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THE
Quarterly
VOL. 1 NO. 3

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Shepherding
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Sheep

The Truly
Liberated Woman

The Restoration
Principle and
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The Quarterly

Editor:

Bradley S. Cobb

Regular Contributors
(in alphabetical order):

**Jamie Beller
Gantt Carter
Gerald Cowan
Kyle Frank
Perry Hall
Bill Howard
William Howard
Joseph McWhorter
Mark McWhorter
Jim Mitchell
Roderick Ross
Jake Schotter
Devin Self
James Sims Sr.**

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Cobb Publishing
(479) 747-8372

www.TheCobbSix.com
Bradley.Cobb2@gmail.com

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THREE IS A MAGIC NUMBER...

Welcome once again to another issue of *The Quarterly*, probably the *only* brotherhood magazine which has appeared in the top .05% of sellers on Amazon (not that I track that stuff or anything...). Sorry we are a couple weeks late getting this out, but I hope it is worth the wait. In this issue, we've got a lot of great things in store for you, such as:

Interview: There is a lot of encouragement to be gained from listening to faithful Christians. Jim Mitchell takes the time to sit down with Lewis Hale and discuss things that brother Hale has seen in the last six decades.

Get to Know the Books: A brand-new feature, this section gives a brief introduction to some of the books of the Bible—with contributions by three different writers, covering Matthew, John, and Haggai (bet you didn't expect that combination!).

Elders: A couple years ago, several preachers volunteered to submit chapters for a book covering many aspects (some not even touched elsewhere) of elders, their struggles, their qualifications, and their work. Due to life, time, and other considerations, some of these men were unable to complete their chapters. But there were several others whose submissions have been begging to see the light of day. So we are obliging! Darryl Wingo writes on desiring the work, while Scott Wiley covers the intriguing topic: "The Shepherds and 'Flock-Hopping' Sheep." In addition, Jamie Beller has returned to write on "Shepherding the Flock: Learning from the Chief Shepherd," which serves as a sequel of sorts to the cover article from our first issue.

Obscure Bible Characters: There are many people in the Bible who are only named once or twice—if they're even "named" at all. But in this issue, you get to learn more about some of these unheralded men and women of the Bible.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to read *The Quarterly*. And please take a look at the people advertising in this issue, and take advantage of the services that they offer.

Some people have asked why we don't have a mailing address in our information box (the left side of this page). It's because we haven't moved into our new house yet, and we don't want to have different addresses this issue and next. If you have comments, questions, or want to subscribe for yourself or someone else, you can send us mail at: Cobb Publishing; 444 Leavell Lane; Dover, AR 72837. Of course, by the time the next issue comes out, we will have moved, but my in-laws (whose address I just gave you) will be happy to pass the mail on to us.

Bradley S. Cobb
Editor

WHAT TO FIND AND WHERE TO FIND IT

(A.K.A. the *Contents of the Quarterly*)

Editorial: House Hunting and Flock-Hopping

Bradley S. Cobb6

Exceeding Great and Precious

Bill Howard7

“Each Day I’ll Do a Golden Deed...”

Travis Anderson8

What is Your Hobby?

Devin Self10

Visits with Seasoned Ministers: Lewis Hale

Interview by Jim Mitchell14

How Suddenly is “Suddenly”?

Jim Mitchell16

Biblical Biography: Silas

Bradley S. Cobb18

The Woman Who Anointed Jesus

Richard Mansel23

Mnason The “Old Disciple”

Mark McWhorter24

A Truly Liberated Woman — Lydia

Jake Schotter25

The Eternal Purpose of God: Race Relations in the Church

Jeremie Beller29

Forgery and Faith

William Howard31

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK: *Desiring the Work*

Darryl Wingo33

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK: “Flock-Hopping” Sheep

Scott P. Wiley35

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK: *Learning From The Chief Shepherd*

Jamie Beller42

The Quarterly

Vol. 1, No. 3

July, 2017

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the contents thereof are
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WALKING THE WALK:

APPLYING THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE TO INFANT BAPTISM

Bruce Daugherty..... 47

Quotes and Anecdotes 52

Tabernacle Shadows: The Pillar of Cloud

Mark McWhorter..... 53

Adventures in Benevolence

John Krivak..... 57

What I Now Know as an Octogenarian

Gerald Cowan..... 59

Seasons and Eternal Day

Gerald Cowan..... 61

Meditating on Doubt and Faith

Joseph T. McWhorter 63

Overcoming Temptation II: 1 John 2:15-17

Gantt Carter 66

Starting Your Ministry

James Sims Sr. 69

An Introduction to Matthew

Mark McWhorter..... 72

“These have been Written so that You may Believe”

Jake Schotter 73

“Hey Guy, What Did You Say?”

Stephen Scaggs 75

On a Pirate Ship

William Howard..... 78

Bible Reading and Bible Study

Kyle D. Frank 79

Honor Your Parents when Young *and* Old

Perry Hall 81

Paul Darst: A Novel

D.R. Lucas..... 87

Bible Q&A: What about the “Lost Books of the Bible?”

Bradley S. Cobb..... 93

About the Authors 95

What do you think?

We are always interested in hearing from our readers about things they would like to see in the Quarterly.

We have a lot of things planned, themes to cover, series to present, topics to delve into—but we would really like to know what *you* want to read.

We’ve got a great staff of writers, and several contributors who I’m sure can cover just about any topic or theme that you can throw our way.

Please give us your input.

Bradley.Cobb2@gmail.com

(479) 747-8372

444 Leavell Lane

Dover, AR 72837

Editorial:

HOUSE HUNTING AND FLOCK-HOPPING

House hunting is fun...until it isn't.

Two months ago, the church in Charleston, AR, asked us to come work with them. We have been driving 90 minutes (one way) to services each Sunday and Wednesday, because we don't have a house yet. We made the decision that we were not going to just settle on whatever was available, but would find a house that would work for our family, and be a house we can enjoy.

Here we are, two months later, without a house. We found a house with a phenomenal view, but it wasn't big enough for our family of six. We found an amazing house with plenty of room, but it was at the top end of our budget and 30 minutes from the church building (and the sellers weren't in the mood to negotiate). We found a house in town that was big enough, but it has some work that needs to be done to make it livable. In short, it seems there is no "perfect house." In one way or another, we are going to have to "settle" on one by giving up something that we were really hoping for.

Looking for a congregation is the same way. I've met people who move into an area, and who start looking for a congregation that is the "perfect fit" for them. They stay with one for a while, maybe even placing membership, and then leave because the congregation 15 minutes away has a bigger youth group. Then they leave that congregation a few months later because the bigger church 30 minutes away won't ask them to do anything or be involved. (Yes, this is a true story.) They keep looking for the "perfect congregation." The problem is, there is no perfect congregation, because they are all made up of people—none of whom are perfect. We all have our "wish list" for a local congregation: faithful, active, loving, growing, with a good number of well-behaved godly youth, and actual qualified elders guiding the congregation without the slightest shred of egotism. I'm sure there's more that could be added to that list, but congregations very rarely meet up with this ideal list.

Instead of jumping from church to church, looking for that imaginary "perfect congregation," why not realize that they all have faults, areas to improve, and work *with* one of them to try to elevate their effectiveness with the gospel? Obviously, there are times when you simply *can't* stay at a certain congregation because of something happening there which is either sinful or causes you to not be able to worship God in spirit and in truth. But that isn't the norm. These congregations need you. You can be a great asset to the local body of Christ. So find a congregation and do your part to make it the best it can be.

[Update: since writing this editorial, we have officially started the process of buying the house in town, to be able to be right in the community and within walking distance of the church building, the library, and Sonic.]

-Bradley S. Cobb

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Exceeding Great and Precious

By Bill Howard

Exceeding:

To surpass, outstanding, supreme, immeasurable, extraordinary, amazing, vast.

Great:

Immense, colossal, mammoth, stupendous, boundless, prodigious, tremendous.

Precious:

Priceless, dear, inestimable, valuable, costly, choice.

Descriptive words relating to the meaning of exceeding, great, and precious are innumerable. It is easy to think of many dozens more that will expand on the intent of the words of the inspired Apostle Peter in his second general epistle. "According as His (God's) divine power has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:3-4a).

A promise is a pledge, a vow, a troth, an oath, a covenant, a guarantee. In this passage of scripture, Peter is counseling Christians to be fully aware of what God has provided for each of us in the sacrifice of our Savior. In his first epistle, he wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

He has promised to give us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. Everything we need in this life and all the necessities for our spiritual life. Godliness is the life of Christ living within us, our union with Christ. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of his spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God" (Ephesians 4:13-15).

The believer is a recipient of these blessings already; they have been fulfilled in part: The blessings of this life escaping the worldly corruptions through our faith and obedience to God and living the Christian life. "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). We take part in the fulfillment of these promises as His family sharing in the divine nature here and hereafter. The ultimate fulfillment will be completed in the life to come when we escape eternal suffering and dwell forever in the house of the Lord.

Angels took the hand of Lot and told him to escape to the mountain. God's word will cause us to escape to the mountain of the Lord's house. The greatest blessing God has provided, the promise that exceeds great and precious, is the gift of our Savior who sacrificed His life that we could lay hold to

eternal life. We recognize the worth of that promise, we have faith in the one who made the promise, and we understand the conditions attached: Recognizing our need, and trusting that it will be fulfilled.

For those choosing to serve the living God and who yearn for the time when Jesus tells us to enter into His rest, there can be no relationship with the depravity of the world about us. The promises and blessings are reserved for those who are of God's family. Do not be deluded into thinking otherwise; there is no middle ground. Either we choose to serve God or we ignore Him and fail to be a recipient of His exceeding great and precious promises.

As the author of the letter to the Hebrews questioned: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Sadly there is no escape if we choose to neglect God's will for us.

Either we choose to serve God or we ignore Him and fail to be a recipient of His exceeding great and precious promises.

"EACH DAY I'LL DO A GOLDEN DEED..."

By Travis Anderson

INTRODUCTION:

Little is known about the life of William M. Golden. He wrote this song, "A Beautiful Life," at the age of 40 in 1918 while serving an 8 year prison sentence. All of the 20 or so gospel songs he penned were written while in a jail cell, but only two had any staying power: this one and "To Canaan's Land" The circumstances that brought about his imprisonment are unknown, but this song would lead on to believe it was because he was not living the beautiful life he describes and time behind bars has brought life into a much better perspective for him.

VERSE 1

*Each day I'll do a golden deed,
By helping those who are in need;
My life on earth is but a span,
And so I'll do the best I can.*

The message of this hymn, and especially this first verse, is that a Christian must live a life that shows our faith (James 2:18). It must be such that we shouldn't have to walk around with a loud speaker pronouncing to all that we are Christians; nor should we live in a such a way that people would be shocked to learn that we are Christians

There also appears to be a reference to Ps 90:10. There is this idea of urgency, that a long life is not promised to us, and in fact, our drive home from here tonight is not promised.

If we want to live a beautiful life, we must be helping others, helping those who are in need. That was the point of the Jesus teaching about the Good Samaritan. It doesn't matter who is in need, or how much it may inconvenience us, we need to make that small gesture to help the man on the street corner, the elderly couple down the street, the hungry kid next to you on the school bus.

Again, as William Golden was sitting in his cell penning this song, I am sure he thought of many

times in his life where he did not take the time to do the golden deed when he saw someone in need. Let's not make it take a stint in prison to help us to see the good, and necessity in helping those around us. We should do the best we can while we have the chance to, because we never know when we will no longer have a chance.

It is interesting that in 1934, at the age of 56, William Gold died in a car crash.

VERSE 2

*To be a child of God each day,
My light must shine along the way;
I'll sing His praise while ages roll,
And strive to help some troubled soul.*

Jesus was a doer, not just a talker (Matthew 5:14-16). He made it clear that to be a faithful follower of his, we must, as the saying goes, "talk the talk and walk the walk" He taught that not only was Christianity to be a religion of the heart and of the head, but also of the hands—and a large part of the "doing" part of Christianity should be expressed through our actions toward others.

Christ tells us to be the light of the world, and at the same time he himself claimed to be the light of the world in John 8:12, Well Jesus, which is it? If we ever hope to be a light in this dark and sinful world, it is Christ that must be shining through us.

It doesn't matter who is in need, or how much it may inconvenience us...make that small gesture to help...

- It is his teachings
- It is his life
- It is his example
- And it is his attitude toward the lost and sinful of this world that we must emulate if we ever hope to have the beautiful life described in this song, and in this book (our Bibles)

VERSES 3-4

*The only life that will endure,
Is one that's kind and good and pure;
And so for God I'll take my stand,*

*Each day I'll lend a helping hand,
I'll help someone in time of need,
And journey on with rapid speed;
I'll help the sick and poor and weak,
And words of kindness to them speak.*

Marilyn Neal left a legacy in the congregation where I preach. The stock market could crash and we could ascend into another Great Depression tomorrow and lose all the physical things we have worked so hard for, yet her legacy would remain. Tornados and fires could reach the home of every family member of Marilyn's—all the pictures of her and all the things she ever owned could be erased in a heartbeat—but her influence as a parent and as a Christian would remain.

Unless Christ returns in the next century, most people reading this will have passed from this physical existence.

Matthew 6:20

What will your legacy be?

Will it be the nice inheritance you left your kids, or will it be the Christian principles you instilled in them as best you could?

Will it be the nice cars you drove, or will it be the memory that people have of you that you would had no problem pulling that nice car over to the side of the road and helping someone in need?

Will it be how many points you scored and trophies you hoisted, or will it be how you treated your teammates, your opponents, and the referees?

Will it be how far you climbed up the corporate ladder, or how much you helped others climb Jacob's ladder to heaven?

VERSE 4

*While going down life's weary road,
I'll try to lift some trav'ler's load;
I'll try to turn the night to day,
Make flowers bloom along the way.*

Notice that the phrase "I'll try" is repeated twice in this verse. Maybe William Golden acknowledged something that we should notice as well: that trying is all God really asks us to do.

We know we cannot be perfect, we cannot solve every problem ourselves, we cannot wipe away every tear, and we cannot mend every broken heart—but just because we cannot do *everything* does not mean we cannot do *something*!

That is what Jesus is referring to in Matthew 10:40-42. He goes from receiving God to giving a small one a cup of cold water. In chapter 10, Jesus is speaking only to His Apostles. There is no crowd, or anyone else listening. On more than one occasion, Jesus referred to his disciples as "little ones" (they were new at following Christ or young in the faith).

So what he is saying here that even aiding those who are following Christ is not too small a task for God to notice.

Whether you are fully receiving the teachings of Christ and are giving up your life to follow him, or you are merely helping the cause in a small way, you are trying.

Whether you are an Elder or Preacher, or whether you teach a child's Bible class, sweep the floors, prepare the communion, give a devotional, lead a song, lead a prayer, build a tract rack for the auditorium, mow the yard, change the lightbulbs, fix a dish for the family who has just lost a loved one, whatever it may be, just try.

There are so many more opportunities to minister in the world if we will just TRY.

That's all William Golden is asking of himself in this song, and that is all God is asking of us.

CONCLUSION:

As we close, notice the Refrain with me.

*Life's evening sun is sinking low,
A few more days, and I must go
To meet the deeds that I have done,
Where there will be no setting sun.*

There is a Hell, and there is a judgment coming. We know that the only way we will be saved is by the grace of God through the blood of Christ and not our own works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but it is clear from Scripture that our actions will be taken into account (1 Peter 1:17).

For a faithful Christian, who trusts in the grace of God and lives a beautiful life as described in this song, there is no need to be anxious about the end of our life, but to look forward to it with anticipation (Revelation 14:13).

So the question is, are you living a beautiful life? Don't make a stint in jail force you to change your life if you are not, make that change today!



What is Your Hobby?

By Devin Self

There are so many hobbies out in the world today. Whether it's collecting things, engaging in a certain physical activity, or something simple like reading, you can just about find just about anything to do as a hobby. And people tend to spend a great amount of time and devotion on their hobbies, enjoying the pleasures of this world. But how many times do you ever hear of people out there proclaiming that their favorite hobby is studying the Bible, trying to become a better Christian, or devoting their time towards doing God's will? If you do hear it, I'm surprised, because it isn't very often you hear of people confessing their love for Christ. I myself need to get better about what I spend my time towards, and we all can improve this.

But the fact is you don't hear of it much, and that's because people are not driven to read and follow God's word like they should. It either becomes a routine, or worse—just an activity maybe to make someone else happy, or because you know it is what you are *supposed* to do, but maybe not knowing why (which we can most definitely help you with) but you just *do* it.

What we should be doing though is exercising our minds in the Bible every day. It should be a constant thing we look forward to doing, just like our hobbies. Not something that is a challenge or a routine like a job, but a privilege we should take great interest in.

Psalm 37:4-5 says,

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

We delight in the hobbies we have, we look forward to doing them again and again, week in and week out, because it's what we thoroughly enjoy. And in the same way we delight in those hobbies we should delight in the Lord—actually *more* than any of those hobbies. *Why*, you may ask? Because it says it right there in Psalm 37, “he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” That means our heart will be filled with joy because we have committed ourselves wholly to the Lord. We won't need anything to fill the desires of our heart, because God will have filled it completely.

I think a lot of the reason we don't make Bible study and serving God something we enjoy or do all the time is because not everyone else is doing it. See, what are we going to talk about—no one wants to talk about religion, right? They may not want to, but we *need* to talk about it with them they may need it more than you realize. And it is our duty as well, as servants of Christ.

Now read 1 Timothy 4:12-13:

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conver-

sation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Just like any hobby in this world today, the more time and practice we put into it the better we get at it. And people can tell who is an example of being a Christian very easily from seeing the things described in the above passage in our lives. See, by us being believers and followers of Christ, we have a gift in us. And as this passage said, we must represent for Jesus, exhibiting our faith. Everything we do must be for the glory of God our Father because without Him, brothers and sisters, everything is a loss.

And if any of our earthly hobbies get in the way of our worship to God, we should flee from them. Just as it says in 1 Corinthians 10:14: “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.” And this is because idolatry is the immoderate attachment or devotion to something other than God. Another verse telling this is Colossians 3:5:

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Not only should we avoid all these things, but we should also try harder to be in the personal relationship with God that He desires of us. We should live our life after the word of God. Psalm 119:33-40:

Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way. Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

Longing to learn more about the scripture and devoting our lives to it can only strengthen us—so what is the holdback? There should be no holdback! The lives of different people can have many different twists and turns in their road. But in the end, there is only one path that will lead to the ultimate victory; only one path that will gain us a heavenly kingdom, and that is the path of righteousness. I think a lot of times, because things don’t just pop out at us, we lose that devotion to fearing (or respecting) God, but I tell you *we must never lose the fear of God.*

Read Psalm 147:11:

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and we think for a second that we can do things or lose our fear for him because we don’t think there will be punishment? It is very foolish. God takes pleasure in our fear for him, because when we fear him we follow his instructions very carefully—which we should always do.

Remember the pathways I just talked about a minute ago? Read Hebrews 12:13:

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Also Matthew 7:13:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.

We also must help others in any way we can just like the Bible instructs us in Isaiah 35:3-4,:

Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.

This verse reminds us to encourage one another. Encouragement is a very powerful tool that we must possess as Christians. Encouraging someone can really raise their spirits and make them feel a

*We must never lose
the fear of God*

lot more comfortable in doing tasks for the Lord, knowing they are backed by their fellow Christians. Not only that, but people can be easily overwhelmed in the world today with so much going on. It is our job and privilege to show them that God will take care of it all. Let them not be disheartened, thinking there is no way, because there is a way! God will come and save!

We need to encourage and strengthen the brethren, just like Paul and Barnabas did to the large number of disciples they had taught in Acts 14:21-22:

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

See those verses right there show that there is no excuse for us not to be preaching the word and standing for our faith. If we have a hard time of it just because we don't want to, or are uncomfortable, remember what Paul had to go through right before returning to the cities mentioned in these verses. They had stoned him thinking he was dead because he was in so bad of a shape, but he still stood for his faith and being nearly killed didn't stop him.

Now read with me about the demon possessed man that Jesus healed in Mark 5:18-20:

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Je-

sus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

The example this man set, when he told his friends about being healed by Jesus, made them curious. And in their curiosity they probably sought to learn more about Jesus. And in doing so, learning more about the gospel. All in all, this causes a chain of events, a domino effect. Just like us today finding out a better way to do something, or a sharing a doctor that is really good, so also should we share the story of our faith and salvation with others. In turn you never know how much it can have an effect, and might lead that person to

understanding more because of their curiosity about the word of God. Do you ever think that what you've got going on in your life might be too hard for God to handle? Whatever it may be I'm sure it can't be any harder than the demon possessed man from the scripture above.

