

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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Politicizing Morality

Jerry C. Brewer

Satan has many devices for the corruption of humanity. Among those is his ability to get his followers to redefine terms of morality. Many of those are familiar to all of us. For instance, the practice of murdering babies in the womb is called *abortion* and one



of Satan's devices is to politicize that term, along with many others. Unlike the laws of the Medes and Persians, law in our day is fluid and always subject to change. That is the case when God's moral law is placed in the realm of politics.

A few years ago a deacon in a congregation in Oklahoma chastised the preacher for speaking against abortion, saying that he was preaching on "politics." Now, we all know that partisan politics have no place in the pulpit and no faithful gospel preacher would ever preach on such topics. But the devil, and his followers in high places, know that if they can persuade men that preaching on the morals God has ordained is *politics*, they can silence opposition to their immorality. The same is true with sodomy. If it can be politicized, preachers who

preach the truth on it can be silenced by the law.

It's often been said by liberals that, "You can't legislate morality," and they are correct. Man cannot legislate morality. **God has already done that.** His immutable moral code by which He intends men to live was impressed upon the human race in the beginning and cannot be changed. Of course, what politicians mean by that statement is that legislatures or Congress cannot legislate **against** immorality. When the righteous oppose legalizing gambling, liquor, or "same-sex marriage" (as the latter has been), the cry goes up that, "You cannot legislate morality." Making immorality illegal does **not** legislate in the moral realm. It simply aligns man's secular laws with the moral law of God. What objectors really mean is that, "You cannot pass a law that agrees with God's moral law and opposes our hedonism."

American society—and most of the world for that matter—is as pagan as any ancient culture. The White House occupant endorses sodomite marriages. A few years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sodomite marriages are legal and recently ruled that sodomy is a protected class under the law. That ought to make decent folks tremble. When the highest office in the land demonstrates that it lives by no moral code higher than an alley cat—although alley cats disdain sodomy—the outlook is indeed dark for successive generations of our children and grandchildren. And it becomes even darker when we consider that speaking out against such wickedness as abortion and sodomy is considered "preaching politics" and may be prosecuted as "hate speech" under men's laws

This country is at a critical juncture in its existence. Decent people must either take a stand—a **firm** one—against immorality and its endorsement in high places, or we will witness the end of a country that once stood as a bastion of freedom and moral rectitude. And that is **not** "preaching politics." God's long suffering ended when He de-

stroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and it may well end soon for this country that has been the recipient of the greatest blessings in the history of the human race.

Evil men in high places may politicize morality and call it “politics” but Christians must never fall for that kind of thinking. We must, lift up our voices “like a trumpet, cry aloud, and spare not” (Isa. 58:1) and let the chips fall where they may. This land is ruled (yes, **ruled** not governed) by evil men and the sooner they are gone from high places, the better. I have never preached on politics and do not ever intend to, but evil men have trampled underfoot the moral laws of God, calling evil good and good evil, and we cannot remain silent in the face of their wickedness.

Dress Code? Or, Respect for God?

Eddie Whitten

The Bible does not specify a dress code, so why do elders try to impose a certain type of dress for members when we assemble for worship? The Bible teaches that God looks not on the outward man but on the heart. Most of our younger generations of today are not aware that “casual dress” in the services of worship to God, grew out of the rebellious days of the *hippies* and *baby boomers* of the 1960s. Respect for, and submission to, authority was dealt a severe blow by the “independent” thinking of that era. Like most other things that challenged the “establishment,” the initial shock soon wore off and that which once was “unthinkable” became acceptable.

The secular world still places great emphasis on dress. Business executives wear suits to work and usually require their younger aspirants to do the same. Quality of work is usually enhanced by neat and proper dress. The reputation of the company is represented to a great degree by the way employee’s dress. The reason: **A respect for those representing a company generates a respect for the company represented.** Contrary to what one may think, those who respect their person, their values, and their employers command the respect of those who do not.

It is a source of genuine distress to see the lack of respect for God displayed by so many in our worship services. Preachers are no exception; in fact they should be leaders in trying to keep the congregations aware of the Divine nature of God. God should be exalted to the ultimate degree of respect, adoration, reverence, and awe before whom His children should humble themselves. Slovenly dress, casual, unkempt foot-wear, carelessness in presentation all profess that we have no awareness of the greatness of the God we profess to serve. Those who see God’s representatives in such common and presumptuous attire cannot have respect for the God they represent. It is no wonder that it is difficult to try to convince lost souls of their need to revere God, when it is apparent that He is not revered by those claiming to represent Him!

It is not a dress code that needs to be enforced. It is a desperate effort to instill in the hearts of Christians the abject respect that God’s children should have for their heavenly Father. Every example of the Old Testament, and every principle of the New Testament shows the need to glorify the God of heaven. Old Testament priests had to wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean (Num. 8:6-7).

A dress code? Not in the least! A plea to honor and glorify God in our dress? Yes!

EDITOR’S NOTE: Look around at folks in worship and observe their clothes that are not only slovenly, but are **sinful**. The trend began a few years ago when women decided to dress like men and traded their dresses for slacks. That began the slippery slope downward until people traded their clothing for worship with that which cost them nothing. Because he numbered Israel, David angered God and was given one of three choices for punishment—seven years of famine in the land, three months of flight before his enemies, or three days of pestilence (2 Sam. 24:11-13). David chose three days of pestilence in which 70,000 men died from Dan to Beersheba (2 Sam. 24:5). When the angel came to Jerusalem, God stopped the pestilence and ordered David to build an altar of sacrifice at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David offered to buy the threshing floor, Araunah told David that he would **give** him the threshing floor, oxen for sacrifice, and the wood without charge.

And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the

threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver (2 Sam. 24:24).

The principle for us is in David's words, "...neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing." How many people come before God in worship wearing the cheapest, common, everyday things they have? Clothing worn in worship does not have to be expensive, or even new. But it should reflect reverence that ought to characterize the heart of the worshiper. I know at least one person who wears short-shorts and a T-shirt in worship, and looking like he's just from a pick-up basketball game. He is a high school student and one must wonder if his parents have any authority of him.

My grandparents were poor people who lost their farm in 1935 during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl years in Oklahoma. My grandfather's "Sunday-go-to-meetin" best consisted of starched and ironed striped overalls, a starched and ironed white shirt, a necktie, and a straw fedora. That reflected his reverence for God in worship. In later years, he was able to afford a suit which he wore thereafter. He would never have gone to worship in the overalls he wore in the cotton field. Should we not, therefore, present our physical selves in the most honorable and reverent manner possible? Elders **must** do their duty to oversee the church and make sure folks will at least **dress modestly**.

Baptism in the Apostolic Epistles

Foy E. Wallace Jr.

Other texts on baptism—by that we mean the abundance of teaching in the New Testament besides Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38. If sectarian debaters were able to prove that Mark 16 is spurious (which they are not) and that Acts 2:38 means because of (which they cannot) they would yet be confronted with a formidable array of "other" texts, which, indeed, are just as decisive as the two against which all denominational genius has for generations been concentrated. Having followed the subject through the Acts of Apostles in previous article we now advance to other texts in the apostolic epistles.



The Roman Christians had "died to sin" "and should no longer live therein." To impress this lesson upon them Paul said:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might, be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin: For he that is dead is freed from sin (Rom. 6:3-7).

The subject "we"—"we are buried with him by baptism"—includes Paul; hence, the baptism of this passage is linked with Saul's baptism of Acts 22:16, They are, in fact, twin passages. Whatever Saul was baptized for—the Romans were baptized for also. And the form of the Romans' baptism was the form of Saul's baptism.

Taking the two passages together, therefore, by Paul's own words; we have both the how and the what of baptism definitely settled. Ananias told Saul to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins"—that is the what of it as to design. "We are (ASV *were*) buried with him by baptism"—that is the how of it as to its form.

Observe further that the text says very plainly what baptism does: "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized, into his death." Baptism puts one into Christ, and in so doing it puts one into His death The word into, is a preposition that denotes motion, out of one state into another—from without to within. Baptized into Christ, previous to baptism one is out of Christ, after baptism is in Christ, by baptism he is brought from without to within. And there are no degrees in a state; one is either in or out of Christ, just as he is either married or unmarried, or as he is either a citizen or an alien. Hence, to the Galatians (Gal. 3:26-27), Paul again says: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into

Christ have put on Christ.” Thus baptism preceded by faith is God's appointed way of bringing men into Christ.

Still not satisfied with the emphasis, the apostle further says that we are baptized “into his death.” Baptism stands between the sinner and the death of Christ—it stands, between the sinner and the blood of Christ, the merits and the benefits of his atoning death. Baptism is the recapitulation of the death of Christ; there the sinner being buried with Christ into death is made in the likeness of His death, His burial and His resurrection; there in death with Christ, and in Christ; he loses his sins, for “the old man is crucified with him” and “he that is dead is freed from sin.” No stronger figure could be employed by which to set the design, form and benefits of baptism. It is the reenactment of Calvary.

But the capstone of the argument is yet found in the clause, “like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Baptism stands between the sinner and newness of life.

This statement is embellished in the Colossian passage (Col. 2:12), “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” In baptism there is a burial and a resurrection with Christ through faith in the operation (working) of God. In baptism God performs an operation. The comparison begins with verse 11. Circumcision was a physical operation, made with hands; the circumcision of Christ is a spiritual operation, without hands. One was the putting off of the flesh; the other is the putting off of sins. In baptism God performs an operation—the putting away of sin by the power of God. And the same power that God exerted in raising Christ from the dead is the power that is exerted when in baptism we raised up with Christ—“wherein ye also are raised up”—and the one baptized is baptized through faith in the operation of God. But if one believes he is saved before baptism, hence, has already had the operation—how could he, be baptized through faith in the operation here required? It is mighty strong indication of the faith that qualifies baptism. But having been buried and raised, concluding his effort to edify the Colossians on the subject of baptism, the apostle adds: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). Baptism thus stands between Christian and the risen life with Christ.

Returning to the Roman letter, there is yet another reference to baptism in the sixth chapter, following, closely upon the declaration that “we are buried with him by baptism.” It is verse 17: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Obedience to the form of doctrine stands between the sinner and freedom from sin. But baptism is the form of death, burial and resurrection, which Paul says is the doctrine delivered (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Being baptized then is obeying the form of the doctrine--and Paul says, being then made free from sin. When do you say? Paul says then, and then means when, and that means freedom from sin comes when one is baptized.

The One Baptism: Ephesians 4:5

One frequently hears the expression “**modes** of baptism.” There is no such thing. As well talk about shades of white! White has no shades and baptism has no modes.

Baptism being a noun, stands for one thing; and baptize, being a verb of action, cannot denote several actions. Grammatically, it is impossible for the noun *baptism* and the verb, *baptize* to denote several things and actions. But Paul settles the argument scripturally when he says: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” That cannot mean two in kind (Holy Spirit and water) nor three in form (sprinkling, pouring and immersion). As to the form there being but one, if sprinkling is baptism, pouring is not, if pouring is baptism sprinkling is not; and if either is baptism, immersion is not and if immersion is baptism neither sprinkling nor pouring is. The process of elimination will decide the point, since all the world has admitted that immersion is baptism. Paul, knowing the how and the what of it all, said: “We are buried with him by baptism.”

