Can you handle “the truth” and not manhandle it?

There is a constant media cacophony who deny, deny, deny. Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me” (Luke 22:34). When he was singled out, Peter did deny his association with Jesus. The rooster crowed, Jesus looked at Peter, “So Peter went out and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). The truth was still true, though Peter denied, denied, and denied it. It was when Peter “wept bitterly,” that he showed that he still had a conscience that knew right from wrong. There are those, though, who speak “lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2). These have no tears of remorse, speak lies to your face (or investigative committee!), have no feeling of conscience left, as they deny, deny, deny the truth without repentance!

False Promises, “They have lied about the LORD, And said, ‘It is not He. Neither will evil come upon us, Nor shall we see sword or famine. And the prophets become wind, For the word is not in them” (Jeremiah 5:12-13). False preachers teach false ideas and cause people to falsely believe that: (1) God either doesn’t exist, or doesn’t care, or doesn’t help; (2) nothing bad can happen to those who obey God. This causes frustration and rejection when something bad does happen! (3) People who listen to them are “tossed to and fro and carried



about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Ephesians 4:14). (4) Lies about God are not based in the Word of God, the Bible.

Worthless Religious Leaders. “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the LORD. They continually say to those who despise Me, “The LORD has said, ‘You shall have peace;’ And to everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, ‘No evil shall come upon you’” (Jeremiah 23:16-17). What disqualified “the prophets?” 1) They did not preach God’s Word, but their own ideas; 2) They constantly stroked “God-haters” with “God’s love;” 3) They promised “no harm” to the selfish; all of which made their religion “useless.” It is only God’s Word that lets us “be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

## Truth Comes Through God’s Word = The Bible

**There Is Only One God.** “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6). A short summary of the Creation found in Genesis chapters 1 & 2. Only God was “In the beginning” with power enough to bring all this into existence. “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). “For He spoke, and it was done; He



commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:9). In Genesis 1, after the ten times "God said," the entire world and its organizing rules, were brought into reality. Origin and Design did NOT come through the "fictional god of Time," a.k.a. "Evolution," but only through the living God.

**Godless Evolution.** Speaking of Jesus as God in the Creation: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands" (Hebrews 1:10). The false doctrine of "Evolution" tries to account for this creation without God. Without any vestige of scientific fact to support it, it assumes: (1) matter always existed; (2) after a chaotic "bang," order developed over billions of years of Time; (3) humans came from animals. Did I miss anything? The Bible points to scientific fact: (1) matter had a beginning; (2) God designed the order in creation; (3) God created everything within a week; (4) humans are especially made.

Did you miss anything? Of Christ, it is said: "All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17).

**Evolutionary Contradictions.** Repeating a lie doesn't make it true. "The prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, 'Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie'" (Jeremiah 28:15). The false doctrine of "Evolution" causes people to exchange "the truth of God for the lie" and worship and serve "the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). There is no demonstrable scientific fact to prove it, and it contradicts Scripture and scientific facts! God will reject the immoral and "whoever loves and practices a lie" (Revelation 22:15). "Evolution" cannot account for: (1) amazing design and detail; (2) a human's emotional heart; (3) cell DNA; (4) faith and hope; (5) an eternal soul; (6) or life, itself. It substitutes primordial goo for God; survival of the fittest for mercy; and racist outer comparisons for spiritual inner connections. It is a blind faith in a completely

unscientific fantasy, and those who believe in it are living in la-la-land!

**Transgenderism.** Who decides what sex your child is? Jesus Christ said: "But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female'" (Mark 10:6). The history of mankind has rested in this simple, biological fact. One must turn away from normal humanity to perversely alter God's plan! Once conception has taken place, the birth gender has been decided. Before birth, a child has not "done any good or evil" (Romans 9:11). After birth, a child must be instructed "to refuse the evil and choose the good" (Isaiah 7:16). Some parents feebly leave such a decision to the child, but God said: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). Parents should teach the child, not vice versa! Don't be confused: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

**Willful Ignorance of Climate Change.** The entire "Climate Change" fantasy is based upon so-called "scientists" piecing "together a picture of Earth's climate, dating back hundreds of thousands of years" according to the Environmental Protection Agency's website. These are the same people who cannot accurately piece together a weekly forecast etched in stone. These fake "scientists" really are the "scoffers" who Peter said come "walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'" (2 Peter 3:3-4)! They willfully ignore the evidence for the world-wide flood in Noah's day which destroyed life on the Earth (2 Peter 3:5-6). If "Climate Change" is based upon willful ignorance, how ignorant are those who follow after it? God's witness is that He "gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons" (Acts 14:17). God controls climate! After the world-wide flood in Noah's day, God decreed: "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and

night Shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). Look out the window, and if the earth is still remaining, then it is still controlled by God, not fake "scientists," fake media, and fake political machinations! "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 'And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'" (John 8:31-32).



## Update from Worldwide Preacher Training

Andy Erwin

Readers of the *Gospel Gleaner* have probably noticed a recurring advertisement for Worldwide Preacher Training in the 2022 issues. I have been blessed to broaden the scope of my ministry in the hope of being able to make a positive contribution to train preachers around the world. I have been given the opportunity to teach in schools of preaching in the United States, South Africa, and the Philippines. I am now making plans to leave the day after Thanksgiving to travel to Africa and conduct workshops for preachers in various countries.