I want to remind you to make serving God and studying your Bible a hobby in your life. Trust me when I say this: it will be a better enjoyment that anything you've ever experienced. And not only will it bring you joy in this lifetime, but it will bring you the greatest joy for an eternal lifetime in the kingdom.

By this point in the lesson you may be wondering why? *Why if pleasures of this life are what make me happy are they so bad? If I don't enjoy reading the Bible and becoming a better Christian why should I make it a hobby?* And if you are thinking this, I've got a clear answer. *Remember Solomon.* That is what I've got to tell you brothers and sisters. Read with me about his experience with pleasures of the world in Ecclesiastes 2:10-11:

And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored

Do you ever think that what you've got going on in your life might be too hard for God to handle? ...it can't be any harder than the demon-possessed man...

to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

See, it took Solomon going through all these trials and proceeding forward with whatever he desired before he finally realized that in the end it was all meaningless. And this is what I'm trying to talk to you about, brothers and sisters. I don't want you to go through the same thing that he did. Because in the end, God is all that matters and the duty that he has entrusted us with as followers.

And if you're still thinking, *You know I might not enjoy doing all these things the Lord requires of me*, let me read a couple of more verses to you. First is John 17:13 where Jesus says,

And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Jesus found joy in the things he spoke to the world because he knew he was doing God's work, he was spreading the word and helping the lost to find their way, and so should our joy come from things such as these—because trust me, there is nothing better than seeing someone commit their life to Christ. Everything is going to be so much better for the new Christian. Another verse is Matthew 5:6, where Jesus says:

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

What does he mean by *filled* in this verse, you may be asking yourself. What he means is *complete*, there are no desires, no longing after things of this world to fill a void in our minds or hearts. We will be completely filled, be longing not for anything else, because we will have all we need: and that is righteousness.

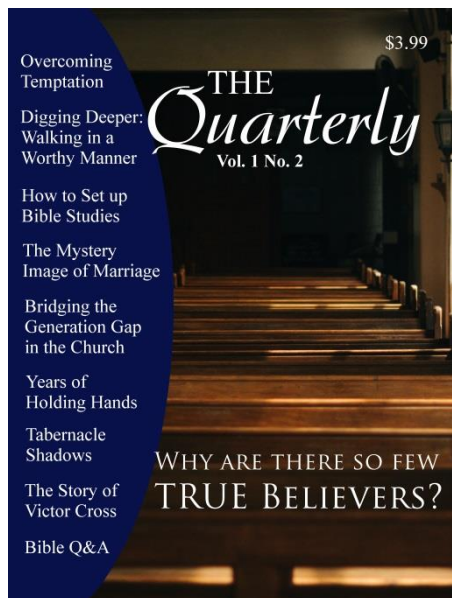
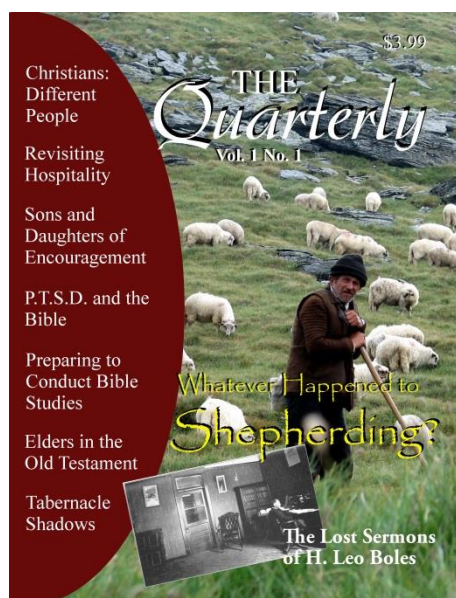
Psalm 118:24: "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

So to conclude, make God your number one hobby. He won't let you down. And if you do make Him at the top of your list, things will be a lot better off now and for eternity, because there is no greater joy than being a follower of God's word. So take joy, rejoice and be glad because the Lord has made this day for you. Feel very privileged and excited to be a follower of the one true God that will always care for His flock.

Revelation 2:10:

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Make God your hobby and live for Him always, and He will give thee a crown of life.



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Visits with Seasoned Ministers: Lewis Hale

Interview by Jim Mitchell

Lewis Hale preached for the Southwest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City for 57 years. It was a joy to sit down with him as he reminisced about those years, the present, and beyond. *[As a side note, my father attended Freed-Hardeman College at the same time as Lewis. They both went from FHC to Abilene Christian College at the same time as well. My Grandfather was one of the elders at the Southwest congregation in Oklahoma City when Lewis came to work with that congregation.]*

What changes have you seen in the church over the years?

Lewis: I've seen lots of things that have changed through the years. Growing up, I well remember when communion cups were introduced. It was 1934, I was 8 years old. When we had Bible class (we called it a "card class" – it had a picture on one side and a lesson on the other side) we met in a corner while the adult class was taking place in the main part of the one room building. One or two families left when we started using individual communion cups. For a time, there was fellowship between congregations using one cup and those using individual cups; however, when families of one-cup congregations began attending those using multiple cups, the fellowship became one-sided.

What do you think has been among the most encouraging things to take place in the Lord's church in this area in the last few years?

Lewis: We need to emphasize things which are positive while opposing what is unscriptural. In the Oklahoma City area, things such as the Affirming the Faith lectureship are positive. Things such as that which encourage fellowship and co-operation among God's people are always good. Years ago we had an area-wide teacher training series which involved many congregations. That was a long time ago. Today, churches take care of their own programs of work and don't really have much to do with other congregations in the area. We don't have the inter-congregational fellowship like we used to have.

Do you think the emphasis on evangelism used to be stronger than it is today?

Lewis: Definitely. We need to be more interested in saving souls rather than attracting those already saved. You hardly hear evangelistic type sermons anymore, and that's reflected in the number of baptisms most congregations have during the year. I think part of that was a reaction to the criticism preachers received years ago from preaching so many sermons on fundamentals, as we called it – so it was almost cut out altogether. Too many times, sermons seem to be one story after another – narrative preaching. There seem to be a lot of "feel good" sermons, and while there is a place for being encouraged, to build a sermon around a good story you've heard instead of having a good sermon and then looking for a supporting illustration is doing things the opposite way of how Scripture needs to be approached. Christians need to hear sermons that encourage by challenging them with information from God's word and then motivate them by telling them how to apply the information learn.

What year did you first come to Oklahoma City?

Lewis: I came to the city in 1956. The people here have been extremely good to us through the years. Your grandparents were very good to us, and so was everyone else. Walter Bryan was preaching here before I came and was very good at personally teaching people. He converted lots of people and made a very good foundation for me to build on. I told him many times through the years that if I ever moved again I wanted to move somewhere where he had just been, but I've never been sorry that I moved to Oklahoma City.

What sort of challenges do you think congregations face today?

Lewis: I think they need to be willing to stand against unscriptural innovations which some may try to bring into the church. Sometimes congregations are so anxious to grow that they add to their membership people who left a congregation because they were disgruntled somewhere else. Disgruntled people may be disgruntled still after they

move. I think that's a big challenge for any congregation. I feel like if I had any strength as a preacher it was to be a unifying force among people with divergent views trying to teach them to examine things which were believed and practiced instead of being divisive. I have always been interested in stimulating people to think for themselves. I believe that most people have a heart to try to do what is right and I think that if you point them to what is right, in a good way, that they will usually be cooperative. I think you need to be careful about pushing people into a corner where they are less likely to change their point of view.

What are some of the most memorable things which have happened in the Oklahoma City area?

Lewis: One thing which impacted Oklahoma City greatly was then Oklahoma Christian College moved from Bartlesville to Oklahoma City. It had a unifying effect for several years in helping them move. By the time I came to the city in 1956, the

college had already relocated here. Unfortunately I don't agree with the path the school has been going down for several years now with speakers who are not members of the church giving lectures on Biblical topics and yet, some of those who are still in positions of leadership at the school are very close friends of mine.

As we finished our time together, Brother Hale reflected on the influence of both N.B. Hardeman and W. Claude Hall on his life and preaching. He stated that he felt like these two men made a tremendous impact on all of the preaching students who attended their classes at Freed-Hardeman College. One of the things which impressed me greatly about our conversation was Brother Hale's emphasis on the continual need to probe the scriptures, investigate the text, and think for oneself to an extent rarely emphasized today with the same veracity of years gone by.

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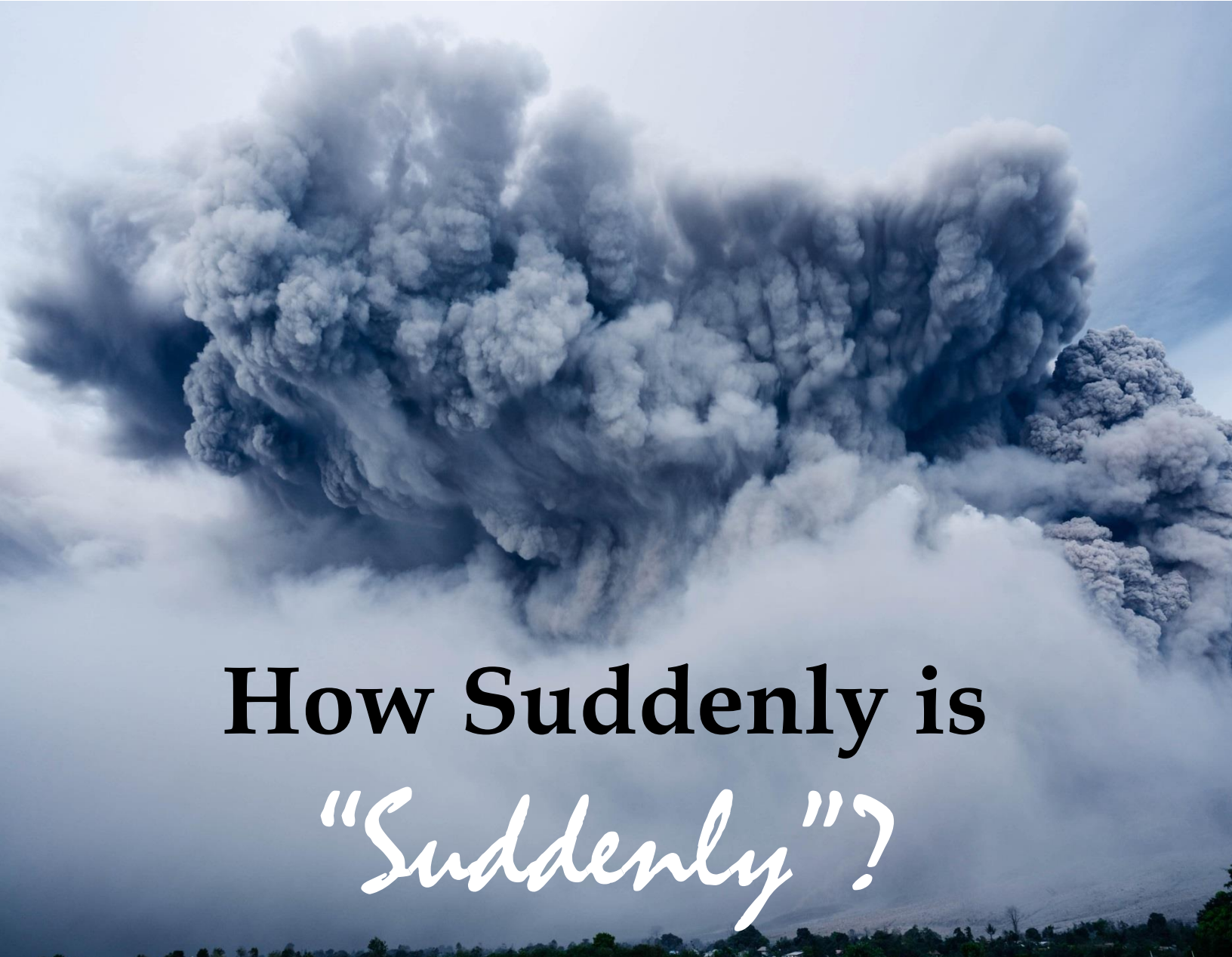
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How Suddenly is "Suddenly"?

By Jim Mitchell

"...you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly..." (I Thess. 5:2-3a).

On Sunday, May 18, 1980, thirty seven years ago, shortly after 8:30 Pacific Daylight Time,

*"Mount St. Helens in Washington State, triggered the largest landslide in recorded history and a major volcanic eruption that scattered ash across a dozen states."*¹

¹From an article written on May 18, 2015 by Alan Taylor, "The Eruption of Mount St. Helens, 35 Years Ago" in *The Atlantic Photo*.

"Everything within eight miles of the blast was wiped out almost instantly. The shock-wave rolled over the forest for another 19 miles, leveling century-old trees; all the trunks neatly aligned to the north. Beyond this "tree down zone" the forest remained standing but was seared lifeless. The area devastated by the direct blast force covered an area of nearly 230 square miles (596 square kilometers).

"Shortly after the lateral blast, a second, vertical explosion occurred at the summit of the volcano, sending a mushroom cloud of ash and gases more than 12 miles into the air. The cloud of ash darkened the skies, causing streetlights to come on as far away

as Spokane, Wash., more than 300 miles (480 km) away. Ash continued to erupt for more than nine hours. Ultimately, an estimated 540 million tons (490,000 kilotons) of ash drifted up to 2,200 square miles (5,700 square km) settling over seven states.

“As the north face was blown apart, the heat instantly vaporized glacial ice and snow around the remaining parts of the mountain. By 8:50 a.m., massive mudflows were moving through the river systems to the west and southeast of Mount St. Helens. The hot mud moved in excess of 90 mph, sweeping away everything in its path.

*“Fifty-seven people are known to have died. More than 200 homes were destroyed. More than 185 miles of roads and 15 miles of railways were damaged. Ash clogged sewage systems, damaged cars and buildings, and temporarily shut down air traffic over the Northwest.”*²

As “sudden” as that massive volcanic eruption appeared to be, for two months prior to the eruption on May 18th, dozens of non-major earthquakes had been recorded around the mountain and a massive “bulge” began to form on one side of the mountain. All of these signs were indicators of imminent danger. A “red zone” was established in the area authorities believed to be unsafe. Only a few of the victims died inside this red zone. The majority of the victims believed they were a safe distance away, but the eruption was much more massive than was projected. Many of us may remember the story of the 83 year old man (Harry R. Truman) who refused to leave his home on the side of the mountain. But let me tell you about a family you may not remember.

“Ron and Barbara Siebold and their two children (ages 7 and 9) were driving along a route outside of the “red zone.” The four bodies were found inside the family’s car, their lungs filled with ash. When rescue workers finally reached them, also found were a cassette tape, recorded by Ron and Barbara Seibold’s children on their way to the volcano. “They were goofing around --

asking whether or not they would see lava coming out of the mountain,” said Jim Thomas, who was a top state emergency management official in 1980. “One asked if it was dangerous, and both parents cheerfully reassured their kids that they’d be safe.” But they weren’t. (The parents were) answering questions posed by the bubbly children: Would they see the volcano erupt? The father, playing along, said he hoped that they would, said emergency worker Jim Thomas, who was present when the tape was played for Barbara Seibold’s family.

*“We were all struck by what we were hearing, the irony of the parents’ reassurances. The mother’s sister began to sob, quietly at first, and then her sobs became a long, low moan of sadness,” he (emergency worker Jim Thomas) wrote in an essay about the experience.”*³

Obviously, these parents did not mean to put themselves or their children in harm’s way, but taking the word of the “authorities” over the repeated warning signs from the mountain itself, that’s exactly what they did.

While it is true, as Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica, that the “day of the Lord” will come suddenly, each day of life provides opportunity after opportunity for us to be ready for that time, no matter when it may occur. “Peace and safety” are often blindly taken for granted by people who have had no time for God or His word. Hopefully, something in life will trigger the realization of mortality with an awareness by those so moved to see the need for investigating what the Bible teaches and responding with loving obedience. May we never be lulled to sleep in ways where we forget that life is, at best “a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14, NIV). May we also constantly be on the lookout for those who have begun to realize the frailty of life, and who are looking for spiritual answers.

² www.livescience.com/27553-mountain-st-helens-eruption.html

³ articles.latimes.com/2005/may/15/news/adna-helensvic15/2

Biblical Biography:

SILAS

By Bradley S. Cobb

APOSTLE OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

Silas, most likely short for *Silvanus*,¹ first appears on the biblical scene as a co-worker with Judas Barsabbas.² He was chosen by the brethren in Jerusalem, along with the apostles and elders, to take the letter (likely written by James)³ to the Gentile Christians in Antioch. He was one of the “chief men” of the church in Jerusalem, possibly even one of the elders.⁴

Silas was both a Jew and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-38), but how he attained citizenship is not recorded for us. He could have been born a citizen, like Paul, or perhaps he was able to purchase his citizenship (Acts 22:28). His Jewish ancestry is evident because (1) he was a member of the church in Jerusalem, where very few, if any, Gentiles were



members, (2) he was a prominent member of the church in Jerusalem, showing that he had been there for quite some time—probably meaning he was a disciple of Jesus before the Gentiles were accepted into the church, (3) his name appears to be derived from the Aramaic word for “Saul,”

which is a Jewish name,⁵ (4) there is no hint that the issue of what to do with Gentile converts to Christianity in Jerusalem prior to Acts 15 was ever brought up—implying that Silas was a Jew, and (5) it is very unlikely that the Jerusalem church would send a Gentile as their official ambassador.

In carrying the letter with Judas Barsabbas,⁶ Silas was an apostle of the church in Jerusalem.⁶ His mission was to take this letter to the Gentile Christians in Antioch (and it was spread throughout Syria and Cilicia)⁷ and to verbally convey the same information to them (Acts 15:27).

Like Judas, Silas was also a prophet, endowed by God with a measure of miraculous gifts given by the Holy Spirit.⁸ If tradition is correct, and Silas was one of the seventy that Jesus bestowed miracu-

¹ Joseph J. Fitzmeyer, in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* on Acts, presents the case that the name “Silas” is the Greek form of the Aramaic name “Seila,” which, in Hebrew, is “Saul.” If this is the case, then perhaps this is one of the reasons why Luke starts using the name “Paul” for Saul of Tarsus.

² See the section about this man for more information.

³ For more information, see the author’s introduction to the letter from James in “Justified by Works: A Study of the Letter from James.” See also the section on “James, the brother of Jesus Christ” in this book.

⁴ This was the opinion of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, see their entry on Judas Barsabbas.

⁵ Again, see Fitzmeyer’s work in the *Anchor Bible Commentary* for more information.

⁶ The Greek word “sent” (Acts 15:27), which is contained in the letter from Jerusalem, is the verb form of “apostle.”

⁷ Acts 15:23

⁸ See this author’s book, “The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts.”

lous gifts upon in Luke 10, it may be that Silas continued to have these abilities and wasn't required to have the apostles lay hands on him, since he would have received his abilities straight from Jesus Christ many years earlier.⁹ He used this gift of prophecy to help encourage and strengthen the Christians in Antioch (Acts 15:32).

APOSTLE OF THE ANTIOCH CHURCH

After fulfilling his mission in Antioch, Silas was allowed to go home, but he decided instead to stay in Antioch for a while, working with the congregation there.¹⁰ After some time had passed,¹¹ Paul thought it would be good to go back to the congregations he and Barnabas has planted during their first missionary journey as apostles of the church in Antioch. Barnabas agreed, and wanted to take his nephew, John Mark with them—the same John Mark who had abandoned them on that first journey. This didn't sit well with Paul, and so they split from each other. Barnabas took John Mark with him, and Paul chose another man who he had been able to get to know: Silas.¹²

We do not know when Paul and Silas first met. They might have met during their youth in Jerusalem;¹³ they might have met for the first time when Saul tried to join the disciples in Jerusalem shortly after his conversion; it may well have been that they didn't meet until the gathering in Jerusalem to discuss whether Gentile Christians needed to be

circumcised. Regardless of when they first met, the probably had plenty of conversation on the way from Jerusalem to Antioch with the letter; and Paul would have been impressed with Silas' desire to teach and preach the gospel to Jew and Gentile alike.¹⁴

When Paul and Silas left Antioch, they were "recommended" [literally, "delivered"] to the grace of God by the brethren there. That is, they were sent out for this work by the church in Antioch, who prayed and probably helped finance to help the work. Silas was now an apostle of the church at Antioch.¹⁵

Paul and Silas' first stops were the churches of Syria and Cilicia. Paul didn't visit these churches on what is generally called his "first missionary journey."¹⁶ However, his visiting of these churches is logically and biblically explained by two facts: (1) the letter which was sent with Paul, Silas, Barnabas, and Judas was addressed to the Gentile Christians in Antioch, *and* Syria, *and* Cilicia;¹⁷ and (2) Paul had done evangelistic work in the area of Syria and Cilicia fourteen years before the events of Acts 15 (Galatians 1:21-2:1).