It is often argued that these passages on baptism in the epistles refer to Holy Spirit baptism. This is done in an effort to escape the apostolic teaching on the design of bap-

tism—that it **puts one into Christ**. If that be true, the antecedent admission is the elimination of water baptism, for Paul says there is **one** baptism (which cannot mean two) and if Holy Spirit baptism prevails, there is no such thing as water baptism, and all such has been but a wet, meaningless ceremony, without New Testament authority or sanction. But most of those who preach Holy Spirit baptism, practice water baptism also. We wonder why. When water baptism is established, Holy Spirit baptism is eliminated—Paul being the witness.

It should not require a tedious or devious argument to arrive at the right conclusion. If the Great Commission is now in force—water baptism is in force. Jesus commanded the apostles to teach and baptize men (Matt. 28:19). The apostles could not administer Holy Spirit baptism. Paul preached to the Corinthians and they were baptized (Acts 18:8). Paul baptized some of them, and other men baptized the others (1 Cor. 1:14-16). So the Corinthians were baptized by men; but men cannot baptize with the Holy Spirit; therefore, the baptism of Corinthians was not Holy Spirit baptism. Hence, when Paul said to the Corinthians, “For by one Spirit are (ASV *were*) we all baptized into one body,” the Spirit was the agent and not the element. By one Spirit, by the authority of, as commanded by Christ in the Commission.

To the Ephesians in chapter four, Paul said: “There is one baptism.” But in chapter five, he said: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse with the washing of water by the word.” Surely, Paul would not tell the Ephesians that there is but one baptism—chapter four—(if it refers to the Holy Spirit) and then enjoin water baptism in chapter five! The one baptism of chapter four, therefore, is the water baptism of chapter five. This baptism is said to be “by the word” in Eph. 5:25 and “by the Spirit” in 1 Cor. 12:13. The word is not the element of baptism in Eph. 5 and the Spirit is not the element of baptism in 1 Cor. 12:13. It is “by” the word and “by” the Spirit that men are baptized with the washing of water.” This being the one baptism in Ephesians, it is the one baptism in all the Book besides. Holy Spirit baptism was special, never general; its purpose was inspiration, never obedience. No man was ever commanded to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. But the Bible commands men to be baptized; and there is but one baptism; it follows, therefore, that Holy Spirit baptism does not prevail today.

Then, is the one baptism essential or nonessential? Read Ephesians 4:4-6 and pick out the non-essentials: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling on the Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Out of these seven things, is there but one non-essential? This ought to expose the weak and feeble claim of denominationalists that baptism is nonessential.

The Like Figure, Baptism 1 Peter 3:21

As Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 compared our baptism into Christ with Israel's passing through the sea, so Peter compares our salvation by baptism with the deliverance of Noah's family by water. He said:

Wherein (the ark) few, that is eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

Leaving out the parenthetical clause, the passage simply states that “baptism doth now also save us by the—resurrection of Jesus Christ.” That should be plain enough.

First, it is argued that baptism is just a figure, because Peter said “the like figure.” But when Paul referred to Israel passing through the sea as a figure of our baptism into Christ, and the drinking of the rock in the wilderness as a type of Christ, “and the Rock was Christ”—does that make Christ figurative? The text says that “baptism doth now also save us by the resurrection of Christ.” The salvation is actual, and the resurrection of Christ is actual—why not baptism? The comparison is that God used water to deliver Noah and his family from the old world, its corruption, and environment; and God uses water, even baptism, to save us, to deliver us from sin. The figure is in the comparison—not in the thing done. The meaning of the passage must be evident—that as

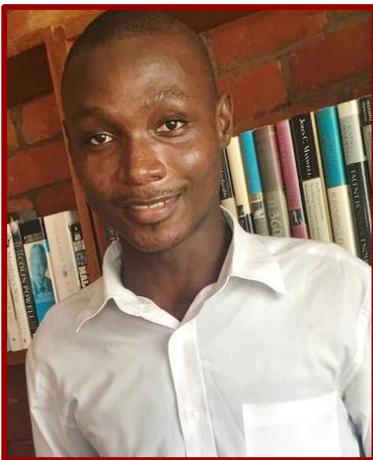
water delivered Noah, so baptism saves us—and any explanation that says baptism does not save is not an explanation, but a contradiction.

But we are told that Noah was saved by staying out of the water! Then, if that be the point of comparison, the ante-deluvians were lost, by getting into the water. That sinks the Baptist church, preachers and all, for no one can be a Baptist and stay out of the water! According to such sophistry the Great Commission should read, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be damned—like the ante-deluvians!” And Peter was wrong—for baptism damns, instead, of saves, per the conclusion of the objector. Such objections serve only to reveal and to expose a class of arch-perverters of the word of God.

Twenty Three Thousand or Twenty Four Thousand?

Nana Yaw Aidoo

One of the numerous sins that Israel committed on the way to the Promised Land was fornication. According to Numbers 25, while in Shittim, the people committed physical fornication with the women of Moab and spiritual fornication with Baalpeor. This aroused the Lord’s anger leading to the deaths of many of the Jews via a plague. Moses recorded that: “And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand” (Num. 25:9).



However, in an apparent reference to this same incident, Paul wrote: “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Cor. 10:8). To students of the Sacred Writings, this seems like a discrepancy. Bible skeptics have been known to feast on this and other such seeming discrepancies in order to cast doubt on the integrity of the Bible as being “...in truth, the word of God...” (1 Thess. 2:13). Those who like this writer are sticklers for the inspiration of the Bible and the in-

errancy of its autographs in fact can be confident that there is no real problem as far as these texts are concerned and that this seeming discrepancy can be solved in either of two ways.

The first is by noting that while Moses tells us the number *that died in the plague*, Paul tells us the number that died *in one day*. Moses in his record does not say that all the deaths happened in one day, rather telling us the number of all who died in the plague. This makes Paul’s record supplementary. By combining both texts, we learn that of the twenty four thousand that died, twenty three thousand died in one day. It is possible that the remaining one thousand died the day after, making the number of casualties sum up to 24,000.

The second solution is that Moses added the number of leaders or rulers who were hanged in the sun (Num. 25:4-5), to the number of those who were **directly** killed by the plague, whereas Paul focused **only** on those who were **directly** killed by the plague, excluding the leaders or the rulers who were hanged in the sun. If this were the case, then we can surmise that the number of rulers who were hanged in the sun, totaled one thousand.

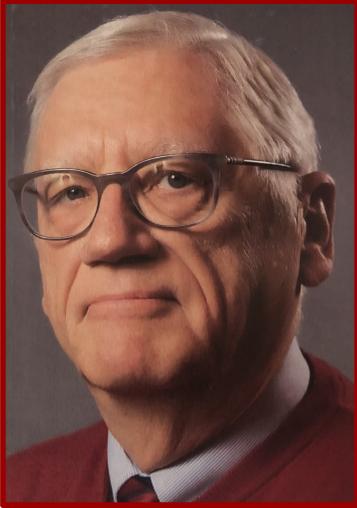
The honest, sincere and careful Bible student who pays a little more attention to these seeming discrepancies would come to realize that they aren’t really discrepancies at all and that the Bible is indeed what it claims to be.

Jesus came to save sinners, not to make sinners. People were sinners before Jesus came, and they would have continued to be sinners had Jesus not come. If people do not believe, they continue sinning just as they would have done had He not come. — R.L. Whiteside —

A Call to Repentance

Lester Kamp

In Jeremiah 3 God, through the prophet, pleads with Judah to repent. About ninety years earlier Israel, because of their persistent sinfulness, had been defeated and brought into captivity by the Assyrians. Now God's attention was directed toward Judah. Surely Judah would learn from what had happened to Israel! The Biblical examples of the results of disobedience should encourage others to obey God and repent of sin. "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11—ASV). But God's people, even today, have difficulty in accepting such lessons.



In this case, Judah would not heed the warning: "Repent or be destroyed like Israel before." God's spokesman was rejected, abused, and persecuted because he preached the truth. Those who preach the truth need to be willing to endure such treatment (2 Tim. 2:3, 9-10) for there will be those who "will not endure sound doctrine" (4:3). Jeremiah was given a message from God that needed to be heard and, therefore, had to be preached. He was genuinely concerned for the people and for the truth. Jeremiah described the message as "fire shut up in my bones" (Jer. 20:9) and that message was "from above" (Lam. 1:13). Such a message must be preached.

Sin was the problem in Judah—not military weakness or political alliances. A covenant existed between the descendants of Israel and God. God said, "I am married unto you" (Jer. 3:14). This was a sacred, permanent covenant. In the New Testament this husband-wife relationship exists between Christ and the church. Paul wrote about this relationship and the faithfulness it requires in 2 Corinthians 11:2: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Because of this marriage, unfaithfulness is considered spiritual adultery. To some this concept may be harsh and severe, but sin is not to be treated lightly. One sin separates the sinner from God and leads to other sins. In this third chapter of Jeremiah notice God's repeated reference to Judah's sinfulness.

thou hast played the harlot with many lovers...thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness...yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also...Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord (11:1-2, 8, 20).

Departure usually begins with idolatry. Idolatry is not restricted to statues and images (Col. 3:5). In fact, anything that becomes more important than God becomes an idol. When this priority is changed, any act, however wrong, can be justified. Sin, unrepented of, brings destruction (Rom. 6:23).

It is often as difficult to get a sinner to repent as it is to force a goat's nose to the ground. Why? Because they are stiff-necked, stubborn, and determined to resist. Stephen described those who were about to kill him because of his preaching, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

In order for sin to be forgiven it must initially be acknowledged. When Nathan told David that he was a sinner, David reacted by penitently acknowledging his sin. He wrote: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Psa. 51:3-4).

Jeremiah implored Judah, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God" (Jer. 3:13). Sinners must be made to realize their guilt because of sin before repentance and forgiveness are possible. As on Pentecost, sinners must always first be "pricked in their heart" (Acts 2:37), convicted of their sin-

fulness, before they will be willing to follow God's prescription for forgiveness.

Be assured that God desires to forgive the sinner and, therefore, calls them to repentance. Now this call to repentance comes through the preaching of the Gospel (2 The. 2:14). In Jeremiah 3, God, through the prophet, repeatedly calls and declares: "Turn thou unto me...Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly... Return, thou backsliding Israel...Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (2:7, 10, 12, 22).

It is still true today. God does not want any to be lost but desires to forgive (2 Pet. 3:9). The choice is clear: "Repent or be destroyed." Sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2), but God is willing and able to save. Today sin is still described as spiritual adultery. James wrote: Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (Jam. 4:4). We cannot flirt with and love the world without suffering the consequences (2 The. 1:7-9). Worldliness, being like the world, will destroy the children of God. We dare not follow "a multitude to do evil" (Exo. 23:2). We cannot afford to ignore the warning. God calls upon us, His children, "Repent...and pray God" (Acts 8:22) or be destroyed. Will we listen?

Medical Marijuana, Oh, Really?