The work focuses on helping men to be preachers of Christ and Him crucified, not doctrines, commandments, and opinions of men. We are also working to develop lifelong relationships and friendships with these men hoping to mentor them. In 2019 I received a PhD in the fields of ministry and theology, writing a dissertation on the mentoring of preacher students in a school of preaching. Young men need sound teaching and they need spiritual mentoring to become effective gospel preachers. My prayer is to continue teaching and mentoring as long as I have the opportunity.

Upon graduating from the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies in the spring of 2003, brother Jim McGill invited me to join the faculty. I began teaching for the school that summer. Over the past two decades the desire to teach fulltime has only grown. I continue to teach for this school and love and respect the men and women who teach and study there. Milton Stephens, the director of the school recently wrote,

“We received a copy of the recent letter from Worldwide Preacher Training. I passed along the information to the congregation at Lynnville. We are glad to be a part of this good and much needed work for the cause of Christ. I have spoken with some recently about the work and encouraged them to look into supporting Worldwide Preacher Training.

I recommend the work because of our association with the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching. I was speaking with one brother just last week about your work. I said, I can recommend Andy because: ‘Andy has been involved in training preachers and teachers as an instructor with the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching & Biblical Studies for several years. He has taught at several of the school locations during his work with the school. His classes are well presented, thorough and biblically sound. I have been told by students, who have taken Andy’s classes, how much they have benefited from them.’

So, I can recommend your good work with all confidence. Thank you for your continued work with the school. May God continue to bless you and all you do for the cause of Christ.”

I have also been blessed to get to know Bill Rayburn and Demar Elam through my teaching in the Philippines. They are experienced missionaries who love the Lord. I am learning greatly from them. Demar recently wrote,

“We are blessed to have Andy Erwin working with us in the Open-Door Ministry. Andy has a tremendous work ethic and is teaching in our graduate department at Asian Christian University.

Andy is a faithful and dedicated servant of the Lord. He has a fire in his bones (Jeremiah 20:9) to teach and preach the gospel message of reconciliation to those who are lost in the nations of the world. The lost need this wonderful message of God’s love for humanity. We are grateful for Andy’s service and commitment to Christ in carrying out the mandate in Matthew 28:18-20.”

The work of training preachers has also taken me to South Africa, where I have been able to teach at the Somerset West School of Preaching. Brother Paul Gerber has become a good friend. He also gave a nice recommendation, writing:

“Brother Erwin has been teaching in the Somerset West School of Preaching and this year he taught *The Parables and Studies in Acts*. Later this year he is scheduled to teach *The Preacher and Evangelism* and *Church Growth*. The students enjoy his in depth, yet practical approach, while we as staff appreciate the time and effort he puts into his studies. His efforts are effective and productive. Thank you.”

The Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies has welcomed me to join their faculty. The teachers and students are outstanding! The school’s director, Mike Greene was kind enough to give his recommendation of my work, writing:

“Andy Erwin has been teaching in the Nashville School of Preaching for about two years and doing a great job. He is well liked by the students and faculty. He has been a blessing to the Nashville School of Preaching.”

The Summerdale church of Christ in Summerdale, Alabama oversees this work. This church has been actively involved in training preachers for years in Guayana, South America. They have the experience, wisdom, compassion, and love necessary to oversee a work like this. In a short amount of time the Summerdale church has become a home away from home for me and my family. I truly believe the hand of God’s providence has brought us together in this great work.

Can you think of a greater need in the church today than training faithful gospel preachers? The spiritual and numerical growth of the church depends on the gospel being preached. How shall we preach the gospel to future generations, if men are not being trained for ministry? Moreover, what *kind* of men are we training? Gospel preachers must do the work of an evangelist to have fulfilled ministries (2 Timothy 4:5). The church needs hardworking, faithful men of integrity, who love the Lord, His church, His word, and the souls of men.

We believe the preaching of the cross is not only the greatest need in the church, but that it is also the greatest work in the church. No matter what else we may do, if we are not preaching the gospel, we are not saving souls. Where would you be in your life and relationship with God had not a faithful gospel preacher been there to teach you? Will you see to it that a faithful preacher will be there to teach others?

If you or your home congregation would like to support this effort to train Christ-centered preachers around the world, please call, email, or write to us. I ask that you don’t take from Peter to pay Paul. I do not want any missionary to have support cut to help me. If you have the ability to help, we are offering the opportunity.

Summerdale Church of Christ  
c/o Worldwide Preacher Training  
PO Box 314  
Summerdale, AL 36580  
Office: (251) 989-7748

Andy Erwin  
[andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com)

# Jesus Wants Us to Die to Ourselves

Robert L. Waggoner

The Christian symbol of the cross is often glorified in our world. Whether on church buildings, personal jewelry, or elsewhere, the symbol of the cross implies devotion to Christ and the principles which he taught. Wherever there are Christians, the cross is a meaningful symbol. But the cross has not always been appreciated, not has its symbol been honored as it is now.

What did Jesus mean when He said, “Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34)? And what would others have understood Him to mean when He talked about taking up the cross?

He did not mean that His followers would have burdens to bear or that there would be obstacles in the pathways of life because everyone has these.

The cross is something He asks his disciples to carry voluntarily. The cross was a symbol of death, a thing to be crucified upon. It meant a shameful criminal’s death. It meant failure and rejection. Though Jesus was no criminal, He despised the shame and endured the cross (Hebrews 12:2). And that is what Jesus asks of His followers. Jesus asks us to die to ourselves in order that He might live within us.



**The**  
**GOSPEL CLEANER**  
The Gospel Cleaner  
7 Brown Creek Dr.  
Fayetteville, TN 37334