SILAS' MISSIONARY JOURNEY WITH PAUL

Leaving Syria and Cilicia behind, Silas accompanied Paul to the province of Lycaonia, to the cities of Derbe and Lystra, where Paul had previously gone from being called a Greek God to being beaten almost to death with stones within a very short

⁹ This is a theory of the author of this work, but it is not held dogmatically. It is possible that the miraculous gifts that Jesus bestowed on those seventy men ceased at some point prior to His death on the cross, and that they required the apostles to lay hands on them as seen in Acts 8.

¹⁰ Acts 15:34 is absent in some Greek manuscripts, but it is much more likely that it was accidentally omitted by a scribe than it is that someone intentionally inserted this sentence into the text (as some claim).

¹¹ Luke simply says, "some days," which doesn't give us a clear time lapse. It could have been just a few weeks, but multiple months seems more likely. The longer period of time is supported by the fact that John Mark has appeared on the scene again, when last we saw, he was in Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Some have suggested that Silas had gone back to Jerusalem and perhaps returned to Antioch with Peter (Galatians 2). Others have suggested that Silas and Mark returned to Antioch together around the time of the events of Acts 15:36-ff (see *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* entry on "Silas").

¹² These events are described in Acts 15:36-40.

¹³ This is nothing more than guesswork, since we do not know how old either man was—there may have been a decade or more difference in their ages.

¹⁴ Silas encouraged and strengthened the Gentile Christians in Antioch (Acts 15:32) after having been a prominent member of the church in Jerusalem, which was primarily [if not completely] comprised of Jews (Acts 15:22).

¹⁵ This same phrase, "recommended to the grace of God" is used to describe the role of the Antioch church in the work of Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:26. Since they were "apostles" (14:14) of the church in Antioch (see also 13:1-4) by means of this "recommending," then Silas was also an apostle of the church in Antioch on the basis of Acts 15:40.

¹⁶ Luke is very detailed in recording the missionary travels of Paul. Syria and Cilicia are not mentioned in the first missionary journey at all.

¹⁷ See Acts 15:23. Luke records that the letter was read in Antioch, and the Christians there were "confirmed" or "strengthened." But there was no record of any of these four men making it outside of that city until Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia. This hypothesis is proven true in Acts 16:4-5.

amount of time.¹⁸ It is there that Silas meets a young man named Timothy, with whom his name would be connected more than once.¹⁹ Silas, Timothy, and Paul traveled through Lystra, Derbe, and then through other parts of Asia Minor,²⁰ strengthening the churches with the letter from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, and then finally arriving at Troas.

Troas was located on the western edge of Asia Minor, and though Luke doesn't record Silas and Paul engaging in any evangelistic activity, they must have done *something* for the Lord in that city. It is while they are in Troas that the company of Silas, Paul, and Timothy is joined by a fourth companion: Luke. Whether Luke was converted at this time and joined with them, or whether he had already heard the gospel from others and just jumped at the opportunity to work more for the Lord, the fact remains that Luke discovered somehow that Christian preachers were in the city and joined himself to them.²¹

It was in Troas that Paul received a vision of a man in Macedonia begging him to "Come over into Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Silas, being a prophet, agreed that this vision was quite clear and

that they needed to go to Macedonia to preach the gospel. So they boarded a ship bound for Europe, and departed west to Philippi, one of the major cities of that Roman province.

In Philippi, Silas and the others went to a river outside of the city, sat down, and started teaching some women who were gathered there on the Sabbath to pray. Lydia, who believed the preaching and was baptized, asked Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke to stay in her house while they were in the city.²²

While in that city, perhaps the most memorable event of Silas' life (at least to Christians today) took place. He, along with Paul and the others, had been preaching for "many days," and a girl had been following them around. This girl was possessed

by a demon,²³ and was proclaiming "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show to us the way of salvation!" This girl was also owned by some men who used her "skills" to make money. So when Paul cast the demon out of her, these men were very upset. They grabbed Silas and Paul, drug them before the rulers of the city, had them severely beaten, and then threw them into prison.²⁴

That evening, Silas, beaten and bloodied, sore from the abuse and with his feet tightly locked down, began to pray and sing. Paul, in the same condition, was doing the same thing. Neither one of them hid their praises to God, for "the prisoners heard them." What an amazing attitude Silas and Paul had! At midnight, as they were praying and singing, a violent earthquake shocked the inmates as the prison doors all opened, and all the prison-



¹⁸ The text of Acts 14:8-20 does not reveal any passage of days between the attempted deification of Barnabas and Paul and the Jews' vicious stoning of Paul. It reads as though it all took place the same day, especially when you read verse 20. There may have been a time lapse between verses 18-19, but it is also possible that there wasn't.

¹⁹ See Acts 17:14-15, 18:5; 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

²⁰ Luke, the detailed historian, records that they traveled through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia on their way to Troas. Paul wanted also to preach in Bythynia and Asia, but the Holy Spirit had other plans (Acts 16:1-10, see notes on that passage in the author's "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts").

²¹ If Luke was converted in Troas at this time, his use of the words "we" and "us" to describe his involvement in the interpretation of a vision, the decision to go to Macedonia, and the preaching of the gospel point to a somewhat longer stay in the city than we generally suppose. A brand-new convert would not have instantly risen to the level of standing that Luke had attained in Acts 16:9-10.

²² Lydia was apparently in Philippi on business, as a seller of purple, since Luke says that she was from "Thyatira," which is a city in Asia Minor.

²³ Literally, this is a "python spirit." See comments on Acts 16:16-18 in "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts" by this author.

²⁴ Apparently Luke and Timothy were able to escape, or else the men were only concerned with the two who were viewed as the leaders of the group. We know Luke was present, for he says the girl "followed Paul and us" (Acts 16:16).

ers' chains were loosed.²⁵ The jailor woke up and ran to the prison—then his heart sank when he saw the open doors. So certain that the prisoners had all escaped, he took out his sword, preparing to kill himself.²⁶

Silas listened as Paul yelled, "Don't hurt yourself; we're all here!" And he watched as the jailor, who just hours before had confidently chained their feet tightly in the stocks, came trembling in fear, falling down to the ground in front of Silas and Paul. The jailor eventually stood up again and brought them out of the prison, and the first thing on his mind was "What must I do to be saved." He had heard what Silas and Paul had been preaching, and he had heard about the salvation offered.²⁷ The results of the earthquake were enough to convince him that Silas and Paul were speaking the truth, and that they served the true God—just as the demon-possessed girl had been saying.

After telling the jailor to believe in Jesus Christ so he could be saved, Silas and Paul preached the word of the Lord to him and his family.²⁸ The jailor was so moved that he washed their wounds and wasted no time in making sure he and his family

were baptized. Silas rejoiced, as did Paul, that more souls were added to the book of life.

The next day, Silas and Paul were asked to leave quietly, but Paul wouldn't have anything to do with it. He invoked Silas' (and his own) Roman citizenship, and demanded what was, in effect, a public apology from the magistrates of the city.²⁹ After the city leaders personally released Silas and Paul from prison, the two men went back to Lydia's house and met with the brethren before collecting Timothy and departing towards Thessalonica.³⁰

AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

The next stop of substance for Silas was Thessalonica. It is to this city that he, Paul, and Timothy came and taught in the synagogue for three weeks that the Messiah needed to suffer and rise from the dead, and that Jesus was that Messiah. Some of those Jews believed the message, and a very large number of Gentiles did as well, and they began to associate themselves with Paul and Silas. But as happened several times on these missionary journeys, many Jews became upset and wanted to kill Silas and Paul.³¹ The brethren, fearing for the safety of their friends and "fathers" in the faith,³² sent Silas and Paul to Berea in the middle of the night.³³

In Berea, they found a more open-minded group of Jews who were willing to examine the claims of Paul and Silas from the Scriptures. Because of that, many of them believed; but the Jews from Thessalonica came and stirred up the people, and Paul was taken by some brethren to Athens. Meanwhile,

²⁵ The effects of the earthquake prove that it was miraculous. No natural earthquake could unlock chains around the feet of prisoners and open all the doors. Such a violent earthquake, one would assume, would also cause some serious damage to the structure, causing parts of it to crash into at least some of the prisoners, causing serious injury or even death. But there were no such incidents. It was an earthquake orchestrated and directed by God Himself, with only the effects that He wanted it to have.

²⁶ The penalty for allowing the prisoners to escape would have been death. In most instances, it probably wouldn't have been a quick and painless death. The magistrates of the city would have wanted to make an example out of him, and there would have been great shame brought on his family in the process. Thus, the jailor figured suicide was the best course of action.

²⁷ It is quite possible that the first time the jailor heard anything about the salvation offered was at the marketplace where Silas and Paul were accused and then beaten. Someone certainly would have given testimony to what the demon-possessed girl was saying about how they were servants of God who were showing the way of salvation (Acts 16:16-17).

²⁸ This man was told to believe, but he had not yet even heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, Silas and Paul had to preach it to him. The preaching of the gospel includes preaching baptism (see Acts 8:35-36). After hearing the word of the Lord, the jailor and his family were baptized. Those who seek to use this passage of Scripture (especially verse 30-31) to teach a faith-only salvation do not read the whole passage.

²⁹ The magistrates had the right to beat people and throw them in prison, but for them to go to the prison and bring prisoners out was an admission of guilt on their part, and a declaration of the innocence of the ones they were releasing. This action, and the announcement of their Roman citizenship, would have made the magistrates wary of saying anything against them, should they ever return; and it probably helped the Christians in Philippi in any future run-ins with the city leaders.

³⁰ Luke leaves the missionary group at this juncture. While their arrival in Philippi was described with the words "we" and "us," he continues the narrative with the word "they" (Acts 17:1), showing that he is no longer with them.

³¹ Luke says that the disbelieving Jews and their Gentile thugs were looking for "them." It was not, as some perhaps have assumed, that they were only interested in Paul. Silas was a target as well.

³² If Timothy was Paul's "son" in the faith, then that means it is perfectly legitimate to call Paul Timothy's "father" in the faith. It does not mean that it was a religious title, nor was it an office. It simply describes a relationship.

³³ These incidents are recorded in Acts 17:1-10a.

Silas and Timothy stayed behind in Berea, working with the converts there until they heard back from Paul.³⁴ When the message came, Silas and Timothy left immediately.³⁵

Silas and Timothy met up with Paul in Athens,³⁶ but somewhere along the way, it appears Paul sent them both out again on specific missions. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1-6), and Silas was perhaps sent to Philippi.³⁷ Meanwhile, Paul moved on from Athens to Corinth, where he was later joined by Silas and Timothy, who had returned from Macedonia.³⁸

Silas preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in Corinth,³⁹ though we are not informed how long this lasted. He was there with Paul when both letters to the church in Thessalonica were written (see 1:1 of each letter), and it is in the first of these letters that Paul makes an interesting statement:

Even after we [Paul, Silas, and Timothy—1:1] had suffered before, and were shamefully treated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel with much contention. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile...neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, not a cloak of covetousness; God is witness; nor of men did we seek glory, neither of you, nor of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:2-6).

Paul makes it clear that he, Silas, and Timothy were missionaries sent by Jesus Christ to preach

the gospel. Paul had seen the vision, and the three of them (along with Luke) determined that they needed to obey the divine call to preach in Macedonia (where Thessalonica was located). In this sense, they were all “apostles of Christ,” being sent by Him with a divine mission.⁴⁰

After a long period of time, Paul left Corinth, and nothing more is said about his missionary relationship with Silas. In fact, the Bible mentions nothing more about Silas except that around a decade later, he made it back to Jerusalem and helped to write First Peter.⁴¹ And there, more than ten years after he’s disappeared from the scenes of recorded history, he’s called “a faithful brother.” There’s nothing more that needs to be said. Those three words say it all.

TRADITION

According to some Christians a few hundred years after Christ’s death, Silas was one of the seventy men sent out by Jesus Christ in Luke chapter ten. Other sources state that he became an elder of the church in Thessalonica, and died as a martyr there, “having undergone many sorrows and misfortunes for the Lord’s sake.”⁴²

In the Nag Hammadi Library, an anti-gnostic writing called “The Teachings of Silvanus” (written approximately AD 150-200) was discovered. This was noteworthy, since the Nag Hammadi Library was made up of almost entirely Gnostic literature.

³⁴ Paul was definitely the lightning rod for the Jewish persecutors. When he was sent away, it appears the persecutors dissipated and returned home.

³⁵ Acts 17:15.

³⁶ In the first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul refers to himself, Silas, and Timothy as a group (see 1:1). He says “we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timothy...to strengthen you” (3:1-2). Thus, we have definitive proof that Silas had arrived at Athens.

³⁷ Acts 18:5 shows that both Silas and Timothy had returned from Macedonia (in which was both Thessalonica and Philippi). Their arrival allowed Paul to cease his “tent-making” work, which seems to indicate that Silas brought funds with him. Paul told the Corinthians that brethren which came from Macedonia supplied his needs (2 Corinthians 11:9), and Paul also stated that the only congregation which aided him financially was in Philippi (Philippians 4:15).

³⁸ Acts 18:5.

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 1:19

⁴⁰ There are those who argue that Paul is using an “editorial” or “royal” literary device, and that when he says “we,” he’s really just referring only to himself. Even though this view is presented by many commentators (Barnes, Coffman, Hampton, Dunagan, and implied by McGarvey and Lipscomb), it does not hold up under examination of the text. If it were some “editorial” device, then Paul was very sloppy in applying it, sometimes speaking in the singular, while other times speaking in the plural (2:17-18, 3:1-5, 5:25-27). Since the letter is clearly sent by the three men (1:1), we should understand the words “we” and “us” as referring to the three from whom the letter was sent.

⁴¹ 1 Peter 5:12-13. The Bible places Peter as a “pillar” of the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-9). John Mark (who is also mentioned in the same passage) lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25, 13:13). “Babylon” is the name given in the book of Revelation to the city whose destruction would avenge the blood of the apostles and prophets (Revelation 18:20-19:2); which Jesus said was Jerusalem (Matthew 23:34-37). Thus, the evidence shows that Silas was in Jerusalem when 1 Peter was written.

⁴² The official website for Orthodox Church in America (<http://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2013/07/30/102132-apostle-silvanus-of-the-seventy>)

The Woman Who Anointed Jesus

By Richard Mansel

When faced with unpleasant people, we typically classify ourselves as superior and dehumanize them so we don't have to feel guilty. Yet, as Christians, we must rise above such childish behavior.

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to a meal at his house (Luke 7:36). The meal took place in an area that was accessible to passersby, who could observe and even draw near to the diners. The invited would remove their sandals and recline beside the table on their left side, propped up on their elbows.

Considering their choice of footwear in a rugged and dusty area, guests were typically blessed by having a servant bathe their feet or they would wash them by their own hand, so they wouldn't stain the carpets or pillows.

J.W. McGarvey says that, "The old Jewish method of eating was to sit cross-legged on the floor or on a divan, but the Persians, Greeks and Romans reclined on couches, and the Jews, after the exile, borrowed this custom."

A woman who was a known sinner came to them. Luke doesn't disclose her identity and her specific sins are a mystery. Her presence was undoubtedly a source of embarrassment to the host.

She "began to wash Jesus' feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed his feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil" (Luke 7:38, NKJV).

Plummer notes that "Among the Jews it was a shameful thing for a woman to let down her hair in public; but she makes this sacrifice."

Her behavior indicated a heart torn by sin and remorse. The Savior was the center of her life at the moment. She tenderly and continually kissed his feet. The other guests were likely mortified at her behavior.

The Pharisees considered themselves far above common sinners, especially women. She threatened their social image and the host reasoned in his mind that if Jesus were truly a prophet, he would know better than to be touched by this terrible woman.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, questioned Simon about two debtors (Luke 7:40-43). One was forgiven a smaller amount and the other a larger one. Simon was asked which one will be more grateful? Simon said the one who had been forgiven the most.

Jesus wisely forces them to look carefully at her for the first time as a human being. He chastises them for their spiritual hypocrisy. She had done the job the host should have done (Luke 7:44-46).

But Simon either refused to embarrass himself in front of his Pharisaical friends or he didn't consider Jesus worthy of the usual treatment of esteemed guests. Jesus, though, was not going to allow him to forget it.

The woman's love showed her salvation (1 John 4:19). Jesus sends her away with spiritual blessings rather than chasing her away like a cursed dog.

We learn the following lessons from this story.

First, this woman offered herself and her sins to Jesus (Matthew 11:28). She was unashamed to be spiritually open to him and his love.

Second, social status has nothing to do with righteousness. The Pharisees saw her as filth (Matthew 9:11) but Jesus saw her as a soul in need of salvation. Whether we have our name in the social register has no bearing on whether our names are in the book of life.

Third, men can pronounce sins, but only Jesus can forgive them (1 John 1:9). Our eternal destinies are not determined by the opinions of humanity (John 14:1-6; Isaiah 55:8-9). Wealth, poverty, nation of origin, ethnicity or physical health aren't determining factors, only the state of our souls.

Let's focus on what's truly important.

COBB
PUBLISHING

Mnason

THE “OLD DISCIPLE”

By Mark McWhorter

Mnason was a Christian who allowed Paul to stay with him during Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem.

“And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge,” Acts 21: 15-16.

The Codex Bezae adds “to a certain village” which suggests that he lived in a village between Caesarea and Jerusalem. This would mean that they stopped at his house on their way to Jerusalem. However, it makes more sense that Mnason had a house in Jerusalem, since verse seventeen says that the brethren in Jerusalem “received us gladly.” The “us” includes Mnason.

There are differing opinions on whether he was an older man or an early convert. Either way, it demonstrates that Mnason was an open minded individual who accepted that Jesus fulfilled prophecy. He accepted that Jesus was God. He accepted that Jesus had died, had been resurrected, and had ascended back to heaven. He accepted that Jesus was the Son of God.

Mnason very probably knew Barnabas, since Barnabas was a native Cyprian. It is possible Barnabas converted him. Barnabas was wealthy and it may be that Mnason was as well since he had property in Jerusalem.

It seems he was an active member of the church, as those from Caesarea brought him with them. We don’t know why he was in Caesarea. But obviously he was of good reputation among the brethren.

They all knew what Agabus had prophesied about Paul going to Jerusalem. They all knew Paul would be arrested. It took courage for Mnason and the others to go to Jerusalem with him. Especially

courageous for Mnason since it was his house in which Paul would stay. His association with Paul could get him in real trouble with the Jewish leadership.

If he was an old man, he is an example that the elderly can aid in the work of the church. He had a house which he allowed to be used by a great missionary of the church and those with him. He was a man of hospitality. If old, he also is testimony that the elderly can be taught and converted.



A Truly Liberated Woman — Lydia

By Jake Schotter

A Study of Acts 16:11-15

INTRODUCTION

I love reading biographies of historical figures; there is a lot to be learned from the life of a person who has lived before me. Biographies, however, are even more powerful in the Bible. There are at least four great reasons Biblical biography stands out in the midst of regular 'folk.'

First, a biography translates truth into action. Theology, by itself, is dry and boring to most people. While it is certainly valid, all it becomes is information — it becomes abstract. We need to not only discuss the truth, but we need to live it out.

Second, a biography brings theological truths out of the dark because we are able to relate to them. A biography, then, creates a special relationship with those whom we admire. When we study the life of a person in the Bible, we feel like we have just met a friend. We begin to feel close to them and we become grateful for them as we get to know them more.

Third, a biography offers stability when we go through similar experiences. A great example is the life of David who experienced the death of his baby or dealing with an oppressive superior. Or, like Elijah, you're dealing with a strained relationship with your mother. As a young man, I am often dealing with sexual temptation, as Joseph did.

Fourth, these biographies help us maintain a divine perspective on life. It is easy for many of us to become worriers, burdened by failure. When this is the case, we can study the life of Peter, and we'll find a man driven by his own emotions. Impulsive to a fault, he spoke without thinking and had habits that led him to deny his Lord on three different occasions. Yet, you and I are encouraged to see how the Lord restored His fallen friend and his rebound after that.

The Bible is a book about real life, showing real people growing through real experiences in a real world. When you see lives portrayed, you see the negative with the positive. The Holy Spirit gives us stories of these people because we are just like them and their experiences will help us understand our lives, as well.