Jess Whitlock

"Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor" (Prov. 14:9). Sin is being played down in America today, and what's worse is being promoted! Consider alcohol, abortion on demand, gambling, adultery, divorce for any cause, so-called



marriages (?) of a man to a man or a woman to a woman, et al. The world has contended with drug abuse for multiplied centuries. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). The crimes caused by hallucinatory drugs would fill thousands of volumes of books. Yet, many supposedly sound citizens have been instrumental in making former illegal drugs legal! Fools will go on making a mock of sin.

Former President Hussein Obama argued that, "marijuana is less dangerous than alcohol...as has been well documented. I smoked pot as a kid, and I viewed it as a bad habit and vice, not very different from the cigarettes that I smoked as a young person..." This was the President of America speaking! When reporters of the *New Yorker* pressed Obama as to marijuana being "less dangerous" than alcohol, he said, "...yes, in terms of its impact on the individual consumer." You may recall that Obama suggested the legalization of recreational marijuana use in Colorado and Washington was an important "experiment" that may help to remedy the "disproportionate number of marijuana-related arrests and incarcerations among minorities...we should not be locking up kids...for long stretches of jail time, when some of the folks who are writing those laws have probably done the same thing."

Seven years ago, recreational marijuana was legalized for sale in the state of Colorado. In the first ten days of 2014 more than 5 million dollars of "pot" was sold. Recreational marijuana on average, costs twice as much as medical marijuana. The report in Colorado early in the year was they were running out of "pot" fast.

Actually, marijuana is illegal under federal law. Satan is alive and well in America today. Eight states have "legalized" recreational marijuana and 16 states have "legalized" medical marijuana. Oklahoma's State Question 788 passed and caused former Governor Mary Fallin to state, "...this new law is written so loosely that it opens the door for basically recreational marijuana." She was right. So, almost half the states of the United States have paved the way for an illegal drug to be counted as legal! May

God have mercy upon our nation in our stupidity.

In Galatians 5:19-21 we find listed the “works of the flesh.” In verse 20 you will note the English word “sorcery” taken from the Greek *pharmakia* which is defined by W.E. Vine, “...primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then, poisoning; then sorcery, Galatians 5:20...see also Revelation 9:21; 18:23. In sorcery, the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals to occult powers...” (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, pg. 51-52).

It is estimated that in Colorado only 2 percent of prescribed marijuana is given to people who suffer from cancer and less than 1 percent from HIV/AIDS virus patients. Around 94 percent of prescriptions for “pot” are due to “unspecified pain.” So, if you have a tooth ache or a hangnail, just go get some medical marijuana. In those states where “medical marijuana” has been introduced, the use of “pot” has gone up! America continues to make a mock of sin.

You may make marijuana (almost) legal in our nation, as trying to the Oklahoma Legislature which many have done or are attempting to do, but you can **never, ever make it right!**

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Practical Baptismal Regeneration

Lee Moses

It is not terribly uncommon for members of the church of Christ to be accused of believing in “baptismal regeneration.” Baptismal regeneration claims that baptism “is the channel of grace by which regeneration, in the sense of the impartation of new life, is **alone** received” (emphasis mine, LM).¹ This is a false charge—while we stand



upon the Scriptures, which teach baptism is essential to receiving new life in Christ (John 3:3-5; Rom. 6:3-4), faithful brethren have always firmly asserted that baptism **alone** will save no one. Sadly, however, there are some today who teach and live as though the false doctrine of “baptismal regeneration” as defined above is true.

Some would have you believe that one who does not understand what he is doing can be saved by baptism. By this teaching, denominational baptisms would be just as acceptable as Bible baptism (contrast with Ephesians 4:5). But hearing and understanding the Gospel is essential to salvation. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus said when one fails to understand the word, the devil takes the word away from that person (Matt. 13:19). It was when the Romans “obeyed from the **heart** that form of doctrine” that they were “then made free from sin” (Rom. 6:17-18, emphasis LM). The “**heart**” (Greek *kardia*) is the “center and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition.”² So one’s thinking, emotion, and will must be fully employed to obey the Gospel properly. This is part of the reason why infants are not suitable candidates for baptism. If one could be given new life by immersion in water without understanding what he was doing, then every person who had ever been swimming or otherwise under water would have been born again (contrast with Acts 19:1-5).

Others would have you believe that one who fails to repent can be saved by baptism. That is, one can remain in a sinful state (e.g., an unscriptural marriage) and yet begin to walk in newness of life. But Paul affirmed that central to the message he preached to the world was “that they should repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance” (Acts 26:20). Never, under any dispensation, has man been able to live pleasing to God while remaining in sin (Gen. 6:5-7; Isa. 59:1-2; 1 John 3:9). Repentance is a prerequisite to Scriptural baptism (Acts 2:38).

There are some who live as though the baptism they received years ago gives them carte blanche to do as they please in the time following. As such, they effectively affirm that baptism alone saves. But Scriptural baptism is only the birth that begins a **new life**. As Paul wrote in Romans 6:5, “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death (through baptism, verses 3-4), we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (through faithful Christian living, verses 1-2, 11-16). Baptism is not merely a way for one to “get his ticket punched” to heaven—it implies that the one submitting to it will live a new life for God.

Indeed, baptism is essential for receiving the new life that comes as we are saved from our sins (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16). But let us ensure that we do not add to nor take away from the word of God (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). If we teach or live as though baptism **alone** gives new life without any required acts of obedience, we teach “practical baptismal regeneration.” Rather, let us all “obey from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”

End Notes

1 J.H. Garrison, *The Story of a Century* (St. Louis: Christian Publishing Company, 1909), p. 196.

2 Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 508.

A tragedy, to have any unity of action when played on the stage, must be planned and written by person—at least under the direction of one person. Imagine, if you can, a play written by several men, neither of whom knew what the other was writing, or that he was writing, at all. Yet the tragedy of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus was so written by the prophets. And then the play—none of the actors in the drama, save Jesus, knew that the part he was playing had been written, yet each played his part according to the record. God knew what would be done, and had the prophets to write it down. —**R.L. Whiteside**

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

Our first question this month is, “Where Israelites deposited their tithes during the Law of Moses was in force? In Jerusalem only?”

Websters Dictionary gives this definition of tithe “a tenth part of something paid as a voluntary contribution or as a tax especially for the support of a religious establishment.”



It is fitting that we look at some history of giving a tenth part of something. The beginning of giving a tenth took place first in Genesis 14 when the various kings were doing battle and Abraham’s nephew Lot was taken captive. Upon learning of this by one that escaped, Abraham armed over three hundred of his men and preceded to retrieve Lot and he did so. In this there was the taking all the goods after the battle was won. We are then introduced to Melchizedek who was king of Salem—king of peace (cf. Heb. 7:1-10) unto whom Abraham gave tithes (cf. Gen. 14:20), for God blessing Jacob, who promised to give a tenth to the Lord (Gen. 28:22).

In these instances, this was voluntary action based upon the heart of the giver not by command from God. Later the children of Israel would become a great nation while in Egyptian bondage. After the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea and in the second year away from bondage the building of the tabernacle was commanded by God, but not tithing.

This is where God would meet the people, Moses commanded them to give free will offerings in order that the tabernacle could be built. Notice now what happened:

“And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments” (Exod. 35: 21). The women’s hearts were “stirred” up also and the rulers gave of themselves likewise (Cf. Verses 26, 27). Is this not a good picture of what giving free will can do if the heart is stirred up?

There was an abundance given so that they had to be restrained from giving more because “...The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make” (Ex. 36:5). There is no work that is too big for the local church to do. The work of the church is the preach the Gospel to the whole world and the church can do that when hearts are stirred up to do the work. This may produce other questions regarding the work of the church, but this is about where God would meet the people and where does He meet them today? It is also a primer on our giving freely as we have prospered (cf. I Cor. 16:1,2).

In Leviticus 27, tithing was commanded from all they possessed or produced. It was “...holy unto the LORD” (Vs. 30 ff).

Instructions are given in the book of Numbers regarding the tithes. Since the tribe of Levi had the service of the sanctuary, they received of the eleven other tribe’s tithes for their own livelihood.

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation (Num. 18:20-21).

Again,

But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance (verses 23-24).

After the Babylonian captivity and the building of the temple began they were commanded to, “And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house” (Neh. 10:38).

In Malachi 3:10 God said,

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

The storehouse seems to be where the tithes were kept for the tribe of Levi for the house of the high priest and his sons.

Thanks for the question.

The next question is; “Clap your hands, all people” Psalms 47:1. Who are all people here? Only Israelites? Or both Gentiles and Israelites?”

All ye people; that is, as the original word means, all ye nations. Here, as often elsewhere in the Psalms, the gentile nations are called upon to rejoice in God, in anticipation of their reception, through faith, into the church. All here means all as the best translation indicates.

God is the joy of His people.

The last question of this issue is: “What does Matthew 11:22 mean when it says the kingdom suffers violence and is being taken by force”?

Some think that this is a reference that people were pressing to enter the kingdom before it had its beginning. If you please, force themselves into the kingdom.

McGarvey notes, “Jesus here pictures the kingdom of heaven as a besieged city. The city is shut up, but the enemies which surround it storm its walls and try to force an entrance” though the kingdom was still in the future as Christ spoke.

Albert Barnes says “Our Saviour here simply states a fact. He says there was a great rush, or a crowd pressing to hear John. Multitudes went out to hear him, as if they were about to take the kingdom of heaven by force”.

This is a difficult passage. The only explanation I know that will harmonize with the Scriptures is what is taught in John 6:15. “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.” “Take it by force” in Matthew 11 is exactly the same words as “take Him by force.” The purpose was to take Him and make Him an earthly king over an earthly kingdom.

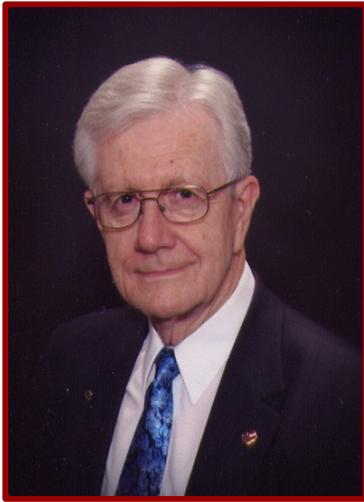
Thanks for your question.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at: wd4lar@gmail.com

Elders—Their Crucial Role

Dub McClish

When the Lord Jesus returned to the Father, He first entrusted the church to the apostles (Mat. 16:18–19; John 14:16–18), who had the responsibility of receiving the revealed Word (John 16:13) and delivering it faithfully. This Word was not only the Gospel to be given to the lost world for its salvation. It was the constitution—the law of Christ—for His church. While the apostles lived, the church was under these inspired ambassadors of Prince Immanuel (2 Cor. 5:20). However, just as the Lord in His flesh would not be with His disciples indefinitely, neither would the apostles.



They left behind that perfected Word which is fully capable (without any direct Divine intervention or assistance) of perfecting the saints who will yield themselves to it (2 Tim. 3:16–17). However, the Head of the church also entrusted her to other human hands upon the departure of the apostles. This grave responsibility would not be to one man or to a small council in some geographical global headquarters, but rather to a small group of men on the local level of His church—men in every congregation of His people. These men He denominated “elders,” “bishops,” “pastors.”