Knowing the power of biblical biography, we are going to examine a truly liberated woman. Years ago, there was a women's liberation movement. Today, we recognize it as feminism. The feminists are crying out about needing to be liberated, but they don't have the faintest idea what liberation truly is! The idea they give off is that libera-

tion is going to work, putting kids in a day-care facility, having abortions whenever they want, the ability to fool around sexually, blatant lesbianism, among many other things. But this is not true liberation!

Do you get the idea? Liberation, to these women, is shrinking the responsibilities of the home and violating the

God-given pattern of love and submission. The only true liberation a woman can have is the contentment to be what God designed her to be. When you submit your life to the plan of God, you are liberated.

*When you submit your
life to the plan of God,
you are liberated.*

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PAUL AND COMPANY (16:11-13)

"So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled."

Before we get into the account of Lydia, let's set the geographical context (16:11-12). In Troas, Paul received a vision of a man saying to go to Macedonia. After concluding with his colleagues that God had indeed called them to go there, they left immediately. They sailed across the Aegean Sea and disembarked at Neapolis, the port city for Philippi. "From Neapolis the missionaries walked on the Egnatian Way the ten miles to Philippi. This city was also a 'Roman colony,' and enjoyed a rich history. Named after the father of Alexander the Great, Philipp II, the city had come under Roman control in 168 B.C. At that time Macedonia was divided into four administrative districts. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia, but Philippi was a 'leading city' in the first of the four districts. Because of its status as a colony, the city was populated with many retired Roman soldiers, but there were few Jews."¹

Once they arrived in Philippi (16:13), they stayed there for a few days and waited for the Sabbath so Paul and company could go to the synagogue and preach the Word. Now, why does Paul go to the synagogue, first? There are at least 3 reasons. The first reason Paul went to the Jews first is because if he went to the Gentiles first, the Jews would have never taken him in. Secondly, the Jews would have a hearing for him and a place to speak because he was Jewish and a former Pharisee. Finally, he went to the Jews because if he could win some of them to Christ; they could help evangelize the Gentiles.

Now that they were ready for the Sabbath, two connected cause-and-effects are found. In Philippi, there was no synagogue. For a synagogue to be started, there had to be at least 10 men. As far as I can see, there was little to no men at all in Philippi. As a result, they had to go "out of the city by a riverside." Asking around town, the team learned that the only place for Jews to gather and worship was outside the city by a river, so that became their launching pad for the gospel, even though only women were in attendance. Since they had no synagogue, which was the standard "place of prayer," they met by the river. Why would they be by the river? One of the most important things the Jews

did in their worship was ceremonial cleansing. The word *proseuche*, according to A.T. Robertson, means an open air enclosure near a body of water for ceremonial actions.²

Now that we have set the scene, everything changes as we meet a lady named Lydia.

II. THE CONDITION OF LYDIA AND HER WORK (16:14A-B)

"A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics"

Quickly, we are introduced to a woman named Lydia. *Lydia* is also the area in which she is from. Her home city was located in the Roman province of Lydia, thus her name was probably associated with her place of origin. In this area of Asia Minor, there was the city of Thyatira. We know this place because of its mention in Revelation. But, in archaeological studies, they have determined that there was a large Jewish synagogue there. We can only conjecture, but it would be nice to say that a major reason for there being a synagogue in Thyatira, was because of Lydia's conversion.

Her occupation was a "seller of purple" fabrics. Thyatira was famous for its purple dye. Homer, in the *Iliad*, says that the art of women in this city and the surrounding area was the art of dyeing the purple. So, we do have historical evidence that this woman came from the right place and she did what the other women in that area did. Now, the trade was interesting as well. There were two kinds of dyes that were used. The first kind was for the rich people – royalty. They got this purple dye from a shellfish by squeezing out drop by drop this colored pigment. The rich people would purchase this and have dye their clothing. Now, as people normally do, the regular folk wanted this color as well in their clothing. However, the shellfish was of a limited quantity and was very expensive. So, a cheaper dye was made by extracting from a Madder Root.

The bottom line is this: Lydia was a very successful woman. This enabled her to have a large enough house to accommodate the missionary team (v. 15) and the new church at Philippi (v. 40). This was the business she was in and the Lord, through her business, had amazing plans.

¹ Gaertner, Dennis. **Acts**. The College Press NIV Commentary Series. Joplin: College Press Publishing Company, 2001: 252-253.

² Robertson, A.T. **Acts**. Word Pictures in the New Testament Series, vol. 3. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930:250.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LYDIA THAT LED TO HER LIBERATION (16:14C)

"a worshipper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."

I want you to notice, as we go through this last section of the text, that when Lydia was saved, the Lord did not kick her out of business and tell her to go home to do the dishes. In fact, the Lord loves an enterprising woman. A chapter every woman should be familiar with is Proverbs 31. In this chapter, we observe that God loves enterprising women as long as it does not interfere with their responsibility to her husband and the home (Proverbs 31:16-18).

Notice, also, three things that make Lydia so commendable and led to her conversion. Her first characteristic was that she worshipped God (v. 14c) – she was a seeker. This means that she has already turned away from paganism, having probably been involved with a polytheistic type of god, typical to the Greeks. This characteristic began her conversion. Somewhere along the line, she turned to the true God and sought Him out. In the book of Acts, she is among a group of people identified as proselytes: God-fearers, converts that are infants in the faith, and Jews that weren't born Jewish. This is made possible because "the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul." This is one thing you will see taught in most churches; you will hear about the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. In this case, and many more, they say that the Holy Spirit miraculously opened her heart. However, there is nothing supernatural here because her heart's opening was accomplished by listening to Paul and the other preachers. It was God's word that penetrated her

heart to respond. This is evidenced even further when we look at other Biblical passages.

"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, 'Beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:14-17).

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In order to be saved, you must hear the message of God to be pierced to the heart. How can you change without an initiative, a starting point? Salvation comes to those who hear and believe the facts of the gospel.

"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

This is the power of the message of Christ one is to hear before they are saved. It is powerful! John MacArthur, in his study Bible, wrote, "While the Word of God is comforting and nourishing to those who believe, it is a tool of judgment and execution for those who have not committed themselves to Jesus Christ" (p. 1871).

"If anyone is willing to do His will, He will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:17).

It is the doctrine of Christ that saves us. However, we must know that doctrine and have it change us. That is what the Gospel does in our lives.

"How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart" (Psalm 119:2).

"So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord" (Hosea 6:3).

The second commendable characteristic of Lydia was that she listened to the message of God; she was a listener. After we read she worshipped God, the next word we see is *heard*. She heard the message she needed. Unlike several incidents in the life of Jesus and the apostles (Matthew 13:14-15; Acts 28:26-28; John 8:43-45; et. al.), Lydia listened!

Finally, Lydia was not only a seeker and a listener, but she was *receptive* to the message of God! The lady heard everything she needed to know to be liberated. The ministers in that little place of prayer by the river planted important, life-changing seeds of salvation—that was all they could do! We plant the seeds—that's the gospel message. God gives the increase—that's salvation. What kind of ground are you? That's the dependent clause—everything that is going to happen hinges on the person and their heart's receptivity.

IV. THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA AND HER LIBERATION (16:15)

"And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us."

As we progress through the narrative of Lydia's conversion, we come to the point where she decides to be baptized. Now, did you notice what is missing? There is no debate about whether or not she should be baptized! Baptism is an automatic response, a logical and natural progression of obedience after hearing and believing the doctrine of Christ (John 7:17). I strongly believe that she must have had a tremendous influence because she was such a lovely lady: not only was she baptized, but

her whole household! In this day and time, her family most likely included servants, as well.

After her baptism, the church at Philippi was started in her own home! Two things Lydia demonstrated in her life: she had the determination to put her Christianity to work and she displayed unwavering courage (note the context of v. 40). When she did that, she was literally asking if she displayed a living and saving faith – "If you have found me to be genuine." Based on what we have learned, I believe, Luke, Paul, and the others, were persuaded to stay with this household for a while. Lydia and her household were the official beginning of the church in Philippi.

Women were very important at the church of Philippi, as we have seen in the beginning of this church's history. Paul remembered these events and was thankful for them (Philippians 1:3-5). But, other women, later on, became the directors of discord that Paul had to correct (Philippians 4:2). Nonetheless, women were integral to the history of Philippi's congregation.

CONCLUSION

So, ladies, do not be discontent with God's marvelous plan that He has designed for you! When you submit to His will, His way,

great things will not only occur for you, but more importantly, the Kingdom as well.

Ladies, we need more of you to be like her!

Men, we need to look for these Lydias and encourage them!

Editor's Note: Jake Schotter's series from Ephesians 4 will return in the next issue. Just as we need to encourage "Lydias," we also need to encourage "Jakes." Jake is a young man (not even in college yet) who wants to preach the gospel. I know, just from talking with him and reading what he's written, that he will be a great asset to the Lord's church. Look for more "Jakes"!

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obedience after hearing
and believing the
doctrine of Christ*

The Eternal Purpose of God

By Jeremie Beller

The people of God have long struggled with the issue of race relations. Jonah was so distraught by the thought of God forgiving the Ninevites that he cried, “It is better for me to die than to live” (Jonah 4:8, ESV). James and John recommended fire from heaven on the Samaritan village for its refusal to receive Jesus (Luke 9:54).

Questions of race were among the earliest and most profound challenges facing our first century brothers and sisters. It is one thing to preach “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21); it’s another thing to practice it. Preaching and baptizing Cornelius and his household met little resistance back in Jerusalem – after all, who needs the gospel more than Gentiles? The thing Peter had to defend most was the fellowship meal that followed (Acts 11:3). Table fellowship implied full acceptance and equality. How could a non-Jew be equal to a Jew?

Cornelius’ conversion and Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 13-14) opened such a can of worms that the church had to meet to decide what to do about all the Gentiles responding to the gospel. Can non-Jews really be fully accepted as brothers and sisters in Christ? Even Paul’s arrest in Acts 21 was in large part due to the issue of race relations. The mere hint that a non-Jew would be brought into the temple area led to the slamming of the temple gates (see Acts 21:28-31). It should be noted that Isaiah pointed to foreigners in the temple as a sign of Israel’s restoration, see Isaiah 56:6-7). Just to emphasize further the magnitude of the issue, race relations plays a significant role in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians.

Unfortunately, the challenge of race relations extended beyond the first century. Multiple voices have pointed out the church’s reluctance to engage the issue of race during the Civil Rights era. As our minority brothers and sisters struggled for equality

in all areas of life, many voices in the church remained silent. While significant time and attention was devoted to such topics as the Holy Spirit, Church Cooperation, and the millennial controversies, far less energy was devoted to the most pressing issue of race relations. Some silence was born out of the naive view that race relations were a non-issue among churches of Christ.¹ The noticeable silence also grew out of the doctrinal conviction that the church’s purpose was in souls and not social structures.²

One only needs to look at the struggle of our black brothers and sisters to gain admittance to our Christian Universities to see that segregation was indeed a major issue in the church. Further evidence can be found in the development of a black University (Southwestern Christian), a black publication (*The Christian Echo*), and a black lectureship program (National Lectureship), all due, in part, to the absence of full acceptance in far too many circles. Segregation was, and still remains, a major issue for the church.

As to the doctrinal claim, the conversation of souls can and must have social implications. Jesus’ ministry did not unfold in a social vacuum. The social implications of his “Kingdom of God” message are often what got him trouble, i.e., eating with publicans and sinners (Luke 15) and talking to a Samaritan woman (John 4). If the will of God is carried out “on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew

¹ Ruel Lemmons wrote, “We do not believe that segregation has ever been a problem with the Lord’s Church...we have never had a problem here” Ruel Lemmons, “The Church and Integration” *Firm Foundation* (31 March 1964): 194

² Lemmons also observed, “Christianity and church were neither planned in heaven nor commissioned on earth to revolutionize existing governments nor to uproot social structures.” (ibid.)

6:10), the broken social structures of the old creation must be challenged as the new creation becomes a reality. Paul believed baptism carried radical social implications, "...neither Jew nor Greek ...slave nor free...male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The relevancy of the gospel comes in part through its implications for social concerns of the here and now.

If the church is to be the true body of Christ, it cannot ignore or half-heartedly engage the issue of race relations. Paul's description of the church being part of God's "eternal purpose" (Ephesians 3:10-11) is in direct relation to the question of race relations. Perhaps unintentionally, the impression has often been created that God's eternal plan was to set up congregations of people hiding in church buildings, meeting every Sunday to sing, sit through sermons, take communion, take up a collection and offer prayers. As long as such people meet and carry out those tasks, then it is often implied that God's eternal purpose lives on. But given the context of Ephesians, and even the broader teachings of the New Testament, the "purpose" of God is far greater.

God's eternal purpose is to join everything in heaven and on earth under the Lordship of Jesus (Ephesians 1:10 – note the echoes of Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6:10). The church's role in the "eternal purpose of God" is to show the broader powers what this looks like (Ephesians 3:10). The "great mystery" (Ephesians 3:8) to which Paul was called to preach was that God was taking Jews and non-Jews and creating "one new man" (Ephesians 2:15), living within the same "household of God" (2:19), constituting the "holy temple of the Lord" (2:21). Paul's list of "ones" in Ephesians 4:4-6 is written to reject a split-race Christianity which would undermine the eternal purpose. Race relations are not a secondary issue for the church, they are a primary concern! Any church/congregation refusing to fully and completely accept anyone in Christ based on their race

or social background cannot be the church of Jesus Christ!

Issues of race relations continue to plague our world. Social media and nightly news carry images of confrontations between young black men and law enforcement. Minority communities continue to have feelings of second class treatment. Fear and distrust remain a defining element between ethnic communities. So where can the voice of the church be heard?

1. ***Acknowledge the failings of the past.*** It does the church no good to defend the indefensible. Voices were too silent. Christian Universities were segregated. Prominent voices said and did indefensible things. "Everyone was that way" does not dismiss the sin of segregation. Repentance begins with admission of guilt.

repentance begins with admission of guilt.

2. ***Understand present perceptions.*** Because of generations of abuse and injustice, a continuing hesitancy of trust remains among minority brothers and sisters toward their white brothers and sisters. This hesitancy exists in the church and within culture at large. While Civil Rights legislation and other policy changes made progress in changing laws, they cannot, and do not, change hearts. We cannot make progress until we acknowledge legitimate perceptions.

3. ***Take intentional steps to move forward.*** Visit a congregation made up of a predominantly different race than your own. Congregations of different racial majorities should work together to minister to the local community. Does the congregational leadership scripturally reflect the diversity of your congregation/community? Build genuine relationships with Christians and non-Christians of a different race.

The eternal purpose of God demands that we get this right. God help us to be a faithful reflection of God's eternal purpose in Christ.

Any church/congregation refusing to fully and completely accept someone in Christ, based on their race or social background, cannot be the church of Jesus Christ!

Forgery and Faith

By William Howard

PART 1

PRICELESS OR WORTHLESS

In 1996 the renowned auction house Sotheby's sold a poem by Emily Dickinson. Forty years had passed since the last Dickinson poem had surfaced. This is the unique event that collectors and museums look for. Like all her poetry it was handwritten in pencil on a slip of paper. It was also signed – Emily. The poem had gone through authentications by experts including authorities on the works and handwriting of Emily Dickinson. Everything was right: paper, handwriting, style, and subject. Everything passed the test and was plausible. Sotheby's spent years building a reputation. Their business is based on trust. Authenticity is all-important.

The final cost was \$21,000 and was sold to the Jones Library in Dickinson's home town of Amherst, Massachusetts and went on display in their Special Collections. That comes to \$1,400 per line or about \$525 per word (including the signature). But after four months the poem was returned to Sotheby's.

The problem is Emily Dickinson did not write it. It was a forgery. The experts were fooled; the piece of paper immediately worthless. The actual poet was a man serving time in a state prison in Draper, Utah. His name was Mark Hofmann. He was a convicted murderer and a prolific forger. The difference between a rare, cherished, artifact, or garbage is described in one word: truth.

Let us now move to the *spiritually* authentic and fraudulent. The Bible proves itself real. It is God's word. It gives all instructions to man with the authority from God to do so. But the religious world overflows with doctrines pretending to be from God. These are forgeries. Jesus spoke of such things in Matthew 15:8-9:

"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

The world has not changed. There are innumerable ideas and teachings presented as valid but not from God. If a doctrine is from Him then it can save. If it is not from God then it is worthless. Authenticity brings validity, but too many people do not check the faith they hold. Millions around the world have followed the teachings of men rather than the teachings of Christ. They honestly and whole-heartedly believe they are doing the will of God but do not know they have been fooled by religious fraud – it looks good and sounds good but cannot save. Men can deceive and be deceived. Go to the proven original. When you have the authentic and can check the truth why go anywhere else? What is actually on the line in the sale of false doctrine? The answer is: a soul lost eternally in hell. Now we go to part two of this story, things which occurred a few years earlier.

PART 2

HOFMANN'S LIE UNCOVERS A LIE

There are two things that are certain. The first is that God's word will never be destroyed or found to be false.

Isaiah 40:8 – The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

The second is that error will be found out.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 – For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Let us begin with the first certainty. If someone came to you claiming to have ancient documents which proved without doubt that the Bible cannot be from God and that Jesus of Nazareth was a fictitious character what would you do? Would you buy it to bury it? Would you try to burn it? Would you ignore it? Your answer would say a lot about

your faith. If you think that any document (ancient or modern) could possibly prove the Bible false then your faith is not with God. If you think that somewhere actual proof against the Bible might surface or has surfaced then you have no faith at all. Nothing destroys the word of God. On the other hand, if your faith is in a lie (even if you think it is the truth) then evidence will arrive anytime to disprove it. What do you do then? Destroy it or follow the truth?

Now we go to the second certainty: error will be found out. Sometimes lies can be exposed in the strangest ways. Lies are so helpless that even a second lie can help uncover the first. In the early 1980's Mark Hofmann began a career dealing in rare books and documents. He was so good at finding unique, historical items that some believed he came upon them by the will of God. The first of his findings was when he accidentally found a paper called the Anthon Transcript. It had been lost for over a hundred years. In 1828 Joseph Smith had jotted down some of the writing from the golden plates he was supposed to be translating into English. Since the golden plates were never seen by anyone but Smith this would be the only example of the writing from the plates which he claimed was Reformed Egyptian. The Mormon Church leaders (who are supposed to be inspired) bought the document immediately. A Mormon scholar actually translated the Reformed Egyptian into English. What is the problem with this? It was a forgery. Hofmann made the document—characters and all. Thus a lie exposed a bigger lie. These men are not quite as inspired as they let on, and I am sure Hofmann laughed to hear his drawings were actually translated.

Before Hofmann was discovered to be a seller and producer of fraudulent objects (and thrown into prison) he sold the Mormon Church more documents with embarrassing implications. He knew they would buy them. One such item came to be called the *Salamander Letter*. This was purportedly Joseph Smith's earlier version of how he came upon the golden plates. In this account a spirit in the form of a white salamander made demands on Smith and refused to let him dig up the "golden bible." The Mormon leadership bought it immediately for \$40,000. Though this was an odd story fabricated by Hofmann, he knew they were likely to buy it. Hoffman (a fellow Mormon) knew they

were hiding stranger things than this concerning Smith. This crazy alternate telling of the tale was the sort of thing Smith was likely to make up. Thus the document had to be secretly purchased and kept out of sight. Evidently one of the duties of being president of the Mormon Church is to cover the truth so everything LDS can be held together. Joseph Smith's behavior can be embarrassing. They did not want more. The less you have to explain the better.

It is as though Hofmann completed a successful sting operation. The inspired Mormon leadership swallowed the bait and were caught in perpetuating and protecting the lie of Joseph Smith. The first was accepting the Anthon Transcript, which is bad enough, but "translating" it exposes coordinated deception deep inside the LDS Church. The second is that even though the Salamander Letter was a forgery it is an indictment on the ones who bought it. They needed it to be swallowed in the shadows of a vault. The point is: they believed the Salamander Letter was real and embarrassing to the Mormon Church, because it was plausible. Smith was just that crazy.