Elders must meet stringent inspired qualifications before being given charge of the congregation (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Tit. 1:5–9). It is their sacred duty first to engage in self-examination, then in congregational-examination (Acts 20:28). Their responsibility is two-fold: (1) They are to feed—tend—nourish the church so that she might develop spiritually to the extent of her potential and remain pure (Acts 20:28b; Tit. 1:9b; 1 Pet. 5:2). (2) Equally important, they are to protect her from evil men and their damnable doctrines (Acts. 20:29–31; Tit. 1:9b–11).

The losses to liberalism the church has experienced over the past forty years could not or would not have occurred had not numerous elders (and some entire elderships) been guilty of serious dereliction of duty. It is not our intent to place upon these men a burden greater than they can or should bear or to discourage any from becoming elders. However, it still remains a crystal-clear conclusion that, had elders led, bishops overseen, and pastors shepherded as they should have, the church would not be in such throes of apostasy as we see on every hand.

Elderships are God’s wall of defense for His church—accountable for congregational welfare and safety—and are directly responsible to God for that which is taught in the

classrooms, the pulpit, the church bulletin, and all other teaching media they supply. They need not do all of the teaching personally (impossible even in an average-size congregation), but **they must know what is being taught**. This knowledge includes the material that is used and that which is taught in the Bible classes. Also, elders need to know that the teachers are both morally and doctrinally sound. They must do this by personal interview, written questionnaire, or some other means, or be guilty of grave neglect. They dare not merely assume that all is well in these matters. It is their business as overseers and pastors to find out—to know.

Hundreds of congregations have been lost to error in the last four decades, likely never to be reclaimed for the Truth. Misguided preachers and professors have led the departure, but who has enabled them to do so? One group above all others must be blamed—elderships in the local congregations who went to sleep on their watches. We stress again—the role of these men has been (and continues to be) absolutely pivotal to the health and welfare of the church of Christ! Bishops, more than any others, had (and have) both the opportunity and obligation to build up the churches, to prevent false doctrine and practice, and to oppose and expose them if they appear. Weak, ignorant, overly-benevolent, or sometimes outright liberal elders have allowed compromising preachers (and occasionally under-taught and over-zealous “youth directors”) to continue to spew out their errors and promote their innovations, when these men should have been sent packing long before.

Elders are supposed to be “mouth-stoppers” of such men (Tit. 1:9–11), but sadly, many of them are “mouth-supporters” of them! They have kept corrupt preachers in their pulpits till they converted much of the church (and sometimes the elders). (Ironically, it is the man who is determined to preach only and all of the Bible without fear or favor who is most often run out of town by misguided elders nowadays.) Many elderships have become so numbers-happy that they are willing to allow almost anything to be taught or practiced if it will draw the crowds or keep certain ones (and their money) from leaving. Now most of those elderships would not think of inviting in and supporting any besides such religious wolves, further devouring the flock. Consequently, in many places (and especially in the larger metropolitan areas) the church is drowning in a sea of error.

Elders must practice a zero-tolerance policy toward any and all religious error. Many churches have been undermined by and lost to various erroneous “isms” advocated by brethren through the years because elders were either inattentive, apathetic, ignorant, or cowardly. The current monster of liberalism in the church could have been killed aborning had elders been informed, alert, and strong enough to allow it no place at all in their respective congregations. Instead, in hundreds of cases it was tolerated in its earliest manifestations as merely a harmless “different approach.” Many elders (and preachers) boast that they do not know what is “going on” in the church and that they do not want to know. Their congregations are paying the price for such folly.

One who claims to be a Gospel preacher has no excuse for perverting the Gospel and will be damned eternally for so doing (Gal. 1:6–9). However, we reiterate, the ultimate blame for the rampant apostasy in the church must be laid at the feet of elders. They could (and should) have denied rotten preachers the pulpits and support they gave and are giving them. **It was their business to do this—the buck stops with them!**

Many elders who are sound in the faith still seem to be in a state of denial relative to their pivotal role—they just do not seem to “get it.” Some otherwise conservative elderships seem to see no inconsistency in inviting a false teacher for a Gospel meeting or workshop of some sort (“We won’t let him teach error while he’s here”) or in publishing in the church bulletin an article written by such a man. Likewise, they will allow programs to be announced from the pulpit, on bulletin boards, and through the church bulletin on which false teachers are featured, which simply gives the unworthy teacher undeserved credibility and implied endorsement.

We should contemplate with shame and sorrow how few elderships ever lead their congregations in withdrawing from erring, impenitent members. It is evident that elders have all too often been willing to wink at immorality and sinful divisive behavior,

as well as false doctrine, rather than deal Scripturally with it. This neglect has resulted in severely weakened churches in some cases and in apostasy of the entire congregation in many others. Elders fail miserably if they are unwilling to lead the church boldly in its Divine mandate to withdraw from those who will not repent of their impurity of life or teaching.

There is no greater or more demanding work in the entire world than that of serving as an elder, bishop, pastor in the Lord's church. However, the greater the potential for good if one serves well, the greater the potential for harm if one fails. We unhesitatingly commend the many faithful elders of past and present—they deserve much honor. There is likely not a more thankless task than is theirs. It has been this writer's great delight and encouragement to work with several such righteous shepherds over the years. Let us encourage such worthy men, and let us pray that in His providence the God of Heaven will raise up more great men for this great work.

Preachers, elders, deacons, and all other members are precious to the Lord and important for the church to be what He desires. However, the elders in any congregation occupy a crucial position more than any others. The Lord appointed them to nurture and to keep His church pure. The congregation is a reflection of its eldership more than of any other element or factor. If elders fail at the point of tending the flock, particularly at the point of providing it with sound teaching and protecting it from error, they fail utterly, and so will the congregation they oversee.

He is None of His

Ron Cosby

A respondent to an article on the gift of the Holy Spirit asserted,

Those who believe and obey Jesus are given/receive the Holy Spirit. He is the gift in Acts 2:38 but since that person doesn't believe that scripture here are more from the Holy Spirit l (sic) John 7:37-39, Acts 5:32, & the nail in the coffin Rom 8:9-16. Conclusion All (sic) baptized believers who are saved who belong to God & are Gods (sic) children have the Indwelling (sic) of the Spirit. Case closed.

We emphasize these phrases from the writer: (1) **“that person doesn't believe that scripture here,”** (2) **“nail in the coffin,”** and (3) **“All baptized believers...have the Indwelling of the Spirit.”**



If the writer, or anyone else, wants to believe in the personal indwelling of the Spirit, that is his business. However, when we point out that this indwelling is not a literal indwelling but a figure of speech or when we present a different view of a Personal Indweller's favorite passage, more than once he has falsely accused us, like the writer did, of failing to believe. With the writer's accusations in mind, we call attention to a few things.

First, (using the writer's language) we ask: “Do you believe Acts 8:15-16?” It declares that the baptized Samaritans who belong to Christ **did not have the Spirit**. The two apostles “prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.” Pretty clear. These were believers. These were baptized believers. These were baptized believers who did not have the Spirit.

Second, (using the writer's language) we ask: “Do you believe Acts 10:45?” This verse gives the example of a non-Christian who received the Spirit **before he believed and before he was baptized**. “And they of the circumcision that believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Actually, the example even more specifically says that this non-Christian received “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” However, according to the introduced writer's presentation, this cannot happen. He teaches that the Spirit was given to “all

baptized believers.” Cornelius was a non-believer in Jesus at the time he received the gift. He was a non-believer in Jesus who had not been baptized into Christ at the time he received the gift. How does a non-believer in Jesus who has not been baptized receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit?”

Third, (using the writer's language) we ask the writer: “Do you believe Romans eight which says, if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”? The declarations by Luke in Acts eight and Acts 10 refute the introduced writer's understanding of “the nail in the coffin Rom 8:9-16.” His “nail in the coffin” passage becomes “un-nailed” in Acts eight, because it shows that those who did belong to Christ **did not** have the Spirit Himself. How is that possible? Furthermore, our introduced writer's “nail in the coffin” becomes “un-nailed” in Acts 10, because Luke's words demonstrate that some who **did not** belong to Christ **did** indeed receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” How is that possible? It is not possible given the words of the text.

The words presented in Acts 8 and Acts 10, as read, disprove the introduced writer's doctrine. Will our writer now accuse himself, as he did of us, of not even being a Christian? No. He will simply seek an explanation that will fit his view to the statements in the verses and continue to denounce us. If he has a right to explain, so do we. We shall continue to teach and explain and point out the distinctions we see.

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Direct Spiritual Influence

R. L. Whiteside

The baptism of the Apostles in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was not for their special good; but it enabled them to be of service to others. They were baptized



in the Holy Spirit to enable them to fulfill their mission as apostles. Through them the Holy Spirit revealed the gospel, speaking, when occasion demanded it, in languages the apostles did not know. It seems that they did not always understand what the Spirit said through them. As God is not now calling and sending out apostles, no one is now baptized in the Holy Spirit. And yet it seems that some preachers talk more about “Holy Ghost baptism” than they do about Jesus the Christ. But the Holy Spirit, in His first sermon spoken through the apostles, preached Christ, and said nothing about “Holy Ghost baptism” or any other direct operation of the Spirit. Follow up the activities of the apostles and other inspired men, and you will see that these inspired men never told sinners that they could neither believe nor obey till regenerated by a direct work of the Holy Spirit. There is a striking difference between their preaching and much of the preaching of today. One wonders what would happen to the preacher and his hearers if in the midst of the sermon the Holy Spirit should suddenly take possession of the vocal organs of the preacher and do the preaching!

After the incidents of Acts 2 the next recorded sermon is found in Acts 3. When a lame man had been healed, a crowd came together. Peter preached to them, and again reminded them that they had killed the Christ. The Holy Spirit was speaking through Pe-

ter. He did not tell them they must have “Holy Ghost baptism” or must be regenerated by a direct work of the Spirit, or must be born of the Spirit; neither did he tell them they could do nothing. But he did say “Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.” If they did what the Holy Spirit commanded, they were led by the Holy Spirit.

Now read Stephen's speech in Acts 7. It is said of Stephen that he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.” “And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.” “And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:5, 8, 10). These verses show that Stephen had the power of the Holy Spirit upon him, and that the Holy Spirit spoke through him. His sermon was really a sermon spoken by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit depended on words to convict the people. In the sermon nothing was said about regeneration by a direct work of the Holy Spirit. It was said—“Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye.” And the next verse shows that their fathers resisted the Holy Spirit by persecuting and killing the prophets through whom the Spirit spoke; and the council was resisting the Holy Spirit in the same way. And they proceed to demonstrate the truth of Stephen's statement, for they proceeded at once to kill him. People resist the Holy Spirit by resisting his words, nor could they resist him in any other way. No man could resist a direct impact of Almighty Power.