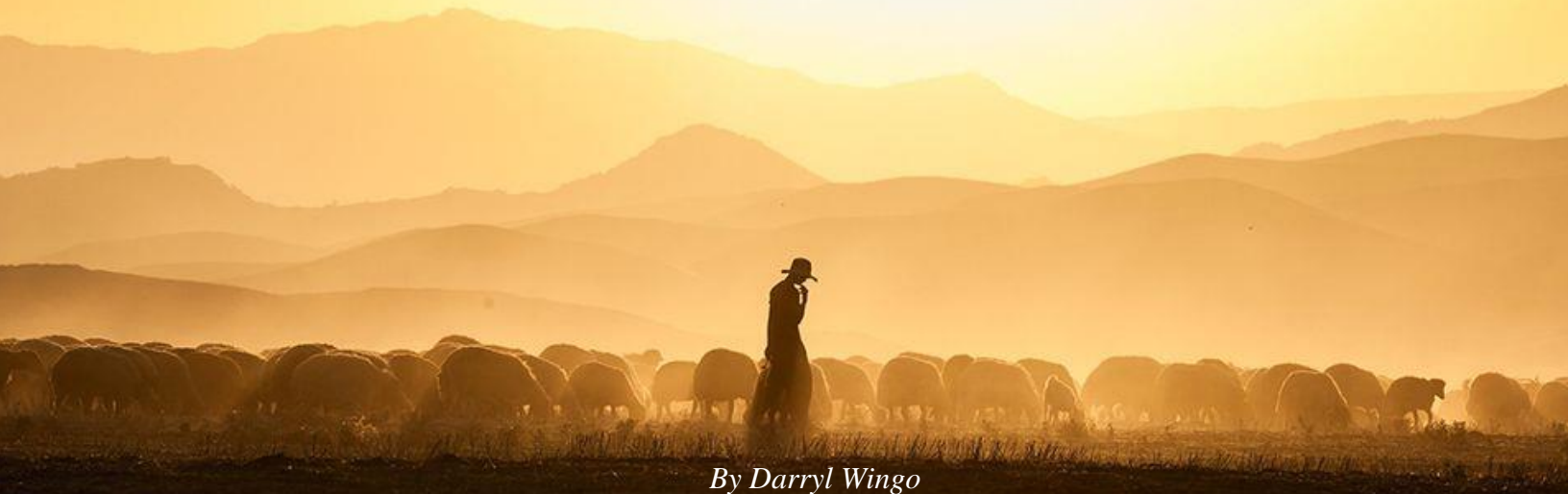
Behind a façade of confidence they know Mormonism has something to worry about. They cannot rest easy on anything written by Joseph Smith because that message did not come from God. The Book of Mormon is a forgery and tell-tale events rise up time and again proving it to be just that.

Those who trust in God's word know the Bible is genuine. Through thousands of years it has passed every conceivable test and is true. The Bible has no mistakes. The behavior of Christ does not have to be concealed in shame. Nothing can stop the word of God. Rest in it. Have faith in it.

Psalm 37:7 – Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him...

Post Script – Mark Hofmann is incarcerated in the Utah State Prison serving a life sentence for the murder of Steven Christensen and Kathy Sheets. He is still regarded as one of the best forgers in U.S. history. Because of that distinction there is now a market for genuine Hofmann forgeries.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK: *Desiring the Work*



By Darryl Wingo

A STATEMENT YOU CAN TRUST

1 Timothy 3:1

When I was a child, I wanted to become a lawyer. As some years passed, I began to realize that becoming a lawyer would involve more than just wanting to become one. There was preparation that must be done up front. There was law school, good grades, acceptance into school, passing tests, etc. Later, I realized that *wanting* was simply a mild beginning. I needed to go far beyond just *wanting*. I really lacked the *desire* to be a lawyer. When *want* meets *desire*, then I would be ready to prepare for the work. Well, want and desire has not met as of yet.

These days it is difficult to trust what some people say. Many are unwilling to search the scriptures to see if it is so (Acts 17:11). However the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:1, “Here is a trustworthy saying. If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task” (NIV).

What is an overseer? In Greek culture the word was used of a presiding official in a civic or religious organization. In 1 Timothy 3:1 it refers to a man who oversees a local congregation. The equivalent word from the Jewish background of Christianity is elder.

H. Leo Boles wrote

“One of the major problems that confronts the churches of Christ today is that of the eldership. Many congregations are inactive because they have not a Scriptural eldership; many others are divided over the question of elders; not a few have open division with opposing parties and factions because they have not sufficient leadership to guide the work and worship of the church. It is sad to think that so many of the churches of Christ are in such a deplorable condition that they cannot fill their mission.”

In order for one to do something well, one must have the desire. The Greek word, pronounced in English ‘orego,’ means to extend, stretch out; to stretch one’s self out, to reach forward to, to desire earnestly, long after. It is not an ordinary desire that is needed to do the job well. The desire must be very strong. He must *want* to do the work. But it goes way beyond want. He must with patience, prayer, and study *prepare* for the eldership.

Another word used for desire is “aspires to” (NRSV). Aspire comes from the word aspirate. It means to breathe upon. It means to seek to attain or accomplish a particular goal. The desire is closely

related to *living* (breath) the desire that is required of the office.

Desire shows right attitude and activity. An activity contained in Acts 20:28, reads “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood” (NIV). The right activity produces caution, courage, and uncompromising decision making. The right attitude allows one to show concern, confidence, and cooperation with those you serve and those you oversee. The right attitude is the desire to keep yourself from being disqualified and to love those whom you desire to shepherd.

Desire for elder’s work does not mean it is a prideful work. It is anything but a position of pride. God hates a proud individual (Proverbs 16:5). Others should not interpret negatively the desire to be an elder. Many times others find critical statements to make when one shows desire to be an elder. So, many times good qualified men refuse to show desire because of the inevitable criticism that follows. Paul says it is a good work. Others cannot also make it a bad thing.

The man aspires or reaches for it because he desires or wants to do it. He is not drafted, sold, or pushed. He reaches for this work because he has a desire to do it (from *Elders, Deacons, Preachers, Saints* by Mike Mazzalongo). I have learned that people show ability to do something before they are designated to do the same thing. In many instances, the person who desires the work will be doing work already. He shows desire by what he does before he actually says “I desire the work of an elder.”

Oftentimes our structures are built on want, prepare, and then you can do. For example, since I thought I wanted to be a lawyer, I had to prepare, dot the “i” and cross the “t”, then I could start lawyering. I think a better way is to desire to do something, do it while preparing to do it well, and then become what you desire to become. If one is not doing anything that is remotely associated with the work he desires, he may not have a deep enough desire to do the work.

In order for one to do something well, one must have the desire. The desire must not be casual but strong. When one has strong desire, he will watch out for all the people God has given him to shepherd (Acts 20:28). When the man has a strong de-

sire, he will lead his own family well and take care of the family of God (1 Timothy 3:5). If the man has a strong desire, he will work hard at leadership, proclaiming, and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17). If the man has a strong desire, he will maintain a good reputation since he watches over God’s work (Titus 1:7). If the man has a strong desire, others will allow themselves to be persuaded by his leadership. If the man has a strong desire, he will keep watch over their souls and give an answer to God (Hebrews 13:17).

Finally, in 1 Peter 5:1c-3 “So, I beg the

older men among you to shepherd God’s flock among you. Watch over them as God wants you to, not because you have to. Do not be in it for the money, but be eager to serve.” These things are key ingredients to serve God’s people well. This is the level of desire necessary to fulfill the work.

*...many times good
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SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK: *“Flock-Hopping” Sheep*

By Scott Wiley

INTRODUCTION

My assignment is to discuss The Shepherd’s Responsibility to “Flock-hopping Sheep.” I thought the question was interesting since I had no memory of anyone addressing the topic before. I did some digging in my book collection, and on the internet and came up empty. As far as I know, the topic has not been addressed in any publication to which I have access. So, for me, this was a blank slate.

I’ve been blessed to know good, godly, effective, shepherding Elders. I’ve also met some Elders who still needed to grow into the job, who probably should not have been installed as Elders yet (“yet” being the operative word here); they were still growing into the job. I’ve met many who really did not understand the role of the Elder; they labored conscientiously at what they *thought* they were to do, not realizing they were failing to meet God’s expectations of what He intended for them to do. And, yes, the spirit of Diotrephes (3 John 9) is alive and well, and still running around (both among some elders AND among those who are not).

We all agree that the Lord should rule His Church, 1 Peter 5:4, that Christ is the Chief Shepherd, that elders serve Christ as shepherds of His flock, but are not themselves, Christ.

NOTE: I am assuming in this discussion that the Elders in place are men who meet the expectations found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. That these are

men, who despite being fallible, and capable of making mistakes in judgment, have God’s intent and the congregation’s best interest at heart.

There are two separate situations here:

1. Those who hop from congregation to congregation every 1-3 years or so, but do place membership for the time they are with a particular flock.
2. Those who attend for varying lengths of time, but do not place membership anywhere.

For the sake of space and time, I am taking the position that formally placing oneself in the congregation and under the shepherd’s guidance is at minimum a practical matter, and should be the normal course action. Others will argue otherwise, but that is another subject. Those in the 1st group, having placed themselves under the Elders’ leadership – even if it’s known that in a year or so they will move on – is not our focus here. I’m assuming that they will act according to what it means to be part of a particular flock until such time as they elect to leave. My focus will be on those in the second group. They attend; move about from flock to flock without ever placing their membership with a particular congregation.

MacArthur offers a concise explanation of congregational membership...

“To become a member of a church is to formally commit oneself to an identifiable, local body of believers who have joined to-

gether for specific, divinely ordained purposes. These purposes include receiving instruction from God's Word (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2), serving and edifying one another through the proper use of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; 1 Pet. 4:10-11), participating in the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and proclaiming the gospel to those who are lost (Matt. 28:18-20). In addition, when one becomes a member of a church, he submits himself to the care and the authority of the biblically qualified elders that God has placed in that assembly."¹

(All Scripture from ASV unless otherwise noted)

THE PROBLEM STATED.

The role of an elder (aka shepherd, pastor, bishop, overseer) is challenging. Among those challenges are those who attend for a while and then move on to another congregation. What is the responsibility of the Shepherds to sheep who hop from flock to flock?

To be fair, there are a lot of different reasons why folk move congregation to congregation, refusing to place membership anywhere. And not all who do, fit into the same categories. For instance, I know a man who has an almost psychological fear of responsibility, if he does not place membership, then he is not responsible for any errant actions or false teaching of the congregation, nor will he be asked to accept responsibility for any particular work within the congregation, he cannot handle stress.

¹ From an internet article titled Church Membership, by John MacArthur . I had written something longer, but came across this and being shorter and more to the point, replaced my words with his.

SOME GENERAL REASONS WHY SOME 'FLOCK-HOP':

For some there are doctrinal issues on the line. They can't find a congregation that matches up with all the doctrines they hold dear and/or consider non-negotiable, and lacking the ability to bring others to their point of view, they move on after a while.

For some there are areas of personal power and/or personal significance on the line. They have a need for significance if not outright power, but cannot seem to find it, so after a while they move on, in hopes of finding some place where that desire can be filled.

In a large number of cases, it's simple Consumerism. Where can they get the most 'bang for the buck'? What programs or ministries can the congregation provide to meet their needs (real or imagined) or desires? They stay as long as the need is met, but if needs change, or, are not being met, off they go seeking a bigger, better deal.

Then there are the Free-Agents. When they attend services at all, it's not with the idea that they are a part of a congregation – part of a flock. They may see themselves as part of the "universal" flock, but they will not commit to any congregation. That way they have no responsibility to work for the good of the flock, nor

are they accountable to anyone, particularly to the congregation's leadership. Yet, they expect to properly receive all the benefits provided by the flock, without any obligations to the flock. I guess it's a very American, consumer-driven approach, but they did not learn this from the Bible.

The Holy Spirit through Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:12ff of the relationship of the individual to the congregation. In Romans 12:4-5, the Holy Spirit through Paul expresses this relationship saying:

...they expect to properly receive all the benefits provided by the flock, without any obligations to the flock.

“For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another.”

It is the body that sees through the eyes, smells through the nose, and hears through the ears. Neither the eyes, nose, ears work alone, nor work for themselves alone. The congregation is the body of Christ, yet free agents see themselves as independent and therefore withhold their abilities, or use their abilities for themselves.

Oh, I suppose some see themselves as providing some service by remaining aloof and unattached they set themselves up as self-appointed hawks, soaring above the folk in the church and pointing out every weakness and failing. Yep, that’s what the church really needs, more critics and fewer workers.

We live in a time where folk think they can embrace Christ and still live as free agents neither responsible nor accountable to anyone. They may say that they are accountable only to Christ, but their refusal to embrace a role in the church is a rejection of His Lordship.

Other folk may have other types of reasons than those I mention, for flock-hopping... but generally within the limits of my experience, I think most folk fall into the above or similar reasons.

SHEPHERDS’ RESPONSIBILITIES

What is the nature of Shepherding?

Shepherding is a powerful description in both the Old and New Testament. Without being exhaustive, we can quickly make some deductions about the shepherd’s task.

The Holy Spirit through Ezekiel is informative:

*“And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! **Should not the shepherds feed the sheep?** Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill the fatlings; **but ye feed not the sheep.** The diseased have ye **not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye***

*bound up that which was broken, neither have ye **brought back that which was driven away,** neither have ye **sought that which was lost;** but with force and with rigor have ye ruled over them.”* (Ezekiel 34:1-4)

Ezekiel listed the duties of the Shepherds as strengthening the weak, healing the sick, feeding the flock, protecting the sheep and searching for the lost sheep.

About a century ago, A. I. Hobbs wrote:

“...the relation of the bishop to the congregation is analogous to that of the shepherd of the flock; only one is spiritual, and the other physical. As the shepherd watches the flock to ward off the beast of prey; to lead them beside the still waters and over the green pastures; to bring back the wandering to the fold; to go in and out before them, and treat them with such tenderness that they will love his voice and follow him with cheerful alacrity; so the shepherd of the spiritual fold should smite the wolf in sheep’s raiment, that comes but to “scatter, tear, and slay,” and lead the flock into the rich pastures of divine truth, and beside still waters of divine grace, and follow the lost one through the labyrinths of Satan’s devices, and bear him gently back to the fold. To go in and out before them in such holiness, with such unctuous piety of heart and purity of life, and genial love for each and for all, that everyone will hail his presence with delight, and be uneasy if he is out of sight.”

The job of the shepherd is to see that the flock prospers. That the sheep are healthy, strong, get the food and exercise they need as well as the rest and protection good health requires.

What are the Shepherds’ responsibilities to both the flock and the flock-hopping sheep?

Love for the Brethren

Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:14 all use the phrase, “love of the Brethren.”

Elders, men of experience, hospitality, and proven faith, will exhibit this trait to all the brethren regardless of whether folk regard themselves as members of that Shepherds’ particular flock or not.

1 John 3:14 translates – *agapao* – love in the moral or social sense.

The rest translate - *philadelphia* – love in the sense of fraternal affection.

Whether we're dealing with members of the flock or not, still, a good beginning point for Elders to consider in their responsibilities to others is "*love of the Brethren.*" This would be the bare minimum, and when we meditate on the idea, we find there is nothing 'minimum' about such love.

Who is my brother?

Marshal Keeble, a much loved preacher of an earlier generation, was asked why he called all men "*Brother.*" Keeble replied that all men are his brothers, "*If I miss 'em in Christ, I'll hit 'em in Adam.*"

In Gen 1:27 we learn that mankind is created in God's image:

And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

The beginning place for our response to our neighbors (Christians or not) begins with the creation and who we are before God and in relation to all other human beings. As God-imagers everyone has an inherent right to be treated with justice, respect and dignity, mercy and love. The command of both Testaments is that we love our neighbor as ourselves and is the natural extension of whole-hearted love for God, if for no other reason than our neighbor is made in God's image.

God's image in every person is the moral and ethical foundation for every commandment that governs how we ought to treat our fellow humans. Believers or not, it calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Note Rom 13:

...he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor.

James 3:9-12 points to the image of God in men and women as an argument for our speech to be seasoned with grace and kindness.

Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God: out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter? Can a fig tree, my brethren, yield olives, or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield sweet.

That same principle works when discussing Christians who will not commit to the local congregation.

Descended from the first father and mother, all mankind are brothers and sisters. Both the creation and family aspects call for the proper treatment of people. This would also include those who move from congregation to congregation. The "weightier matters" apply to all (Matt 23:23).

Accountable for the souls

For those who place themselves as members of the flock, Hebrews 13:1ff applies. Inclusive of...

Let love of the brethren continue. [...] (vs 7) Remember them that have the rule over you², men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.

There is a special relationship with those who place themselves as part of the flock to consider the leadership... Vs 1 "*Let love of the brethren continue*" is reciprocal. It's a shame that some folk do not reciprocate the love they expect from the leaders back to the leaders.³

² If we downplay the importance of membership, it is difficult to see how we could take these commands to submit and to lead seriously and practically. Many won't place membership simply because they will not accept the rule of anyone over them. I know a preacher who served only in congregations without elders. In my presence he said that once a congregation gets elders, he's moving on, "No janitor" was going to tell him how to do his job.

³ Hebrews 13:17. Now the Holy Spirit says that there are those who watch over our souls and God will hold them accountable, that to these folks we are to submit. Our Americanism says that we don't have to submit to no one, not no way, not no how. The Holy Spirit, through scripture, says we do. The Holy Spirit in His Scriptures tells us that there are some specific leaders in the church we are to submit to. Some try to avoid this by saying the word "elders" is not in the text.

READ 1 Peter 5:1-5. "*be subject unto the Elders.*"

These same Elders are told to "Shepherd the folk of God ex-

The Shepherds are not accountable for the souls of those who are not part of their flock. Not in the same sense they are for those within the flock. And this has some practical ramifications, for instance.

For one, the resources of the local congregation are usually limited. It may be that in some cases a choice must be made between use of resources for the flock, or a member of the flock, or for one who is not of the flock.

Second, when it comes to the uses of those resources, non-members do not have the same “voice” as members. I am aware of a congregation that was convinced to add on to their building, largely by folk who were non-member flock-hoppers, when the work was done, and the bills came in, they had already moved on, and the congregation was nearly bankrupted. Wise Shepherds will consider the input of those in their congregation, folk with a vested interest in the overall, long-term well-being of the congregation and those within it. Non-members may have some good input, but lack the same investment in the flock, and will likely not be around when the bill comes due. Wise Shepherds will bear that in mind.

An interesting question was posed to a Sunday School class I was part of many years ago. “*What if a person is a spiritual 9, on a 10 point Scale, and the Elder is only a spiritual 6?*”

My response was, “*If the person is a spiritual 9 they already know the answer. The same as when the wife is a spiritual 9 but her husband is a spiritual 6.*” Biblical submission still applies in both cases.

exercising oversight” (serving as overseers -NIV) and – if they do well, and so, according to the will of God – when the Chief Shepherd appears they will receive the unfading crown of glory.

1Tim 5:17: *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.*

The Holy Spirit, through the scriptures, says that the Elders have oversight in the congregation, the congregation is to submit to them, so that would indicate that they are included in those leaders to whom we are to submit, and who will be held accountable for our souls.

Is it logical then to say they are to:

- Exercise oversight without authority?
- They are to rule well without ruling?
- They have no authority to rule, but are considered worthy of double honor for ruling well?
- They are responsible and held accountable for others but have no authority to carry out responsibility?

It may be that the flock-hopper won’t place membership because they overestimate their own spiritual maturity and refuse the rule and accountability of those whom they consider their spiritual inferiors.

Equipping the Saints

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting [equipping] of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Shepherds (pastors) are among those responsible for perfecting/equipping the saints for ministry. While generally speaking, this would include members and non-members alike, for the shepherd his primary focus of accountability is on those within his flock.

When the saints are equipped, they do the work of ministry, and this results in the body being built up. This provides strong motivation for us to serve in the church. Bringing folk to maturity implies opportunities to find and develop their gifts. When these opportunities arise to preach, teach a class, serve the Lord’s Supper, lead song or prayer, head up a project or special event, and so forth, the elder’s focus will be on using and developing the talent pool within the congregation. It’s these folks’ talents and maturity the Shepherds will be held accountable for developing. Opportunities to develop the spiritual muscles belong to the flock first, then, if at all, secondarily to those who will not join the flock.

Serving in the Worship

When men serve in the corporate worship, in a sense they act as representatives of the body in the service to the body. Accountable for the souls of the flock, the Shepherds will emphasize use of the members in serving, and may elect not to use non-members who attend. It may be a case of knowledge regarding why the Flock-hopper refuses to place membership, such as holding a potentially destructive doctrine⁴ or agenda⁵. It may be the rea-

⁴To be ‘destructive’ is not limited to false teaching. Could be a liberty, or area of opinion which is not destructive in and of itself, but there are folk who are more than ready to sacrifice the faith of others on the altar of their liberties, soap-boxes and/or personal preferences.

son the person won't place membership is due to impenitent sin (past or present). In the minds of some, by participating in the service, they see an endorsement of the person and create a potential legitimizing of the person's claims and/or agenda.

G.C. Brewer offers this:

*"... the imagery here is very beautiful. The church is the flock; Christ is the chief shepherd, and the elders are the under-shepherds. As the shepherd feeds his flock and protects them from wolves and bears, thieves and robbers, so the elders must care for the church. They must protect it from evils without and within. They should keep out false teachers. If there is a hobbyist in the congregation, the elders should not give him any recognition as a public teacher, and should keep him from sowing discord among the brethren as far as is possible for them to prevent it. Care is needed here; "For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers," even today. The elders should show the proper spirit in this sort of work, of course..."*⁶

It may also be due to not knowing why the person hops from flock to flock. If the person refuses to explain their practice, it could well be that sin is behind the refusal, and by moving about, they seek to avoid accountability.

We live in a time where society has replaced righteousness with tolerance as the guiding principle and leading virtue. I'm not much of a fan of Josh McDowell, but he gets it right when he wrote:

"We must aggressively practice love. Everyone loves love, it seems, but few recognize

how incompatible love is with the new tolerance. Tolerance simply avoids offending someone; we must help our children live in love, which actively seeks to promote the good of another person.

Tolerance says, 'You must approve of what I do.'

Love responds, 'I must do something harder; I will love you, even when your behavior offends me.'

Tolerance says, 'You must agree with me.'

Love responds, 'I must do something harder; I will tell you the truth, because I am convinced 'the truth will set you free.'

Tolerance says, 'You must allow me to have my way.'

Love responds, 'I must do something harder; I will plead with you to follow the right way, because I believe you are worth the risk.'

Tolerance seeks to be inoffensive; love takes risks.

Tolerance glorifies division; love seeks unity.

*Tolerance costs nothing; love costs everything."*⁷

Love for the Brethren would call for the shepherds to investigate and take appropriate action, not because they are nosy or judgmental, but because a soul may hang in the balance.

CONCLUSION

While the responsibilities of the shepherds to the flock reflects a different type of relationship than that had with the flock-hopper, still, the flock-hopper is made in the image of God, a brother/sister in Christ and in Adam, to be treated according to the "weightier matters" (Matt 23:23) reflecting the respect, dignity, and ethical treatment those relationships reflect.

The Shepherds, being men of hospitality and good will, will get to know the Flock-hopper to the

⁵ Some of us are old enough to remember when young men and women would come to town with a high moral and spiritual tone and engage members – especially those around their own ages – in deep spiritual conversations, over time gather a number of like-minded members and then either try to take over the congregation in the name of the "Cross-roads movement / Boston Church / International Church of Christ" or draw folk off from the local congregation to start their own. Their 'shepherds' were elsewhere, not local. I am aware of a man who moved to a nearby town and overtime gathered a following from within the congregation and then led them out to start his own congregation. Turns out he had been receiving support from another congregation while he did so. Meditate on Acts 20:17-31 (esp. vs 17, 28-31).

⁶ G.C. Brewer, *The Model Church*, p 43.

⁷ Found in various websites and books and articles.

degree that that person will allow, and seek to go the extra-mile to assist the Flock-hopper in their spiritual walk. Hopefully, helping the Flock-hopper to mature and overcome the obstacles to congregational membership.

Moral, ethical treatment is called for, but that does not mean that the relationships, privileges, and responsibilities to, and for, the Flock-hopper is the same as with the Flock. Keep in mind that it is the choice of the Flock-hopper to accept permanent 'visitor' status.

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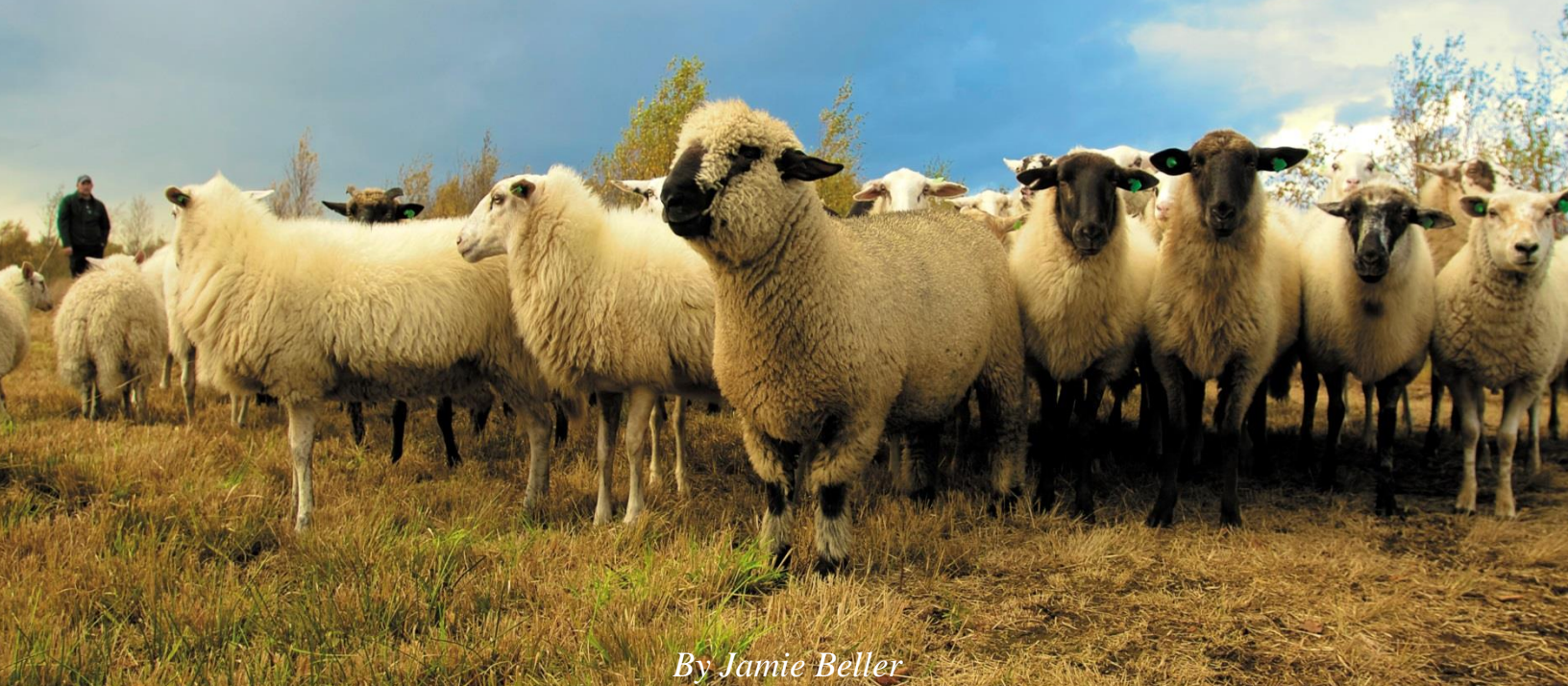
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SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK:

Learning From The Chief Shepherd

PART ONE



By Jamie Beller

One of the most prominent illustrations used with regards to leadership in Scripture is that which portrays spiritual leaders as shepherds. By inspiration, the prophet Ezekiel uses the analogy of spiritual leaders being shepherds. The text declares, “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed their flocks?” (Ezekiel 34:2).¹

The portrayal of spiritual leaders as shepherds is also seen in the New Testament. For instance, Jesus references the leaders of Israel as shepherds: “When he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). When admonishing the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul clearly understood the shepherding model, drawing on the analogy of shepherding, and charging them to “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the

Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Likewise, Peter used the metaphor of elders as shepherds as he charged them to “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:2-4). Within this short text, Peter impresses upon the reader the responsibilities, the readiness, and the reward of those who shepherd.

These aforementioned texts, as well as others, present a necessary perspective concerning spiritual leadership of God’s people. Further, the analogy of spiritual leaders being shepherds expresses that leadership over God’s people requires the compassion and courage that are essential for a shepherd over sheep, as well as the maturity necessary for leading sheep. Imagine a chief shepherd entrusting

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

his flock to an individual who desires to be a shepherd, but is immature, and indifferent toward the flock. Do we suppose that the Chief Shepherd—Jesus Christ—would do such when it comes to the sheep of God’s flock? When it comes to learning about shepherding, from whom can we best learn than the Chief Shepherd? When we study shepherding from the Chief Shepherd, what lessons do we learn which can help shepherds become *better* shepherds?

Before addressing the lessons we can learn from the Chief Shepherd, we must briefly examine what seems to be an unfortunate trend in spiritual leadership: ignorance and indifference toward shepherding. If you serve as an elder, what do you know about shepherding, and from whom did you learn it? While this question may seem elementary, we must recognize that in far too many congregations, the spiritual leadership has been entrusted to those who are, or have been, business leaders, college professors, teachers, military leaders, or others who have excelled in some type of secular leadership. While these positions of leadership may be commendable, they alone do not qualify one to be a shepherd. In fact, one of the greatest challenges confronting the church today is that so many have forsaken, or at the very least forgotten the shepherding model of leadership, and settled for a business model of leadership, where profit, and not people, is the greatest concern. When such becomes the concern, the people of God, and the purpose of God are often sacrificed on the altars of profit and popular opinion. For this, and other reasons, we need to emphasize the shepherding model of leadership; and in doing so, we need to learn the many lessons that can be learned from the Chief Shepherd.

LESSON ONE: A GOOD SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP

One of the most important lessons that shepherds can learn from the Chief Shepherd is that a

good shepherd knows his sheep. Jesus declared, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14). To appreciate the principle, consider that this passage draws a contrast between Jesus, the true shepherd, and the hireling (vv. 12-13). Commenting on the term *hireling*, brother Guy N. Woods observes,

*“He who is a ‘hireling’ is such, not simply because he works for wages, but because the wages are his only or chief consideration. His main concern is not for the sheep but for himself. The shepherds of Palestine were not usually owners of the flock but they were expected to exercise the same care and concern the owners would, this being a characteristic of a true shepherd.”*²

*One cannot be a
good shepherd
and lack care and
concern for the
sheep, whether
individually or
collectively, that
he shepherds.*

As harsh as it may sound, while a man may possess a desire to serve as an elder (1 Tim. 3:1), if he lacks care and concern for those whom he may potentially lead, he is no more qualified to serve in such capacity as is the one who lacks the desire to serve. One cannot be a good shepherd and lack care and concern for the sheep, whether individually or collectively, that he shepherds.

By contrast, a good shepherd is one who possesses a “happy relationship subsisting between himself and his flock—one of mutual regard and understanding.”³ This relationship promotes relationships—the shepherd not only knowing the sheep, but also being known by the sheep. Sadly, this writer can recall congregations where this relationship between shepherds and sheep is far from a happy one. When this relationship is less than a happy one, is it any wonder that some become so discouraged? Both shepherds and sheep must seek to build this happy relationship.

² Woods, Guy N. *A Commentary on The Gospel According to John*, Vol. 4. (Nashville, TN.: Gospel Advocate, Co, 1989), page 210.

³ *Ibid.*, page 211.

As it relates to the principle of a shepherd knowing his sheep, consider that knowing the sheep expresses not merely an *intellectual* knowledge, but an *intimate* knowledge. The difference is that, as it relates to a sheep that has wondered, a shepherd with an intellectual knowledge knows the sheep has wondered, while a shepherd with an intimate knowledge knows not only that the sheep has wondered, but also seeks to find the wandering sheep.

While space does not permit an extensive discussion of the aforementioned principle, consider some of the areas in which shepherds can learn from the Chief Shepherd about knowing the sheep whom they shepherd. First, shepherds can learn that knowing the sheep whom they shepherd means knowing they are struggling. It is hard a fathom a shepherd who would stand by and watch as one of his sheep was entangled in the briars, or was becoming weighed down due to running waters. The imagery of the 23rd Psalm seems to express the care that a good shepherd provides to a sheep in the midst of a struggle. Yet, how many times members and shepherds are alike surprised to learn that another member has been struggling for days, months, or even years!!! One is particularly impressed with the compassion that Jesus had for people when he would see them struggling and be as “sheep having no shepherd” (Mark 6:34). Whether the struggle is physical or spiritual, a good shepherd, knowing the sheep whom he shepherds, ought to have such a relationship with the sheep that they will be confident to communicate such struggles to the shepherds.

Second, shepherds can learn from the Chief Shepherd about knowing when the sheep are straying. Shepherds, it is a shame if a sheep of the flock you shepherd has gone astray, and has been astray for weeks, months, and even years before you realize it. While all members ought to be aware of those who are straying (Gal. 6:1), shepherds ought to especially be aware so as to restore the sheep that has gone astray (Luke 15:1ff). It saddens this

writer to be reminded of shepherds who, assuming that the sheep “just went somewhere else,” never took the time to visit the sheep. In far too many cases, sheep who have left, have not merely “gone somewhere else,” they have “gone astray.” What shepherds can learn from the Chief Shepherd is that as shepherds, they ought to care and be concerned for the sheep that are straying.

Finally, shepherds can learn from the Chief Shepherd about knowing when the sheep are sorrowing. While sorrow is a part of life, there are various reasons why we sorrow. Shepherds, do you know your sheep well enough not only to know when they sorrow, but to sorrow with them? Though giving counsel is an imperative part of the work of shepherds, sometimes the sheep you shepherd need to be consoled and comforted. Sometimes the sorrow may be due to the loss of a loved one (John 11:1-35).

At times, the sorrow may be due to a loved one departing from the faith, or division in the congregation. Regardless of what may be the cause of the sorrow, many times the sheep need *consolation* and *comfort* from the shepherds rather than *criticism* and *condemnation*.

Five Suggestions:

- 1. Shepherds, visit the sheep you shepherd.*
- 2. Shepherds, visit to learn their spiritual condition.*
- 3. Shepherds, communicate with the sheep.*
- 4. Shepherds, take responsibility for your mistakes*
- 5. Shepherds, lead the sheep instead of driving them.*

As often as Jesus corrected His disciples, there were instances when Jesus knew they needed to be comforted (John 14:1-6). While correction is a vital part of the work of shepherds, equally vital is comforting the sheep who are sorrowing.

Though much more could be discussed, the aforementioned lessons that can be learned about shepherds knowing their sheep are lessons that Jesus, as the Chief Shepherd, demonstrated in His life. When it came to knowing His sheep, Jesus does not simply have an intellectual knowledge of them, He has an intimate knowledge. Though shepherds are limited to what amount of intimate knowledge they may have of the sheep they shepherd, there is certainly a need for shepherds to seek to acquire such. Not in an abusive or invasive way, but in a way that expresses a desire to know the sheep whom they shepherd—true care and interest in the well-being of the sheep. Shepherds, “the sheep will not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Though there are limitations, shepherds, seek to know your sheep as the Chief Shepherd knows His.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SHEPHERDS: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR SHEEP

In that shepherds will give an account for those whom they shepherd (Heb. 13:17), how imperative is it to know the sheep whom you shepherd? Here is a short list of suggestions to help you get to know your sheep.

1. As a collective group of shepherds, visit all the sheep whom you shepherd. How many

times do members seem defensive if the shepherds say, “We need to meet with you”? Ask to visit, not for the sake of examining the sheep, but to encourage them.

2. As a collective group of shepherds, visit all the sheep whom you shepherd as a matter of learning where they are spiritually. Such meetings should not be for the purpose of interrogation, but for the sake of spiritual inspection. Equally important, is that such a meeting can be for the purpose of introspection, both as individual shepherds, as well as a collective group of shepherds.
3. Communicate with the sheep. Communication is a vital component in any relationship, particularly that of sheep and shepherds. Let the flock know where you are leading them.
4. Take responsibility for your mistakes. Shepherds, you are not sinless. Because you are not sinless there are going to be times that the mistakes you make affect the congregation you shepherd. Have the humility to take responsibility and admit those mistakes. If it is a matter of sin, have the humility to admit such. Remember, your concern is for the flock. Do not allow your pride be part of what causes the sheep to scatter (Ezekiel 34).
5. Lead the sheep you shepherd rather than drive them. Be an ensample for the sheep to follow (1 Peter 5:1-2).

PLANNED FOR NEXT ISSUE:

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WALKING THE WALK:

APPLYING THE RESTORATION PRINCIPLE TO INFANT BAPTISM

By Bruce Daugherty

Infant baptism is an abiding religious tradition, mainly observed by Catholics, whether Roman, Greek, or English, and those Protestant churches adhering to the tenets of Calvinism. Few of these practitioners question the ritual. It continues as one of those “unexamined” practices that comforts well-meaning parents who never doubt that their religious views are in harmony with the Bible.

But in the days when the American frontier was pushing beyond the Appalachians to the Mississippi River, this time-honored religious tradition was being questioned by many individuals. One such person was Alexander Campbell, newly emigrated from his native Ireland. Reuniting with his father, Thomas Campbell, after a two year separation, the son learned that his father had recently written a document calling for the union of Christians in the various denominations by returning to the practices of the first Christians. The principle of union was to have a “thus saith the Lord,” in commandments or approved examples “for every article of faith, and item of religious practice.” This document, called the *Declaration and Address*, was written in 1809 for the Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania. Writing about his experiences years later, Alexander Campbell stated, “None of us who either got up or sustained that project was then aware of what havoc that said principle, if faithfully applied, would have made on our views and practices on various favorite points.”¹

This article will examine the “arduous task” that Alexander Campbell made to leave the long cherished belief and practice of infant baptism in favor of what he learned in the New Testament. It is one thing to talk the talk and claim to be following the Bible. It is quite another to walk the walk and apply what is found in the Bible’s pages.

BACKGROUND

Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) was raised in the Church of Ireland (Anglican) and had been baptized as an infant like his father and grandfa-

ther, and was a member of that church until he was 26 years old.² His conversion to Secedder Presbyterianism did not alter the practice of infant baptism, as it was prescribed by the Westminster Confession of faith, the official doctrinal statement for English-speaking Presbyterians. His son Alexander (1788-1866) was raised in the Secedder Presbyterian Church until his break with them in 1809.³ Both men never doubted that they were Christians.

But the doctrine of total depravity raised doubts in the minds of thoughtful persons. Questions about who were among the elect left many parents in anguish regarding the state of their children, despite the practice of infant baptism. Note the testimony of the emotions of Adamson Bentley, a Baptist preacher holding Calvinist doctrine:

*I used to take my little children on my knee, and look upon them as they played in harmless innocence about me, and wonder which of them was to be finally and forever lost! It cannot be that God has been so good to me as to elect all my children! No, no! I am myself a miracle of mercy, and it can not be that God has been kinder to me than to all other parents. Some of these must be of the non-elect, and will [be] finally banished from God and all good. And if I only knew which of my children were to dwell in everlasting burnings, oh! How kind and tender would I be to them, knowing that all the comfort they would ever experience would be here in this world!*⁴

This anxiety was also felt by another Baptist preacher, “Raccoon” John Smith. Smith, who had been preaching away from home, received the

² Richard Phillips, “Thomas Campbell: A Reappraisal Based on Backgrounds” *Restoration Quarterly* vol. 49 no. 2 (2007):75-102.

³ Robert Richardson, *The Memoirs of Alexander Campbell*, 2 vols. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1956 reprint of 1897 edition. 1:190.

⁴ A.S. Hayden, *A History of the Disciples on the Western Reserve*. Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, reprint of original edition, 103.

¹ Alexander, Campbell. *The Christian System*. Nashville: Gospel Advocate, reprint of 1835 edition, x.

news that his house had caught fire and that two of his children had died in the conflagration. Shaken at the news, he returned home as fast as he could. But he dreaded meeting his wife and trying to console her.

*He dreaded therefore to meet his wife's look of anguish, and to hear her ask the question, 'Are our little children among the elect of God?' Slowly the awful truth dawned on Smith, "I can give her no consolation!"*⁵

The contradictory nature of Calvinism left no reassurances for Smith.

CAMPBELL'S NEGLECT

After clashes with the Seceder Presbyterians over his practice of "open" communion, Thomas Campbell was officially reprimanded and suspended by the Chartiers Presbytery in Western Pennsylvania. But the freedom of the frontier allowed the elder Campbell to preach independently beyond the reach of the Presbyterian hierarchy in Philadelphia. His break with the Presbyterians was followed by writing the *Declaration & Address* (1809). The document was a plea for unity of Christians in the various denominations. It contained a strong denunciation of the evils of religious division and then a series of propositions of the principles of union on the basis of Biblical authority for faith and practice. A slogan originating in the Reformation was included, "We speak where the Bible speaks; we are silent where the Bible is silent."

Yet a full understanding of the application of this principle or its ramifications was not immediately seen. After Campbell had said those words, one of his listeners spoke up and said, "Mr. Campbell, if we adopt that as a principle, we will have to give up infant baptism." Caught off guard, Campbell replied, "Sir, you are the most intractable person I ever met."⁶ Not wanting to upset the congregation further, discussion on infant baptism was tabled for the time being.