Read Acts 8:1-13. When the disciples were driven out of Jerusalem by a great persecution, Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to the people. Nothing is said about the Holy Spirit regenerating the people to enable them to believe; but Luke does say, “But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Philip preached, the people believed, and were baptized. So far as the record shows the gospel was the only power brought to bear on them. The signs he performed attracted the attention of the people, and confirmed the preaching; but the preaching produced faith, and led to obedience. One thing is certain, and that is, these Samaritans had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, or received any direct operation of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized; they did not receive any direct operation of the powers of the Holy Spirit till some days later when Peter and John came down from Jerusalem and laid hands on them.

In the conversion of the eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) an angel told Philip to “go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza.” When he reached the designated point, there came into view a man of Ethiopia, the treasurer of the queen of Ethiopia. He was reading a portion of the prophet Isaiah. An angel had directed Philip to this point. Now the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” Philip said to the man, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” And he said, “How can I, except some one shall guide me?” Had Philip been imbued with the doctrine of total depravity he would have informed the eunuch that he could not understand what God says until he was regenerated, or made alive by a direct work of the Spirit; but fortunately Philip was under the influence of the Holy Spirit, not total depravity doctrine. So he guided the eunuch to an understanding by beginning from the scripture the eunuch was reading, and preaching to him Jesus, with such force and clearness that the eunuch said, “Behold, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” What hinders any to be baptized? Philip did not ask him, “Have you been regenerated by a direct work of the Spirit?” A lack of faith is the only thing that hinders anyone to be baptized. Philip had preached to him to produce faith; he believed and was baptized. Then he rejoiced.

Luke records the conversion of Saul in Acts 9:1; 19. Saul, or Paul, gives an account of his conversion in Acts 22:1-16; 26:1-19. The student should read and compare these three accounts. Equipped with letters of authority from the chief priests, Saul was on his way to Damascus to bring bound to Jerusalem all the disciples in that city. As he neared Damascus about noon a great light shone about him, so intensely bright that it blinded him and he fell to the earth. A voice said to him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest

thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goads.” And Paul said, “Who art thou, Lord?” He fell to the earth, because he knew he was in the presence of a heavenly being, though he did not know who it was. Back in the days when many of the denominations thought of conversion as a sort of convulsion, they said Saul was struck down. One preacher said, “Saul was knocked clean off his horse” (he was not riding). Recently a preacher said Saul was born again on the highway, because Paul said, “and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also” (1 Cor. 15:8). Now is there, can there be, such a thing as an untimely spiritual birth? The thought is absurd. The meaning is that the Lord's appearing to him was untimely. It had been a number of years since he had appeared in person to any one. He was not saved when he saw the light. It was not spiritual light shining in his heart—shone round about him a light brighter than the sun. If he were saved—born again—at that moment, he was saved before he knew the Lord, or even believed in him; for he said, “Who art thou, Lord?” Neither had he received the Holy Spirit; for in Damascus Ananias said to him, “Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” But one preacher recently said, “Ananias called Saul brother; he was a brother in Christ when Ananias came to him.” Such talk does not appear to be honest. Paul addressed as “brethren and fathers” the mob that had been trying to kill him (Acts 22:21). See also such passages as Acts 2:29, 37; 3:17; 7:2; 13:15; 26:38; 23:11, and other passages. Paul considered all Jews as his kinsmen and brethren. Neither the brilliant light nor Saul's blindness converted him, but that experience put him in a proper frame of mind to give heed to what he heard. He could not believe till the Lord said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” He believed, on that testimony—his faith came by hearing, and not by having it put into his heart by some mysterious operation. Then Saul said, “What shall I do, Lord?” The Lord said, “Arise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” Notice the emphatic **must do**. In the city he was three days without sight, and so great was his distress of mind that he neither ate nor drank. Ananias came and said to him, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.” “And he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened.” Only then was his mind at ease, and his heart glad. If he had been saved on the highway, he would have gone into Damascus happy, even though he was blind; but he went into the city dejected and sad, blind both physically and spiritually, and remained so till Ananias led him into the light.

In the case of Cornelius (Acts 10; 11:1-18) he was divinely guided to send for Peter. The angel said to Cornelius, “Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house.” While Peter spoke to Cornelius and those with him, the Holy Spirit fell on them with miraculous power; but that was not to save him, for they were to be saved by the words which Peter spoke to them. Peter told them what to do to be saved, and set motives before them to induce them to act. The Gospel is God's power to save, and that was the power that was brought to bear on them.

At Iconium Paul and Barnabas “entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake that a great multitude of Jews and of Greeks believed.” The miracles and signs performed through them confirmed the truthfulness of their preaching, but it was their preaching that caused many to believe (Acts 14:1-3). No matter how many other things may happen to a person, he cannot believe in Jesus Christ if he has never heard of him (Rom. 10:14-17).

And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there and she constrained us (Acts 16:13-15).

To get the whole story of Lydia's conversion in mind, consider some things that led up to Paul's preaching in Philippi. After leaving Iconium the Spirit of the Lord kept Paul and his company on a direct course to Troas. Here "a vision appeared to Paul in the night." There was work committed to them. These points are plainly stated in 2 Cor. 8:18-20. Christ's chosen ambassadors were acting on his behalf, persuading men to be reconciled to God. Said Jesus, "He that heareth you heareth me" (Luke 10:16). And Jesus sent Paul to open the eyes of people, and to turn them from darkness to light (Acts 26:16-18). Paul tells the Ephesians that they had formerly had the eyes of their heart enlightened (Eph. 1:18). Hence, to open the heart is to open the eyes of the heart. That was done by preaching, for that was the only way Paul could open the eyes of people. Lydia was a worshipper of God, but did not know Christ; through Paul's preaching Lydia's heart was opened. Before it is said that the Lord opened her heart, it is said that she "heard us." Denominational preachers assume that the Lord opened Lydia's heart by a direct operation of the Spirit, and a direct work of the Spirit; then why did not the Spirit operate on those who shamefully treated Paul and Silas? They certainly needed regenerating.

Notice Paul's work at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9). He preached three Sabbath days in the synagogue of the Jews, proving to them Jesus is the Christ. Notice verse 4: "And some of them were persuaded." His preaching persuaded them to obey the Gospel. They were not so depraved that they could not be persuaded to accept Jesus as the Christ. Christ gives life to those who come to him, and sinners are not so dead that they cannot come. On one occasion Jesus said to some dead sinners, "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:40). These people would not be persuaded to come to Christ, that they might have life; but many at Thessalonica were persuaded to come to Christ, that they might have life. They did not have life, and then come; they came, that they might have life.

Now read Acts 17:10-12). The Bereans "received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Many of them therefore believe." Notice the force of therefore. They believed because they received the word with all readiness of mind. They did not believe because they had received a direct work of the Spirit, but because they received the word of God.

Of Paul's labors at Corinth it is said, "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." The result is stated in verse 8: "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." To these Corinthians Paul preached Jesus as the Christ; he did not preach inherited depravity or the direct operation of the Spirit in regeneration. "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified...And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:2-4). "Demonstration of the Spirit and of power" was not an invisible operation, but a demonstration—a proof—that his preaching was from God. He conferred spiritual gifts and worked miracles. To this church he wrote, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor. 12:12). But these were demonstrations—proof—that Paul's preaching was from God, but only Paul's preaching gave life. "For though ye have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). That settles one thing—spiritual life was not generated in them by a direct operation of the Spirit.

Inspired preachers did not tell sinners that they were so depraved by nature that they could not obey the Gospel till they were made alive by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, or that they must first have an experience of grace, or that they must be baptized in the Holy Spirit. If they did, Luke failed to record it; yet it is the main burden of a lot of preaching these days. In fact, some preachers talk more about the Holy Spirit than about the Savior. The Holy Spirit in God's chosen preachers did not preach Himself, but Christ Jesus. In preaching through these chosen preachers, the Holy Spirit de-

pended on the Gospel to convert sinners; and He Himself said through Paul that the Gospel is God's power unto salvation.

A Timely Warning

Cled E. Wallace

Paul was suffering much anxiety of heart over the spiritual state of the Corinthian saints. "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears" (2 Cor. 2: 4). They were restless and threatening to break out of gospel bounds. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your



minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 3). Many today, even in the church, have "itching ears" for something more than the simplicity of the gospel. There is no prominent item of New Testament teaching which has not suffered because of the pious profanity of some religious busybody who imagined he could improve it somewhat. The simple gospel is still "foolishness" to many and "a stumblingblock" to others.

In the early days of the church the simple proclamation of the gospel led men and women to believe in Christ, repent of their sins, confess Jesus as Christ, and submit to baptism. They were then considered Christians, members of the body, the church. "But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." (Acts 8: 12.) "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." (Gal. 3: 26, 27.) "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof." (1 Cor. 12: 2'7.) These members of the body were associated together in various localities in independent "churches of Christ" for work and worship.

The organization was very simple. Each congregation had its "bishops and deacons" and members. Its mission was fulfilled in the simple program of edifying itself, looking after the needy, and preaching the gospel to the lost. The worship of God in these assemblies was so simple that we note the absence of all gaudy ceremonialism. It does not remind us of the "carnal ordinances" of either popery or Judaism. The New Testament does not mention "the holy sacrament" in discussing the Lord's Supper, nor is there any burning of incense or instrumental music in the prayer or praise of the New Testament churches. The simplicity of the New Testament order should be scrupulously observed by Christians today.

We are hearing too much about organizing Friday Night Clubs and Endeavor Societies and Ladies Aids and other symptoms of displeasure at the "simplicity and purity that is toward Christ." In some religious circles a man does not amount to much who is satisfied to be just a Christian and a normal member of a local congregation of others like him. A man with a New Testament who starts out to worship and obey God, serve his fellows, and finally reach heaven, will not find it a stunt-performing program. A lot of the frenzy and fuss of modern religion is a bid for the attention of men rather than the glory of God. The warning of Paul is still a timely one.

Is it is a Partisan Use of the Term?

What are you in religion? "I am a Christian." Is that a partisan use of that term? It is a New Testament term. It was not used in a partisan sense there. It is not so used now so long as you mean by it what was meant by it in the New Testament, all that was meant by it in the New Testament, and nothing less than was meant by it in the New Testament. Because of the divided condition of religious people, it may be necessary to explain with some care that Christians in the New Testament were the disciples of Christ, saints of God, and brethren in a common, spiritual family known as the church of God. What church do you belong to? "I am a member of the church of Christ." Is that a denominational use of a religious term? Not if you mean by it all and nothing less or

more than was meant by it in the New Testament. For obvious reasons it may be necessary to explain that the church of Christ in the New Testament was the body of Christ, which included all Christians. They were members of it because they were Christians, and Christians because they were members of it. God **added all the saved to the church**, when they were saved and because they were saved. There was no such thing as being saved and not being a member of the New Testament church. If our explanations do not go over, it is a good idea not to run the risk of becoming sectarian in an attempt to make the matter any plainer than the New Testament does. It would still be a pretty plain book if sectarian goggles had never been manufactured. Don't be afraid to say: "I am a Christian, and therefore a member of the church of Christ."

What is a Denomination?

There are hundreds of denominations in the United States. What is a denomination? You will get your information outside the New Testament. The simple order of the New Testament includes individual Christians made such by the preaching of the gospel. They all belonged to, were members of, "the church, which is his body," the church of the Lord. There were congregations of them in various localities. These local bodies had elders, deacons, and members. Christians were not much handicapped in New Testament times trying to wiggle around under official board piles. Sometime this side of the New Testament the idea of a religious body larger than a local church and smaller than the whole body of Christ took objective form. If some Christians were at liberty to thus organize themselves into a denominational ecclesiasticism then others could do likewise. It is named and organized after the order of a partisan brotherhood. It may be named after some man, as the Lutheran or Wesleyan denomination; or after some form of church government, as the Presbyterian denomination; or after some ordinance in religion, as the Baptist denomination; or carry the name of method, as the great Methodist denomination. But this is all contrary to the Scriptures.

God did not intend for any of His people to emphasize some truth above other truth and make it the creed of a partisan brotherhood. If so, then a man would have to be a member of all the denominations to be in possession of all properly emphasized truth. As it is, a man can take a New Testament, believe what it teaches, do what it commands, be just a Christian, and a member of nothing but the body of Christ, which includes all Christians, and not be a member of a denomination at all. It will not rob a denomination of its sinful character to make an adjective out of some Bible noun and call it the "Disciple Church" or the "Christian Church," or even apply to it the title, "Church of God" or "Church of Christ." The thing itself is wrong, regardless of what you call it; and if it is called by a Bible term, the term is misused. The only fool-proof way to steer clear of all denominational affiliations is to refuse to be anything but a New Testament "sort" of a Christian and refuse to belong to anything in religion but the body of Christ.

Christians were not classified and sorted after the order of their partisan preferences in New Testament times. In the nature of the case, denominationalism could never be right unless it should become *right* and consistent for all Christians to belong to *all* of them, and then, in the nature of the case, denominationalism would cease. If a man is satisfied with the New Testament in his faith and practice, no unscriptural terms will have to be invented to describe him, nor will it be necessary to use Scriptural terms in an unscriptural sense to do it. "Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 1: 13.)

"The Thing That Hath Been...": The Cycle of Apostasy

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How To Become A Christian

Ernest A. Finley

Even before the Lord ascended back to the Father and before the church of Christ had its beginning on Pentecost, Jesus announced the conditions upon which alien sinners were to receive the remission of their sins. These conditions are found in the great commission recorded by the Gospel writers. Mark records the words of the Lord in this manner, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Matthew also recorded this same commission but his record does not give us any additional information that will help us in determining how to become a Christian or how to receive the remission of sins. Luke's record throws further light on the conditions of pardon, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). Summarizing these thoughts, we learn that one must (1) believe on Jesus Christ, (2) repent of his sins, and (3) be baptized, in order to receive the remission of sins.

The apostles began to preach these conditions under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. The record of the events that transpired on that day are found in the second chapter of Acts. Peter was the principle spokesman. The bulk of his discourse was spent in an effort to establish faith in the hearts of those who were responsible for the death of the Lord. Jesus showed in his charge or commission to the apostles that he desired that they establish faith in men's hearts that he is the Son of God. Peter taught the Jews on that day, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). That Peter succeeded in his effort to establish faith in their hearts is seen in the fact that they were "pricked in their heart," as Luke tells us, "and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer to men who believed in Christ was that they should, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38). Thus the ordinances of faith, repentance and baptism were preached on that day just as Jesus desired that they should be. Peter promised that those who complied with these conditions would receive remission of sins as Jesus had promised. Three thousand people believed what Peter and the other apostles taught on that day and were baptized.

Laboring under the same commission to preach the gospel to every creature, Philip, the evangelist, went down to Samaria and preached the gospel to the Samaritans. Luke tells us that the Samaritans, just as had the Jews, believed his words and were baptized, "But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Again, the same evangelist, by a special order from the angel of the Lord, went down to the road that led from Jerusalem unto Gaza and preached the gospel to the eunuch who was returning to his home in Ethiopia after having gone to Jerusalem to worship God. The eunuch, in time, requested baptism at the hands of Philip, saying, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" When Philip was satisfied that the eunuch believed in Christ, he took him down into the water and baptized him (Acts 8:38). We can be assured that the eunuch as well as the Samaritans received pardon for their sins when they complied with the conditions that the Lord had set forth. The record shows that they believed in Christ and were baptized in obedience to his will.

One of the greatest enemies of the cause of Christ in the early days of its existence was Saul of Tarsus. Though it is true that he was bitter in his opposition to the church of the Lord and in his persecution of God's children, still the Lord, knowing his heart, looked upon him as a man of sincerity. As Paul made his way to Damascus in pursuit of Christians, the Lord appeared to him. The Lord's appearance to Saul did not save him. In fact, the Lord did not appear to Saul for the purpose of saving him on the road

to Damascus. Rather, he appeared to Saul that he might be an eye-witness of the resurrected Lord. In other words, he appeared to Saul to qualify him to become an apostle. That Saul was not saved then is evidently seen in the fact that the Lord instructed him to go into the city of Damascus and there he should learn what he must do to be saved. Then the Lord appeared to Ananias who was also a resident of Damascus and instructed him to go to Saul. When he came to Saul, the Lord having delayed three days in sending this messenger, he found Saul, blind, fasting and praying. There can be no question that Saul recognized the Lord on the way to Damascus. Certainly there is sufficient evidence for us to know that Saul was a penitent man, that he was genuinely sorry for his sin. Still, Luke's record shows that this man had not at this point received forgiveness for his sin. The reason was that he had not met all the conditions of pardon that are set forth by the Lord. It was for this very purpose that Ananias was sent to him, that he might learn what he "must do." Ananias instructed Saul, and this statement shows beyond any reasonable doubt that Saul was yet in his sin, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Saul did exactly what the Lord had said that one must do when he gave the commission. He believed on Christ; he repented of his sins; and he was baptized to wash his sin away. Certainly, it was not the element of water that washed his sin away. But it was by that act that he was initiated into Christ and in that act he reached the blood of Christ or the benefits of Christ's death. Paul later wrote, "Or are ye ignorant that all we (notice: **we**) who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (Rom. 6:3). Thus, Paul was not in Christ until he met the Lord's condition of baptism. This was baptism predicated upon faith and repentance.

Some would point to the salvation of the man afflicted with palsy or the thief on the cross as examples of forgiveness of alien sins. But these people to whom Christ gave pardon while on earth were not aliens in the same sense that sinners are today. They were Jews. They were of the commonwealth of Israel, thus in covenant relationship with God under the law that was then binding on them. Baptism was not an ordinance in the law of Moses.

God did not require it of them in observance of the Mosaic law. Further, the will of Christ was not then effective for he had not died. No will becomes effective until the man that wrote it died. Before a man's death, he may bestow his blessings in whatever manner he wishes. But after his death his blessings can be bestowed only on the conditions specified in his will. It cannot be changed. Before his death, Christ could bestow favors on any conditions he desired. Since he has died, his will now effective, he bestows favors only on the conditions of his will. The conditions now are faith, repentance and baptism. We must meet those conditions to receive his grace. This is what constitutes one a member of Christ's church. This is how one becomes a Christian.

Suicide

(Exodus 20:13)

There is a murder of another kind that is rapidly increasing in our nation—self-murder, or suicide. There have unbelievers in all ages who have defended suicide as a justifiable means of release from disappointments and hardships of life. However, thinking men, as far back as Aristotle, have, as a rule, condemned it as cowardly and unjustifiable under any or all conditions.

No man has any more right to take his own life than the life of another. God's ancient people, the Jews, have always considered length of days as a great blessing. Strangely enough, the Bible does not mention one single instance of a righteous man taking his own life. This is worthy of consideration. In the 4,000 years of Old Testament history, only four suicides are recorded—Saul king of Israel, and his armor bearer, Ahithopel, and Zimri. In the New Testament history, only one suicide is recorded—Judas. (*The Minister's Monthly*, Vol. IX, No. 6, Feb., 1964).

Links to Bible Study Resources

The Scripture Cache

Northpoint church of Christ

Precept Upon Precept You Tube

Spiritual Perspectives - Gary Summers

False Doctrines of Man

Yukon, Okla. church of Christ

Berea church of Christ, Rives, TN

South Seminole church of Christ

The Terror of the Lord

N.B. Hardeman

One of the most encouraging things at all is to see manifested on the part of intelligent men and women that disposition to hear, plainly put, what is conceived to be, at least by an honest heart, the word of God.

I want to talk to you quietly, if I may be able, from 1 Cor. 5:11, where Paul said: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."



I am quite certain that there is something wrong somewhere in our conception or consideration of those things that really are sacred, solemn, and serious. There are too many people in the world intelligent about all other matters, but are still indifferent toward Christianity. Somehow or other, the preachers of the country have not impressed upon humanity the solemnity of passing into the presence of the Lord. I do not know but that we may have a misconception, very largely, of Jehovah. Perhaps our indifference, our lack of response to the gospel call, our failure to blend ourselves in harmony with God's will, is due to the fact that we overestimate God's love, his goodness, and his mercy.

I know that, as a matter of fact, you can take too much for granted, you can extend your privileges too far on account of the fact that you misjudge the limitations of the other party's extension of goodness and mercy; but in making that statement I would not have anybody think that I want to narrow, limit, or make finite either the love, mercy, or goodness of Jehovah.

I know that the Bible in John 3:16-17 says: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

I know that we read in the Bible that "God is love," and that we magnify the kindly attributes of Jehovah. Do you suppose that some people think that because of God's matchless and wonderful love he will overlook our indifference, our simple mindedness, and just somehow or other, prompted by love Divine, in spite of our disobedience, will at last bear us home to glory and give us a blissful crown at his right hand ?

Perhaps you might rely too much upon that one attribute and characteristic. I have

read in Holy Writ quite a bit of the mercy of God, and I know that he is a merciful character; that one of the paramount attributes of his nature is that of mercy, favor, and grace unto the children of men. Maybe, however, that in my unconcern and failure to respond to duty's demand I am blind and deluded by the idea that out of God's mercy, in spite of our failure to obey him, God will take me home at last. I may speak too much and rely too strongly upon God's mercy, love, and goodness.

I remember that David said (and we ought to learn this passage) in Psalm 103:17-18 "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting [note now] upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

Now, God's mercy "is from everlasting to everlasting," but "upon them that fear him"—not upon any others, but "upon them that fear him"—"and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

I want to say to you, my friends, that any character that can love can also hate. Any character that has the attribute of mercy also must have the antithetic quality and characteristic of vengeance, wrath, and anger. While you are relying upon God's goodness, mercy, and love, don't forget that God hates some things, that God's anger may be kindled, that God's wrath may be provoked; and hence Paul, in contemplation of the fact, said in our text: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord." Paul on various occasions emphasizes other attributes, but he said: "Gentlemen, I know God's terror as well as God's love. I know God's anger as well as his mercy. I know God's wrath as well as his goodness."

Now, when you come to balance the whole proposition, I want to say to you that the man that will walk the golden streets of that celestial city is not only the one that is the beneficiary of God's love, goodness, and mercy, but he is the one also that with love obeyed God's will, thereby enabling Jehovah to uphold the law of high Heaven and to command respect for the highest authority known to mortal man.