When Thomas Campbell was reunited with his family in Philadelphia in September 1809, he showed his son Alexander the proofs of his *Declaration and Address* which he was preparing for

publication. The younger Campbell was impressed with the principles enjoined but also questioned if they would mean the abandoning of infant baptism. His father replied in the affirmative but did not see the necessity for "going out of the Church merely for the sake of going in again."⁷ Put off by this sophism, the subject became a neglected topic of study. The younger Campbell suspended investigation into the question of baptism and in his own words, he "let slip" the subject and allowed it to pass as a matter of religious indifference.⁸ (Richardson, 1:393).

CAMPBELL'S INVESTIGATION

But the question was soon driven back into the forefront of Alexander's attention with the birth of his first child Jane, born March 13, 1812. The immediacy of finding the truth on the subject was hastened by the reality of the mortality rates of infants on the frontier of the early 19th century. First, Campbell read all the books and publications by those favoring infant baptism. Campbell was disappointed with the assumptions and fallacious argumentation of the defenders of the practice. The more he read, the more he concluded that infant baptism was an entirely human invention. Having examined uninspired authorities, Campbell turned to the Scriptures for answers to his questions. His investigation of the Bible led him to understand that the words for *baptism* and *baptize* in the Greek language could only mean *immersion* and *to immerse*. Sprinkling as a mode of baptism was unauthorized.

Campbell's investigation of the Bible soon led him to the conviction that believers, and believers only, were the proper subjects of baptism. Since infants were incapable of belief, they were not subject to the command of Christ found in Mark 16:15-16.

*He now fully perceived that the rite of sprinkling to which he had been subjected in infancy was wholly unauthorized, and he was consequently, in point of fact, an unbaptized person, and hence could not, consistently preach a baptism to others of which he had never been a subject himself.*⁹

⁵ John A. Williams, *Life of Elder John Smith*. Indianapolis: Religious Book Service, reprint of 1870 edition, 103.

⁶ Richardson, op cit. 1:240.

⁷ Ibid., 1:251.

⁸ Ibid., 1:393.

⁹ Ibid., 1:395.

Campbell discussed the matter often with his wife in the spring and early summer of 1812. The shape of his investigation had begun with the question of whether infant baptism could safely be rejected, but had evolved to ask an entirely different question, “May we omit believers’ baptism, which all admit to be divinely commanded?”¹⁰ Members of his family and members of the Christian Association of Washington were also aware of the study and interested in the conclusions he had reached on the subject. The impact of the study was especially difficult on Thomas Campbell. “He had no idea, indeed, in the beginning, that to take the Bible alone would really lead to the abandonment of infant baptism; and although this result was, at an early period, plainly predicted by others, he constantly cherished the hope that the practice might, consistently with his principles, be allowed as a matter of forbearance.”¹¹ The transition to truth from error was a great struggle for those pioneers coming out of Calvinism.

CAMPBELL’S SUBMISSION

Having made his investigation in the light of the Scriptures, Alexander now resolved to obey what God had commanded. He informed his father of his desire to be baptized. Alexander was somewhat surprised that his father had little to say in reply and offered no objections.

Alexander then made his way to Mathias Luce, a Baptist preacher living near Washington, Pennsylvania. Luce was reluctant at first to baptize Campbell, due to the fact that Campbell insisted that the act be done according to the New Testament example of a simple confession of faith “that Jesus was the Son of God.” This was contrary to the usual Baptist practices of the day, which asked candidates for baptism to relate a “religious experience,” and the practice of voting by church members whether to accept the candidate or not. Luce was finally persuaded that what Campbell proposed was in accord with the Scriptures and agreed to run the risk of being censured by his fellow Baptists.

On Wednesday June 12, 1812, Campbell met with his family, members of the Christian Association, and a large gathering of interested individuals

at a deep pool in Buffalo Creek near Brush Run. Here Campbell publicly explained his actions, showing that what he was doing was authorized by the Word of God and urging the necessity of submission to all that God commanded. Thomas Campbell also addressed the assembly, giving the reasons for his change in belief and practice. He admitted that he had overlooked its importance and had failed to see the plain and obvious teaching of the Scriptures on the subject. As he now saw what he had failed to see before, he related his duty to submit to this Divine instruction. Alexander, his wife Margaret, his sister Dortha, his parents Thomas and Jane, and another couple, James Hanen and his wife were then baptized by Mathias Luce. The explanatory discourse, the witness of the baptisms, and subsequent sermons made for a meeting lasting about seven hours.¹² At the next meeting of the Brush Run church thirteen other members asked to be baptized and Thomas Campbell assisted their obedience after a simple confession of faith in Christ.

For the Campbells and others with them, to “speak where the Bible speaks,” had been followed by a slow process that eventually rejected infant baptism as a human invention; they subsequently adopted immersion as the one true baptism according to Scripture, and they acknowledged that the simple confession of faith in Christ was the only requirement by those desiring to be baptized. The talk was now being matched by the walk.

CAMPBELL’S DEFENSE

In the years following his immersion, Campbell became a defender of believer’s immersion as he debated Presbyterian John Walker in 1820. The success in this debate and its subsequent publication in book form gave an awareness of the Restoration plea to a wide audience in frontier America. It also enhanced the reputation of Campbell as a champion of New Testament baptism.

Campbell continued his defense of believer’s immersion in debate with another Presbyterian preacher, W.L. MacCalla in 1823. This debate was also printed in book form and widely distributed. It demonstrated Campbell’s continued study on the subject of baptism and his growth in understanding the connection between baptism and remission of

¹⁰ Ibid., 1:394.

¹¹ Ibid., 1:399.

¹² Ibid., 1:398.

sins. In the debate with Walker, Campbell viewed baptism as an outward sign of the inward pardon already received by the believer. But in the debate with MacCalla, Campbell argued that baptism was expressly “for the remission of sins!”¹³ Through these forensic encounters, Campbell continued his investigation of the Scriptures and evidenced his growth in understanding baptism’s purpose. Writing in 1839, Campbell said:

. . . that remission of sins, or coming into a state of acceptance, being one of the present immunities of the Kingdom of Heaven, can not be scripturally enjoyed by any person before immersion. As soon can a person be a citizen before he is born, or have the immunities of an American citizen while an alien, as one enjoy the privileges of a son of God before he is born again. For Jesus expressly declares, that he has not given the privilege of sons to any but those born of God – John 1:12. If, then, the present forgiveness of sins be a privilege, and a right of those under the new constitution, in the kingdom of Jesus; and if being born again, or being born of water and of the Spirit, is necessary to admission, and if being born of water means immersion, as clearly proved by all witnesses; then, remission of sins can not, in this life, be constitutionally enjoyed previous to immersion. If there be any proposition regarding any item of the Christian Institution, which admits a clearer proof or fuller illustration than this one, I have yet to learn where it may be found.¹⁴

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT OF THE STUDY

The impact of Campbell’s study and investigation on the subject of infant baptism was far reaching. It led to the rejection of the tradition of infant baptism and to the acceptance of immersion of believers for the remission of sins, a concept that had long been forgotten in the pages of Church history. The effort to restore Christianity as practiced in the New Testament was significantly advanced by this

rediscovery of this important facet of New Testament teaching regarding salvation.

The significance of the study deeply impacted the Campbells personally, as they, in figurative fashion like Abraham of old, left their home and kindred so to speak, as they abandoned the religious practices they could not find in the New Testament. This included the long cherished tradition of infant baptism they had practiced in Anglicanism and Presbyterianism. They determined to follow where God was leading them. For a while, they sojourned among the Baptists, but they recognized that this fellowship too, was bound more to Calvinism and tradition than to the New Testament. Leaving that fellowship, they aimed at a “restoration of the ancient order.”

The immediate impact of Campbell’s investigation was far-reaching on the American frontier. In the humble cabins, where the Bible was often the only book to be found, men and women groped for the light of the truth regarding their religious observances. One such family was the Jonas Hartzell family on the Western Reserve in Ohio.

Some time in 1826, his wife, who was a pious Methodist, said to him, unexpectedly, “What Scripture have you for infant baptism? If you have any, I ask for it; for I have no confidence in my baptism.” He replied, “Alice, I can satisfy you on that subject” and opening the Bible, he turned to the proof-texts to show that it came in place of circumcision; then to the household baptisms and the saying, “Suffer little children to come unto me,” etc.; but, upon considering these passages, his logical mind could find no proof in them, and, greatly mortified and disappointed, he put the subject off for the time. Too honest with himself, however, to controvert the teachings of the Bible, he was, after some further inquiry, fully convinced that infant baptism had no divine authority. He then said, “We have been misled by our religious guides. We have been deceived in a plain case, and if so in reference to baptism, perhaps have been led into error on other subjects of equal or greater importance. We have taken our religion on trust. We have read the Scriptures to confirm our creeds. We must now read the Bible to form our religious

¹³ Douglas A. Foster, “Churches of Christ and Baptism: An Historical and Theological Overview,” *Restoration Quarterly* vol. 43 no. 2 (2001): 80.

¹⁴ Campbell, op cit. 180.

sentiments for ourselves, and go withersoever it may lead us."¹⁵

Though their change of religious views caused great grief to relatives on both sides of the family, Hartzel and his wife persisted in reading the Scriptures and doing their best to follow its precepts. Some months later he became a subscriber to Alexander Campbell's paper and was thrilled to learn of its grand purpose of a return to primitive Christianity, "a restoration rather than a reformation." Learning that Campbell taught immersion of believers for remission of sins, Hartzell and his wife were baptized on the second Lord's day in June 1828.

And the results of Campbell's study reach to the present day. As was noted in the beginning of this article, infant baptism continues to be observed by many good parents, who want their children to be saved. Though they mean well, their tradition gets in the way of future obedience of their children to the gospel. Sometimes, when these children are grown, they are led to study what the Bible teaches about baptism. Some of these individuals content themselves with a false comfort in their infant baptism, rather than obedience to the Divine command. The doctrines of men cause the setting aside of the commandment of God – Mark 7:6-8.

To claim to follow the Bible necessitates a knowledge of what the Bible says. When the Bible has been correctly interpreted and understood, then application of its truths must be made, no matter how long traditional religious practices have been observed. May God give humility and courage to those who will investigate to see if their religious practices are in harmony with God's Word.

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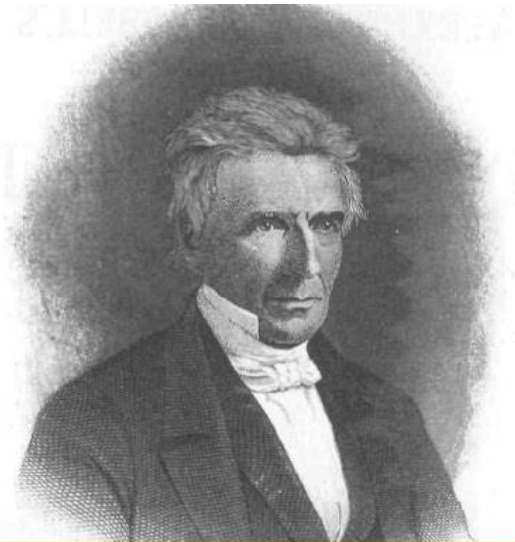
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¹⁵ Richardson, op cit. 2:253-254.

Quotes and Anecdotes

The Rev. William Brimsmead was the first minister in Marlborough. He was settled in 1666, and died in 1701. He was a bachelor, and “uniformly refused baptism to children who were born on the Sabbath.” Whether he refused the little sinners the rites of Christian burial, in case of death, is not stated.

John Hayward,
A Gazeteer of Massachusetts (1849)

When I removed to Nemaha City, in the summer of ‘65, horse racing, gambling, and whisky drinking were the principal occupations of a very large majority of the inhabitants. True, there were a few good moral citizens, in addition to the excellent brethren named in a previous sketch, but they were powerless to stay the tide of evil. On one occasion, when Bro. T.K. Hansberry was preaching in the old school house, a drunken desperado named Stephens entered the house and ordered him out of the stand, saying that he intended to finish the sermon himself! As Bro. Hansberry did not see fit to comply with this extraordinary demand, Stephens advanced, seized him roughly by the collar and attempted to pull him from the stand, saying, “Get out of here, d— you; you can’t preach; let me preach!” Several citizens ejected the wretched man from the house, Mr. Frank Chaplin accelerating his progress by frequent and vigorous applications of a number nine boot, and the service proceeded.

Frank Barrow
The Life and Work of R.C. Barrow

A divinity student named Fiddle
Refused to accept his degree.
‘tis bad enough to be Fiddle, said he,
I refuse to be Fiddle, D.D.

Anonymous

An anecdote is told of Bro. Shidler, which ought to be preserved because of the excellent moral it teaches. He was a very modest man — had very humble conceptions of his own abilities. His education was poor, and when in 1810 he was set apart to the work of the ministry he felt that he was very poorly furnished for so great an undertaking. He

was, however, able to teach his neighbors, and was being very successful in building up the cause. Connected with the Christian Church of that time was Elder William Kincade. He entered with great spirit and ability into the Reformatory movement in the beginning of this century with Stone and his companions. He was a self-made man, of fine native talents, considerable learning, and mighty in the Scriptures — a living, walking concordance, and withal somewhat eccentric. About the time Bro. Shidler commenced preaching, Bro. Kincade preached in his neighborhood. Everybody went to hear the great man — Bro. Shidler among the rest. He had never heard such preaching. It seemed to him he knew the Bible by heart — he knew everything and he himself knew nothing. He went home, measuring himself by Kincade, and therefore overwhelmed with a sense of his ignorance and utter unfitness for the work of preaching. He said to himself, “If I could preach like Kincade, I might preach; but ignorant as I am I had better quit it.” For near a week he was miserable, under the temptation to quit the ministry, because he could not preach like Kincade. He mourned, and wept, and prayed before the Lord, and at last was delivered from his trouble thus. Said he: “Every man can’t be a great preacher — every man can’t preach like Kincade — some preacher in the world must be the least of all the preachers, and if it pleases God that George Shidler should be the man, be it so. God helping me, therefore, I will try to occupy my one talent till the Master comes.” From this time forward he was happy in doing what he could in the vineyard of the Lord.

W.C. Rogers
Recollections of Men of Faith

The churches want preachers rather than sermonizers; men who have a message to deliver, rather than men who have a subject to develop. A well-known divine, at the end of his public life, was heard to say: “If I had loved subjects less and men more, I would have had larger results to show in my ministry.”

The Christian Century,
Vol. 1, No. 20 (May 23, 1901), page 7.

TABERNACLE SHADOWS

THE PILLAR OF CLOUD

By Mark McWhorter

INTRODUCTION

The Pillars of Fire and Cloud are one part of the Tabernacle that does not get a great deal of commentary. They are known by almost every child that has attended Bible classes. Everyone knows the Pillar of Fire was for nighttime and the Pillar of Cloud was for daytime. The major scriptures discussing the pillars are Exodus 13:21-22; Numbers 9:15-23; and Nehemiah 9:12. It would be helpful to read those before reading further in this article.

The pillars were always present. They covered the Tabernacle. And when the Israelites were to move camp, the pillars went in front of them. One should imagine the pillars rising from the Holy of Holies. However, they did not end above the Tabernacle. It will be shown that the pillars went into a cloud that covered the entire camp. The Israelites do not see the moon or the sun as long as they are in the camp.

THE FIRE AND CLOUD WERE THE SECOND PERSON OF THE GODHEAD

In Exodus 14:19, we read that they were “the angel of God.” In Exodus 32:34, they were told “mine Angel shall go before thee.” Exodus 14:24 says that, “the Lord looked through them.” According to Exodus 33:9, the cloudy pillar descended and the Lord spoke with Moses.

In Psalm 99:7 the pillar is associated with God’s testimonies and ordinances, the Law. He was communicating with Moses, Aaron, and Samuel in

verse six. “He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar,” verse seven.

In Exodus 23:20-25, we read, “Angel, mine Angel.” He would keep them in the way and bring them to the place prepared. They should beware of and obey him. They should not provoke him. *He could pardon transgressions*. Thus, this Angel [literally, *Messenger*] must be God.

THE PILLAR OF FIRE GIVING LIGHT IS OUR CHRIST

Isaiah 49:9, “Go forth; to them in darkness. Shew yourselves.” This is a prophecy of Jesus establishing the church in a world of darkness.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). As the Israelites were traveling in the wilderness, so are Christians traveling in the wilderness. As the pillar gave light so that they might see, so Christ gives us light.

Psalm 121:5-6, “The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.” From this scripture we see that the Israelites did not see the moon for the 40 years they were in the wilderness. God was their light. This lets us understand that God is the light of the church.

THE PILLARS WERE FOR SAFETY

It went behind Israel to keep Pharaoh from attacking them at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-20). Christ is prophesied as our rereward [rear-guard] in

Isaiah 58:8, “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.”

In Psalm 78:53, we read, “he led them on in safety, so that they feared not.” The church, being prophesied as a tabernacle in Isaiah 4:6, is seen as a place of refuge.

Zechariah 2:5, “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” The church is seen as a people surrounded in safety by the fiery pillar which is not only around her, but also in the middle of her. The parallel to the Israelites encamped is easily seen.

The righteous are protected by a hedge in a safe place so that they can be delivered from evil, Proverbs 2:11-12. Just as the Israelites needed to remain within the camp to be protected, so must the Christian remain in the church to be protected.

THE PILLARS WERE FOR WAR

At the Red Sea the Lord told the Israelites, “The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace,” Exodus 14:14. Deuteronomy 1:30, “The Lord your God which goeth before you, he shall fight for you....”

Prophesying of Christ, Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 42:13, “the Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”

THE PILLARS GAVE DIRECTION AND LED THE ISRAELITES

If the Israelites remained in one place for two days or for a year, it was because the pillars did not move. If the pillars moved, then the Israelites moved. This was by the commandment of the Lord, Numbers 9:18; Exodus 40:36-38; and Deuteronomy 1:30.

Psalm 78:52 and 77:20 state that God “guided them in the wilderness like a flock.” Deuteronomy 1:31, “...where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that he went....” God was a father to them in leading them. He led them in “the way wherein they should go” (Nehemiah 9:19). “He led them forth by the right way” (Psalm 107:7).

The follower of Christ must be where he is. That is the definition of a disciple. A Christian remains

with Christ no matter where he takes you. To be sheltered and have your way enlightened you must be with Him. Christ uses the phrase “follow me” 19 times in the Gospel accounts. And he said he was “the Way,” John 14:6.

THE CLOUD IS ASSOCIATED WITH GOD’S GRACE AND REST

In Exodus 32-33, the Israelites are punished for building the Golden Calf. God threatens to leave them. Moses takes the Tabernacle out of the Camp. It is there that he calls it the Tabernacle of the Congregation. Those that sought the Lord went out to the Tabernacle outside the camp. The people stood at their tent doors and watched as Moses went to the Tabernacle. The Cloudy Pillar came down to the door of the Tabernacle. Moses met him at the door. He talked with God there. When the people saw this they worshipped God. Moses asks God to show grace to him. He asks God to show him the way so that he could know him. God promises that he will go with him and will give him rest.

THE CLOUD WAS A SYMBOL THAT GOD’S PRESENCE WAS WITH MOSES AND THE CONGREGATION

In Exodus 33:16-17, Moses asks God to continue with them in the presence of the Cloud and Fire. Otherwise, how would the people of the world know that He is with them; that they are a separate people, and that His grace is with them.

God said he is always with us and will never leave us, Hebrews 13:5. If we live according to God’s commands and live in peace with each other, he will be with us, 2 Corinthians 13:11.

THE CLOUD WAS A SYMBOL THAT GOD KNEW MOSES BY NAME

Exodus 33:12 and 17 tells us that Moses asked God to show him and the people that he was with him. God says he will do what Moses has asked because Moses had found grace in his sight. If one reads Exodus 33:9, it is found that the Cloudy Pillar had come to the door of the Tabernacle to speak with Moses. Moses is told that God’s presence will go with him.

The Father knows Jesus by name. In Matthew 17:5, the Father states that Jesus is his Son in

whom he was well pleased. This was stated in the instance of Christ's transfiguration on a mountain. The voice came out of the cloud, Mark 9:7. A bright cloud overshadowed Jesus and the apostles that were with him. It should be noted that it was a bright cloud. The cloud over the Israelites was a bright cloud.

God knows each one of us by name. He even knows the hairs of our head, Luke 12:7.

THE CLOUD COVERED THE TABERNACLE AND WAS ASSOCIATED WITH GOD'S GLORY AND SANCTIFICATION

In Numbers 16:42 and Exodus 40:34, the Cloud covered the Tabernacle of the congregation.