My friends, there are two books in the world of which Jehovah is the equal author—the book of nature and the book styled the "Bible," or "Revelation." In both of these opposite traits of divinity have been pictured. Where is the man so blind that cannot look out upon the natural world and see the evidences of God's goodness on every hand? Why, the earth out of which we came and from which we get our support is kind and good to mortal man. I look beyond the realm thereof and unto the bending blue of heaven's expanse and recognize that the worlds that float about tonight are but the handiwork of highest heaven evidencing God's goodness to mankind. I look upon the surface of Mother Earth and see it at this time of the year clad in its velvet carpet of green. I have watched even to-day the budding and bursting forth of the fruitage of the earth, the beautiful, sweet-scented flowers, and the atmosphere made vocal with the voice of birds. What for? To brighten and cheer humanity on their rapid march from time to eternity. I have looked out upon the splendid hillsides of this most beautiful section of our State and watched the cattle grazing upon the blue grass there. I have watched the sheep likewise feasting upon the goodness of God. In digging down beneath the surface of Mother Earth we find an unlimited supply of mineral wealth and other resources that may be used for the benefit of mankind. All these things are evidences of God's goodness as revealed in the book of nature. I have seen men to-day turning up the surface of Mother Earth, plowing to make it ready for the seed to be put into the bosom thereof, and by and by the grain shall be cast; and then the ripened fruit will be ours upon which to feast during the coming fall and cold, bleak days of next winter. Wonderful world in which we live, evidences of God's goodness on every hand! And yet I must not depend altogether on that.

I have seen, in passing by, some storm houses some places of refuge. Why, the man that built those was not ignorant of the phenomena of nature. He not only recognized that God in the natural world is a character of goodness and mercy, but there are evidences of his terror likewise about us. I have read of the old cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum that were buried by a great volcanic eruption. I have read of the great earth-

quakes which have sunk beneath the surface of the earth men and women, boys and girls, infants and sucklings—all. I have read of the terrific floods that have rushed down and baptized entire cities and swept them from the face of the earth. I have heard the thunder's roar and have seen the lightning's flash uproot mighty trees and rend into splinters the giants and monarchs of the forest. What about all of it? It is but the evidence of God's terror as turned loose in the natural world.

I can appreciate the sunshine and the showers, but am not unmindful of the gathering storm and the oncoming cyclone, the rapid approach of the terrible hurricane that is likely to sweep us away unless we are able to hold ourselves safely behind the sheltering rock. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord."

Well, in the Bible, God's other book, I learn of his wonderful goodness. No man can read the story of the creation but that he is filled with appreciation and genuine gratitude because of the fact that God has made such a beautiful world, that he decorated and adorned it with a master's touch. Finally, from the very dust of the earth man was created and made to bear the impress of divinity upon his brow and the very stamp of God's image upon his heart. For him who was thus honored Jehovah said, "I will make for thee a helpmeet for life;" and then the fitting climax of handiwork—"a radiant gem, a jewel rare," the brightest, fairest, dearest and best—was brought into existence for the comfort, happiness, and joy of man. What about all that? It was God's wonderful goodness unto humanity, and throughout the sixty centuries of history there are evidences on every hand of the extended favors and continued mercies granted and proposed for our acceptance.

But the greatest exhibition of the love of Heaven was manifested, not through the Old Testament regime, not by the sacrifices on Jewish altars, not by the offering of he lambs and bullocks and heifers that characterized their service, but in the giving of Him who was to be the great sacrifice of the world. The Son of God left the realms of bliss above and came to earth to suffer, sorrow, and sigh. He came to teach the way of life and to be an example in whose footsteps all should follow. All this is an exhibition of the mighty love and mercy of God. At last, his work on earth being finished, he yielded to the demands of a bloodthirsty mob and was crucified upon that rugged cross for the salvation of the race. He was buried in a borrowed tomb, but by the power of Jehovah Divine he burst its bars and came forth on the third morning, thus gaining the victory triumphant over the powers of the Hadean world. He brought life and immortality to light. When the facts of the gospel had come to pass and the great commission was announced, he sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth; and thus again his goodness, mercy, and love were manifested to all the world.

Paul, the peerless apostle, would not minimize that. He would not have you depend less upon God's goodness, upon his love, and upon his mercy; yet in the text to-night Paul said: "Brethren, I know the terror of the Lord. I know God's vengeance. I am acquainted with his wrath and with the fact that his anger may be kindled. In view of God's terror, wrath, and vengeance, I persuade my fellows. I am not pleading with God or Jehovah. I am not persuading Christ. I am not persuading the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit hath revealed in completeness the scheme of redemption. Instead of all that, I persuade men."

Do you think that Paul was persuading in his own behalf? Do you think his pleadings indicated his inferiority? Was it for lack of something else to do? Was such action on his part a recognition of his inability to measure arms with any other man of his day? Certainly, certainly not. He was without a peer in intellect and in education, in birth and possibilities.

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he bath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus

my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead (Phlm 3:4-11).

Notwithstanding all this, Paul knew God's attributes and Heaven's characteristics. He, therefore, consecrated and dedicated his life to the persuading of men to be and to become what they ought to be.

Commencing with the very first pair in paradise and continuing on down the stream of human generations, the terror of God is seen on every side. Grandfather Adam disobeyed God's law, refused to submit to Heaven's authority, and though he stood created in God's image as our federal head, God said: "Adam, my terror must be exhibited. Inasmuch as you have disobeyed one commandment, you will have to pass outside of this beautiful paradise." Man must learn respect for order, for law, and for supreme authority. Why? It is for our good and for our ultimate happiness. All and each of- us must learn the lesson of submission, of subjection, and of obedience.

When Cain rose up in the heat of passion and slew his brother Abel, a mark of God's terror and wrath came upon him.

A visitation of God's wrath came upon the ante-deluvians because they refused to respect God's word as spoken through Noah. God demonstrated his terror in that he sent—not the great Johnstown, Penn. flood, nor that of Galveston, Texas, but he sent a great world-wide flood that swept all beings from the earth in whose nostrils was the breath of life. What was that? It was but an exhibition of the terror of God Almighty.

When old Achan laid his hand upon the gold and silver of Jericho, and thus willfully violated the law, God said unto Joshua: "Stone that man. Get rid of him. He must not continue. Israel cannot succeed. Their backs will be turned to the enemy unless you rid yourself of such." The result was that Achan was stoned with stones until he was pronounced dead, as an evidence of God's terror, vengeance, and wrath.

When the Israelites, who carried the sacred ark of the covenant to engage with the Philistines in battle, met with defeat because of the lack of faith in God, the Philistines wrested the ark and carried it down toward the seacoast unto Ashdod. As a result, God's wrath fell upon the Philistines, and they became anxious to get rid of this holy article found in their midst. They made a new cart on which to move it. This was a thing unknown for such a purpose. They tied to this cart two kine; and when all was ready, they started, lowing as they passed along down the way, and at last they came to the town of Beth-shemesh. The Israelites took charge of the ark of God and offered the kine for a sacrifice. David, being king of the nation, called a conference of the leaders thereof, and said: "Sirs, shall we send down now for the ark, or shall we not?" And with one voice they all said: "Send and fetch it." Now watch. David surely understood what God's law was regarding the handling of the ark; but, not content to do what God had told him, not satisfied with remaining faithful and loyal unto the old book, David said: "These Philistines have gotten up a pretty good scheme. Instead of carrying the ark on the poles, on the shoulders of the Israelites, the Philistines have showed me a new plan." So he likewise made him a cart, hitched oxen thereto, and told his two nephews, Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab: "Go down to the house of Abinadab, and there bring the ark up on this cart." As they came on the way, in disobedience every step to the will and to the word of God, what happened? They had come to Nachon's threshing floor, and the Bible says one of the oxen stumbled and the cart shook. Uzzah put forth his hand to stay the ark, but because he did so the record says that God slew him. He died by the ark as a testimony to passers-by that every transgression and disobedience must receive a just recompense of reward.

Then what? David was wonderfully disturbed. There has been a breach made upon Uzzah. So the ark was turned aside in the house of Obed-edom, and there it stayed for three months. After coming to himself and seeing the folly of man's wisdom and ways,

he said: "Brethren, I understand why God killed my nephew. It was because we did not bring the ark as he had directed. I know now what to do." Well, what is it, David? "Let's just cut loose from man-made machinery and quit trying to pattern after the ungodly Philistines. You Levites go and bring the ark on your shoulders, as the Lord has said. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for we sought him not after the due order." And the record says that David got busy to do so after the due order.

My friends, it is a dangerous proposition to vary from the old landmarks. You may put it down as "old fogey;" you may say it is "antiquated;" you may call it a "back number" all you please; but hear it: when the everlasting terror, vengeance, and wrath of God Almighty shall come to pass, I have an idea that those only will stand accepted in God's presence who have stuck to the old landmarks and followed in due order. When a breach is made upon us, some one will say: "It is because we patterned after the Philistines. We have tried to have us a cart on which to carry the ark instead of carrying it as God directed." The "pole fashion" may be out of date, but our hope of reaching heaven at last depends upon it.

It is not in man that lives and that moves to direct his own steps. I am traveling toward that city. I am but a stranger and a pilgrim upon the earth. I have never been over the way. It is not mine to outline it. I trust that evermore I shall have that spirit of humility and submission to our Lord to say: "Speak, I will hear; command, I will obey." I propose not to be wise above that "which is written," for I know God's terror, God's wrath, and God's vengeance unto the children of men.

But I call your attention to this fact: Just before Paul made the statement of our text to-night he had this to say in 2 Cor. 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

I have heard the story that Daniel Webster was once asked while a member of the United States Senate: "Mr. Webster, what is the most solemn, sacred, serious thought that you have ever entertained?" With just a moment's reflection, Mr. Webster said, in substance: "The most serious proposition that ever challenged my attention is the thought that I must appear before the God of my being and give an account for the deeds that I do while in the body, whether they be good or bad."

Friends, have you treated this matter lightly, or have you really studied the proposition? Are you passing through life like a bubble, in frivolity, in fun, and in foolishness? Are you upon the surface, lightly tripping away, headed for eternity unprepared? Or have you halted and seriously considered whither you are going?

Paul says: "I know that men must give an account. I know God's terror. And to keep my fellows from being subjected unto the consequences of a disobedient career, I persuade them all of my days."

I have called your attention to that wonderfully varied, checkered, and dangerous career through which the apostle passed—the trials that he withstood, the journeys that he made, and the difficulties that beset him in his extended journeys into the foreign land. He carried the gospel of salvation, the tidings of joy, and the beacon light of God to guide the footsteps of his fellows unto the halcyon fields of eternal bliss. As he returned from one of these eventful tours, he said to his brethren at Ephesus: "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God...I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." Why, Paul? "I know the terror of the Lord. I know God's attributes. I know Heaven's vengeance. I know that God will recompense. I know that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for God will judge his people; and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where O. where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" But Paul said: "Brethren, I persuade men." To what intent? I answer that by a concrete example. When he stood in the presence of King Agrippa, presumably to make a speech in his own behalf, he forgot himself and his own interests. He rehearsed his own conversion and turned to the preaching of Jesus Christ to a descendant of old Herod the Great. In the final climax of this address I learn what Paul persuaded men to do when

he said: “King Agrippa, believes thou the prophets? I know that thou believes.” And the old king, trembling, said: “Paul, almost thou persuades me to be a Christian.”

What was Paul persuading men to do? Not to vote for him nor to advance his personal interests; but he was spending his time in persuading men to become and to be Christians. And I think it honorable to-night, I rather magnify my opportunity, to follow in the steps of this matchless man of God. He persuaded men to become Christians—not to pretend nor appear, but to be. There is a difference, friends, between appearing and being. Almost thou hast persuaded me to be a genuine, a real, and a true Christian.

I would to God to-night that all those who love to wear his name and who love to sit under the sound of the glad gospel of Christ were really Christians—not just simply “big-meeting folks,” not simply Christians while the fever is on and the excitement up, but every day in the year—on Monday, when there is no preaching, as well as on Sunday when the multitude is assembled and the gospel proclaimed. There are too many people all over the country that are professors only.

When the king said, “Almost thou persuadeth me to be a Christian,” Paul replied: “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” My friends, that is the philosophy and that is the principle. Why? That the world may escape the terror and the vengeance of Jehovah.

We are rushing toward the judgment. After a while the rains will come, the floods will descend, and the winds will blow and beat upon our tabernacle. I wonder if it will stand.

Hearing and doing, we build on the rock; Hearing alone, we build on the sand.

Both will be tried by the storm and the flood. Only the rock the trials will stand.

Now, having talked long enough this Saturday night, I am glad to extend you the gospel call again. I appeal to you to-night, my friends, not only to appreciate God's love and mercy, and goodness, but likewise respect his wrath, his anger, and his terror. Though God's mercy is extended, his dignity and authority must be upheld and his law and order respected.

Hence, I am saved to-night, if saved at all, by the mercy of God, and at the same time by respect for his word and reverence for his truth.

If you would enjoy the goodness and mercy of God and escape his terror, you must yield in submission to his will. All who are willing to do so are invited to come.

A Bible Question For You...

See if you can find the following in your Bible: **A Community Church, The Nazarene Church, A Cowboy Church, The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church, The Pentecostal Church, The Lutheran Church, The Roman Catholic Church, The Christian Church, The Assembly of God, The Mormon Church, The Episcopal Church, The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, or The Presbyterian Church.**

If you cannot find them in the Bible, why are you remaining in a church that God will root up? **“But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13) Every single church listed above will be consigned to hell on The Judgment Day.** Those churches are abominations, founded by men—not God. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain” (Psa. 127:1).

The Second Coming of Christ

Fred E. Dennis

We know that Christ is coming again. There are many reasons why we know this. First, he himself said so. “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 14:3). This language was uttered by Christ to the apostles the night of his betrayal.



Again, we know that Christ is coming again because the angels say so. “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). This language was addressed to the apostles by two angels at the ascension of Christ.

And yet again, we know that Christ is coming again because inspired apostles say so. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:6-8). This was written by the inspired Paul to the church of the Thessalonians.

When is he coming? There has been much speculation and wild guessing along this line. Many dates have been set. These dates have come and gone, but Jesus has not come. What does this prove? It proves that men know nothing “of that day and that hour.” When God says that men don’t know that ought to settle it. “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). We ought to thank God that Christ is coming again, and we ought to thank him that we know not the time of his coming. No doubt there are reasons as high as heaven why the time has not been revealed.

We know not the time of his coming, but we do know something about how he is coming. We have already learned from Acts 1: 11 that he is coming as he went. This being true he is coming in the clouds of heaven. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” (Rev. 1:7).

What will take place at His coming? Here the floodgates of speculation have been torn down! But let us see what the scriptures say. Let us read slowly and carefully:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4: 13-18)

This makes it pretty plain relative to what is going to happen when the Lord returns. The dead are to be wakened, and “then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” Yes, we are going to “be caught up together,” and all meet the Lord at the same time. What about that word “first”? “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” That is, the ones who are living shall not precede the ones who are dead. No two resurrections with a thousand years or so between taught in this passage.

When Jesus comes again the dead will be raised, and all shall be judged. In the last

chapter that Paul ever wrote we hear him saying this, “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” (2 Tim. 4:1). What did Paul say Jesus was going to do at his “appearing”? He said he was going to “judge the quick and the dead.” How would you state this more plainly? If he didn’t mean what he said, why didn’t he say what he meant?

In Matt. 25:31-46 we have Jesus telling about the judgment “when the Son of man shall come in his glory.” Yes, and he says that at this judgment the “sheep” and the “goats” both will be there! The righteous will be rewarded with eternal life, and the wicked will be punished with eternal damnation. Jesus uses the same word to describe the duration of hell that he uses to describe the duration of heaven. When Jesus comes that will be the end of time. The gates of time shall be closed, and the doors of eternity opened. May God help us to be ready for the second coming of Christ. My reader, are you a Christian?

Does it Matter?

Nathan Brewer

Have you ever thought about the sin that Adam and Eve committed? All they did was eat some fruit, yet they died spiritually and God banished them from paradise.

God had told them that they could eat the fruit of every tree in the Garden of Eden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17).

If Adam and Eve couldn’t eat the fruit, why did God even allow the tree in their midst? Because God allows man to be tempted to sin, even though He does not want us to sin.

But what was so special about that fruit that God didn’t want them eating it anyway? It was just fruit. If eating fruit is not inherently wrong, why did Adam and Eve lose fellowship with God just by taking a bite?

Because God said not to.

It has never been enough for man to just believe in God. We have to believe what He says. We have to take Him at His word.

God tested Adam and Eve’s faith. They failed the test, and it cost them their association with God.

What about today?

Jesus says that believers have to be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). Peter says believers have to be baptized to have their sins forgiven (Acts 2:38).

Sometimes people will ask if God would really allow someone who believes in Jesus to be lost forever just because he had not been baptized.

That’s like asking if God would really allow someone to be lost just for eating a piece of fruit.

Because we’re human, we tend to grade each other, and ourselves, loosely. But God has higher expectations. On Judgment Day, we won’t be graded based on our own standards—we’ll be judged in righteousness (Acts 17:31), based on the word of Christ (John 12:48).

Jesus paints a frightening picture in Matthew 7:21-23 of believers being turned away from heaven. Could these be people who thought believing in Him was enough, but who didn’t believe what Jesus actually said about how to be saved?

I may not know exactly why God wants sinners to be baptized in order to be saved, but that’s what He says. Do you take Jesus at His word? Don’t wait until Judgment Day to find out that it really mattered.

**Download “The Thing That Hath Been...” Vol. 1,
Or Read It At: www.thegospelpreceptor.com**

Before following any advice, it is better to find out the character of him who gives the advice and what possible interest he may have in out following his advice.

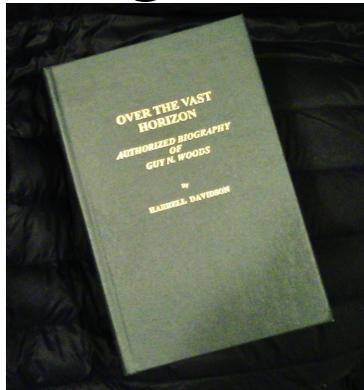
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From the things we learn from God's dealings with the nations, it can be safely said that no nation falls so long as it serves a purpose in God's plans. That was anciently, and it is true today.

If you squeamish about denouncing false teachers, read Jeremiah. If you think people are so hardened in sin that they hate you for preaching the word, read Jeremiah. A careful study of Jeremiah is good tonic. —R.L. Whiteside—

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By Jerry C. Brewer

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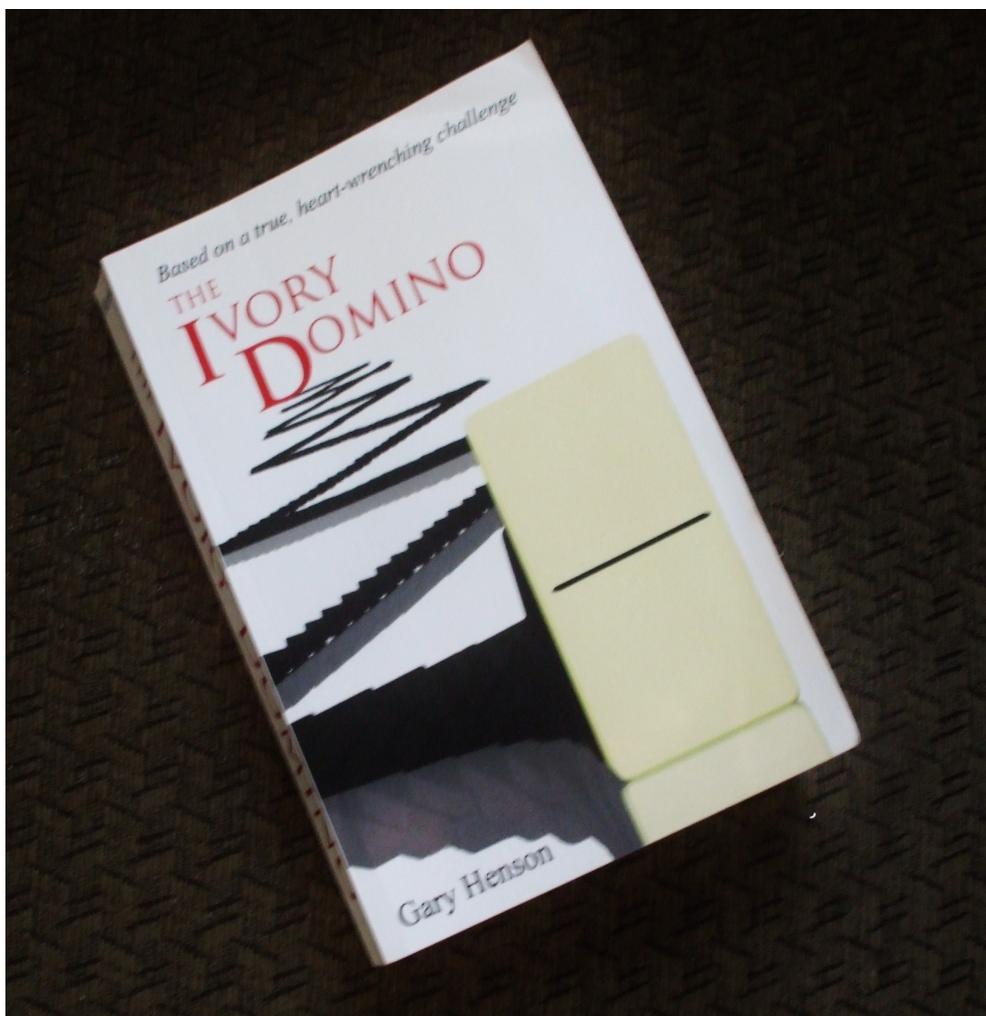
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Jerry C. Brewer
Editor & Publisher
The Gospel Preceptor