"And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the Tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory" (Exodus 29:43). This means the Tabernacle was set apart for God's use. It was indwelt with God and thus his glory. Moses could not enter the Tabernacle when God filled it. This is why no one but the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies one day per year.

THE CLOUD WAS A COVERING FOR THE PEOPLE AND IT GAVE THEM LIGHT

"He spread a cloud for a covering..." Psalm 105:39.

Numbers 10:34 says it was "upon them by day when they went out of the camp." This was when they were traveling. Thus, the people were always covered by the cloud.

When Pharaoh and his army were upon the Israelites at the Red Sea, the Pillars gave light to the Israelites but gave total darkness to the Egyptians, Exodus 14:20. The Pillar was actually a Cloud and a Fire, Exodus 14:24. It had a dual nature in which it could be equally manifested or one aspect could be the majority of the manifestation.

Isaiah 32:2 pictures Christ as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Shadow from the sun is a good thing in a dry and hot wilderness. This is the type of shadow which the Cloud gave.

Psalm 121:5-6, states, "The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." This is a reference back to the Cloud Pillar

associated with the Tabernacle. And it is forward thinking toward the spiritual aspect of the Church in relation to God.

Isaiah 4:5-6 reads, "And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a Tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain." The American Standard Version has "spread a covering" instead of "a defense." This shows the spiritual significance in picturing Christ and his Church. The bright Cloud gave the Israelites light for 40 years. But that light was not hot. The Cloud gave a defense from the heat of the day in the wilderness. God gives a defense from the heat of the spiritual wilderness for those in the Church.

Isaiah 60:19-20, reads, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Again, what many commentators have considered simply figurative language actually has basis in the reality of the Cloud and Fire Pillar associated with the Tabernacle. The Israelites never saw the sun nor the moon during their 40 years of wandering. They had the Pillars. The Pillar never withdrew. It simply changed manifestation. But it was always giving light. Jesus stated he is the Light, John 8:12.

Zechariah 14:6-7 is part of the prophecy of the church. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening it shall be light." There is no waxing and waning of light for the church. Christ is constantly shining. The Cloud and the Fire Pillar kept a constant, steady light. James referenced this in James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The verse has more meaning when associated with the Cloud and Fire Pillar. God's usage

of them was to give a fore picture of Christ and his Church.

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,” Revelation 7:15-17. This is a picture of Christ on the throne. Thus, the context is referencing Him and His Church. Many will connect the eating and thirsting with the water from the Rock and the Manna. But few connect the Pillar of Cloud and Fire with the same verses. The connection is also prophesied in Isaiah 49:10, “They shall not hunger nor thirst: neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.”

This connection continues in Revelation 21:23-24. “And the city had not need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.” Notice the Lamb is the light. No sun or moon is required. Notice that those saved are walking in the light. Thus, showing again that while the Israelites were traveling they were walking within the light which the Cloud and Fire Pillar gave.

THE CLOUD PICTURES BAPTISM

1 Corinthians 10:1-2, “Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all

our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Water completely surrounded the Israelites as they walked across on dry ground. This shows baptism to be a situation where one is surrounded by water. The Israelites did not drown in the water. A person baptized into Jesus does not drown in the water. It is important to notice that the Israelites were under the cloud. This means the person being baptized must be under the Second Person of the Godhead (remember that connection from earlier in this article).

CONCLUSION

John 12:35-36, “Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.” A Christian walks in the light of Jesus, the Christ. The Christian however must continue to walk under that Cloud. Should the Christian wander from being under the Cloud, he will find himself in darkness – just as Pharaoh and his army were in darkness.

Jeremiah 13:16, “Give glory to the Lord your God, before he causes darkness, and before your feet stumble upon dark mountains and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.” Followers of God must give glory to God. If a professed follower does not give him proper glory, if one does not remain under his covering, then one will be in darkness.

Stay under the Cloud and Fire Pillar. Stay in the Light.

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ADVENTURES

in Benevolence

By John Krivak

“For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have?”

The names of people and places are obscured in what follows to protect the innocent. And the guilty. You just never know what you might find when you answer an appeal to the church for benevolence. Many calling are truly pitiable people in difficult situations, and we feel good about helping them in our Lord’s Name. Others are cons, users, or those so dependent upon thin government assistance that they seek out additional help from other charities. We love them too.

I was in my first ministry when the knock at the office door informed me that a couple needed to talk to me. They had come clear from California, and ran out of gas—of all places—right in front of the church in New England. In hindsight, it sure looks like they intended to get as far from home as possible. Ronnie and Kathy had a little baby girl, about a year old. Kathy sought a comfortable place inside for her and baby while I went to the gas station with Ronnie. As he began telling their tale, I was wondering what to make of the ignition switch, which was ripped out of the steering column and duct-taped on top. “You know, that doesn’t look good,” I said. “No problem,” said Ronnie, “I got this car from a drug dealer and it’s not registered to me anyway.” He confessed that he had broken probation over some issue that, he assured me, was quite minor. No big deal.

“Oh,” I replied, wondering how to process this and wondering, moreover, what my responsibilities were.

I then took them home, where some Christians had already gathered to pray or study Scripture. Becky said she would start a big breakfast. First she attended to the little one, holding her at full arm’s length because the diaper was full and the smell strong. I never saw her hold an infant like that, before or since. First priority was a clean bath, then food. Trying to fill the baby-bottle with milk, she found what was in there was congealed solid. Meanwhile, I felt it important to find some assurance of legitimacy in our new friends and asked Ronnie if he would mind providing character references—someone from home who could vouch for him and verify the story of his plight. He dialed someone and all in the room listened as he said to whomever, “Yeah, I have a preacher here that wants you to tell him about me.” After a pause, “No! No—you don’t have to tell him about *that*.” He handed the phone to me. As we got breakfast on, a Christian brother named Pete pulled me aside, “I have a friend who is a cop—would you like me to have him do a background check off the license plate?” It went against my instincts, but I said yes. Another reference came from Ronnie’s sister, a church secretary, who confided, “John, I love my brother, really do, and don’t want to get him in trouble. But I have to tell you that Ronnie is a con artist....”

We settled them into a motel. Not a chain motel, but a locally run place with charm and character. I had been put up there myself when I came to interview for the preaching position, on April Fool’s Day of the previous year (reader, make of that what you will). This arrangement could not be sustained for long, and I was scrambling to find some workable alternative. Then it struck me: Widow Sullivan! I had met her on a separate ministry of benev-

olence. “John,” she pleaded, “I put all my money to the gas bill and have nothing to eat. Do you think the church could buy me dinner?”

“Why sure, Mrs. Sullivan. We’d be happy to do that for you.”

“And, John...do you think you could get me a chicken dinner?”

“Sure—we’ll do that.”

“And John, could you get me the 9-piece dinner from KFC?”

At this point, I was wondering if I were doing benevolence or catering? When I arrived with Colonel Sanders’ best, she told me she was struggling to keep up financially with the demands of her residence, it being just her and all. She then added, “If you ever find anyone who would like to share my nice house (and expenses), you just bring them.” I nodded while calculating that the odds of that were slim to none. Until Ronnie and Kathy! I should add that Mrs. Sullivan was grandmother to none other than a war hero, whose plane went down in the Gulf War and who had been amazingly rescued from enemy territory. I had heard of him on the news.

So I brought the Californians to Widow Sullivan’s place, and it was happy all around. They had a place to stay, she would get financial assistance (that is, once the government SSI checks resumed), and the church did not have more motel bills to pay. I marveled at the working of God and smiled as I left them to get situated.

The next day Ronnie called and was worked up with excitement. It seems he had spotted a policeman checking his vehicle over (it was Pete’s friend). He told me that the state police had lit them all up in the middle of the night as they slept in the car at an interstate rest stop. He declared that he wanted nothing more with the police after such an ordeal. If that was to be the way it was going to be, why he would just leave town right now! In retrospect, I missed a really good opportunity here.

Two days later, the widow called and her voice was frantic, “John, you’ve got to get these people out of here NOW! My daughter just told me she was watching the news on a certain TV channel, and there is a couple from California wanted for all kinds of crimes! Murder, even!” I was back in scramble mode—what to do??? I checked the channel listing, and found that she had referenced CNN. High crimes, on a national network? I called

the local police to see if they had anyone like Ronnie and Kathy on the wanted list? No, they did not. I explained the situation with them and the widow, and asked them what my obligations were here? They told me I should speak directly to her and see if they were still welcome, or not. I called the newspaper to see if any story had come over the wire—nothing. Then I called the state police, and they also knew nothing of what Mrs. Sullivan said had been on the news feed of CNN.

I went straight to the house where I found the couple gathering their things and found the widow in tears. She complained about how they were running up her bills by burning light bulbs too late into the evening. Ronnie poked his head from behind a doorway and looked at me, “John, take it from one con looking at another [the implications of this inaccurate use of speech were not lost on me, but I let it go], she has a big wad of money in her purse and another in the cupboard over there!” She wailed and said the money was for her gas bill (you remember, the one that left her in need of chicken after she had paid it).

So we loaded them up and headed back to the motel. I went to the counter to make the arrangements, but was refused by the owner. No vacancy, I was told. But the sign indicated a vacancy, I said gently. “Well, we have rooms, but we’re not taking any more of your people.” Suddenly feeling physical symptoms of stress and anxiety, I asked why?

“Do you remember those last people you brought here?” I nearly died inside as I answered affirmatively. “Well, when they left, they took everything that was not nailed down—sheets, blankets, pillows, towels, etc.” Feeling sick inside, I made my best apology and offered to cover every loss if they would give me an itemized list of what was stolen. “No, we don’t do business that way; but we won’t take any more of your people either.”

“*Your people.*” The words ate and clawed at my insides.

We found a shelter that took in the homeless and settled Ron and Kathy there. Some weeks went by and I was relieved to have heard nothing more of them. Then one day the office phone rang, “Yeah, John, this is Ronnie. Look: Kathy’s father died. He’s in California and she is going to lose any inheritance from him unless we get back there right away. Do you think the church could...?”

Click.

What I Now Know as an OCTOGENARIAN

Psalm 90:10, 12, 16-17

By Gerald Cowan

I do not know who first said it, but I have learned that it is true: *“We get too soon old and too late smart.”*

The young have never been old but the old were once young. *I once was young, but now I am old...* (Psalm 37:25). I can still remember a little about my youth – both the good and the bad. I may not want to admit that I am old, but I am. Denying it or pretending I am not old doesn’t change anything, but it may decrease the confidence others have in me. If I won’t admit my age, what else might I be lying about?

Old is not a feeling or state of mind. It is a chronological reality. We may want to interpret Psalm 90:10-12 to define old as anything past three score years and ten (70). Eighty years may indicate and require extra strength. And, as some have said, anything past 70 is *bonus* time – or perhaps living on *borrowed* time (Psalm 90:10). Whether young or old we should apply our hearts to wisdom – gathering knowledge and skill in applying it (Psalm 90:12).

There are many things I know as an old man that I could never have understood in the strength of youth and early manhood. Let me share with you some of what I know now as an octogenarian, someone in his eighties.

I KNOW WHAT IS FAILING AND WHAT HAS FAILED.

- **Body and vitality are failing** – I find it true in many ways. My eyes are failing and my vision is dimmer. My ears are failing and my hearing is duller. My voice is failing and the sounds I make are weaker. My flesh is failing and I do not fill out my clothing as I once did, and what I have left has little strength or endurance. My joints are failing and the spring is gone from my step. My heart is failing and my physical activities are limited.

- **Memory and mind are failing.** I have difficulty stretching my mind to absorb advancing technology. Failing also are my ability and willingness to consider new information and to defend long-held concepts. I have to be reminded often of things I used to know.

- **My friends are failing** and some have departed for whatever awaits them in worlds unknown.

- **The world is failing** – I can’t believe the things that used to be hidden that are now brought into the light and applauded openly by darkened and deluded people.

- **Sensitivity and shame are failing.** Not only are people no longer embarrassed or ashamed of their sins, they actually have parades to express pride in their debauchery and degradation.

- **The family is failing.** Of the several functions of the traditional family, many have been abandoned and are considered irrelevant.

- **The church is failing.** The zeal for the lost is being replaced by efforts to prevent the loss of current members and the loss of their children – or at least to prevent the loss of their financial support.

- **Missions are failing.** Fewer new works are started and older works are being abandoned to rebuild, replace, or add to local works to prevent the lose-able from leaving.

- **Preachers are failing.** Some gospelizers my age and much younger (remember I am an octogenarian – 84 at the present count) have been retired for twenty years and more. Many not yet retired are relaxed, resting, and resisting any call to meaningful activity in the church of the Lord.

- **Preacher want-to-be’s are also failing.** Ordinary pulpits in ordinary churches do not have enough prestige, power, popularity, political clout, or material prosperity to attract many to a vocation as preaching minister or evangelist. Would-be preachers want the prospect of greener pastures – an honored name, fame, and fortune. They want

assurance of a lucrative livelihood and a lasting legacy.

- **Love and concern for souls seems to be failing** too, no longer hot or even warm. It has grown cold (Matthew 24:12).

I ALSO KNOW WHAT HAS NOT FAILED, AND WHAT WILL NOT FAIL.

- **God has not failed.** In all of my life God has not let me down. Oh yes, He has sometimes said no to my requests, and He has not done for me some things that I asked Him to do. But not one of His promises has failed – He has always kept His word. That causes me a little concern, since there have been so many times when I failed in my duty and in my promises. God’s threats of punishment or loss of privilege are negative promises. Based upon His past faithfulness in keeping His word I can be assured that He will not fail to carry out both positive and negative promises.

- **Christ has not failed.** He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). What he accomplished by his cross is still valid, still sure and certain (Hebrews 9:12-14). No other way to God is needed because Jesus is the all-sufficient way (John 14:6).

- **The gospel of Christ has not failed** – it endures and remains unchanging forever (1 Peter 1:25). We do not have a new and ever-changing set of rules and regulations, new restrictions and requirements to learn and apply. Man’s spiritual needs do not change. The same gospel that has always saved and edified before will save and edify now.

- **The way to heaven has not failed.** The narrow, restricted, but clearly marked way still leads to life and away from destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

- **The Lord’s true church has not failed** (Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:47, Ephesians 4:15-16). The only church – as the people called out of sin and error, called into obedience and discipleship, called into salvation and fellowship, called into identity with the Lord, ordered, equipped, supplied, and commissioned by the Lord – is unchanged and unchanging. People have failed to preserve it as God planned and provided; people have failed to stay in it; people have made alternate “churches” to suit themselves; but the only church the Lord established and the only one He will ever accept is the

same today as it was at the beginning. The Lord’s “calling” has not failed and will not fail, even if all people reject it and refuse to be among “the called” or “called out” of the Lord.

MY BODY IS UNDENIABLY FAILING, BUT IT HASN’T FAILED COMPLETELY.

- **Most of my parts are weaker but still working.** My eyes still see, my ears still hear, my voice still works. My legs still hold me up and my hands still grasp and hold. My body still processes food.

- **My heart and spirit have not failed.** My heart still loves and yearns. My spirit is still nourished by God’s word and by His Spirit.

- **My faith has not failed and is still growing.** My search for truth has slowed as I have slowed, but it continues.

- **My hope has not failed.** It is still alive and growing stronger as what I hope for comes nearer (Romans 13:11). I still see my goal God’s upward calling (Philippians 3:13-14).

- **My desire to depart and be with Christ has not failed.** That would be the ultimate gain (Philippians 1:21). To live is Christ; to die and be with him is gain.

I KNOW I MUST NOT FAIL. I AM DETERMINED I WILL NOT FAIL.

- **I do not intend to quit or fail the church or my work in it.** I have no plans to quit while I have strength and opportunity.

- **I do not intend to fail in my mission to the world.** The world may fail me and my mission may not bear the fruit I desire, but it is my mission and I dare not abandon it or ignore it while the Lord sets it before me.

- **I do not intend to fail the Lord who has never failed me.** I regret the lapses and gaps in my efforts. I repent of the times I have been diverted and derelict in my duties. But temporary failures do not justify quitting – not now when even my failing eyes and ears and hands and heart can be renewed by God, can be used honorably and effectively to some extent by God even in their present diminished and limited condition.

- **I intend to correct it if I have failed you personally.** If you believe I have failed you, please let me know while there is still time and opportunity to correct it so we can be right with each other and with God.

Seasons and Eternal Day

My spring of youth has come and gone.
It will not come again.
The strength of summer did not last.
'Twas short and sweet, but then
It went away like dew on flow'rs
Warmed by the rising sun,
Or like the light of day will go
When evening has begun.

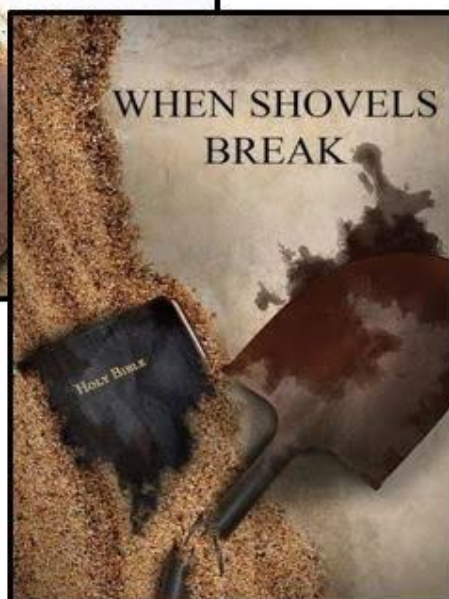
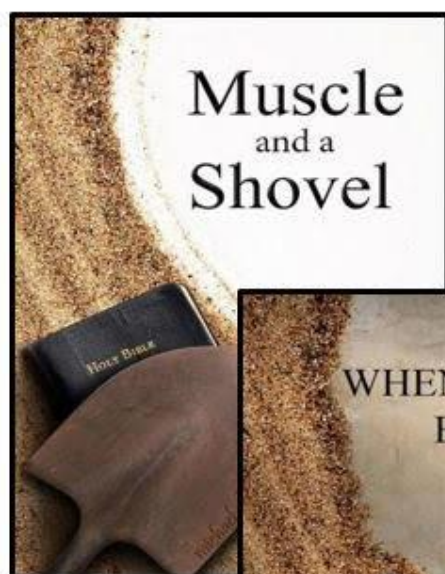
A renewed urgency I feel
Since autumn came to call.
Unless I find new energy,
Autumn may be my fall.
My blood is thin. Can I withstand
The stress of winter's cold
When stumbling ways give evidence
That one is growing old?

Accept each season, like each stage
Of life, when it arrives.
The heav'n of God is yet to be,
In that our hope survives.
My spring will never come again.
My summer went away.
When fall and winter too have passed
Comes God's eternal day.

— Gerald Cowan

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June 2017



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Meditating on *Doubt and Faith*

Joseph T. McWhorter

It was just after the resurrection. Jesus came and appeared to a group of His faithful apostles. Thomas the Twin was absent. When he found out about the meeting with the Master, he couldn't believe it. "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe," (John 20:25). Imagine how crushed Thomas must have felt. He was expecting the triumph of his King. Instead, his King was killed as a criminal. The only proof he would accept that Jesus was alive was hands-on evidence. Eight days later, Jesus returned to his closest followers. This time, Thomas was there. Amazingly, the first thing Jesus did after greeting them was give Thomas what he wanted. Jesus didn't chastise Thomas for his doubt. He didn't scorn him. He gave a man who doubted a reason to believe.

The seventy-seventh Psalm was written by a man named Asaph. It chronicles a journey from doubt to faith. It is a Psalm of meditation. Three times we find the word "Selah" breaking up the Song into four "verses." "Selah" is found seventy-one times in the book of Psalms. We are unsure of its exact meaning but it is found in places of pause and contemplation within the songs. It is a place where we can stop, reflect on what we have read or sung, and recollect our thoughts.

Psalm 77 begins, "I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. Selah," (Psalm 77:1–3). It is unclear what Asaph was going through but he was clearly grieving. He was desperately crying out to God. He yearned for connection with his Creator. Have you ever been so troubled that your soul would not settle or be comforted? Have you ever faced situations that seem far too big to handle

and far too much for you to bear? Doubt often arises in the wake of these storms. Far too often the place we turn is away from God instead of towards Him. Asaph chose to seek God in the midst of pain. But while he determined to turn to God, He felt as though God had forsaken him. The very thought of God made him groan in anguish once again. When he set his heart to meditate on God and the situation, the result was more pain. His spirit was in such a state of anguish that he felt he could continue no more. He was exhausted. Asaph then pauses the music for us to meditate on what he said.

He wrote on, "You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I consider the days of old, the years long ago. I said, 'Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart.' Then my spirit made a diligent search: 'Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?' Selah" (Psalm 77:4–9). He already described his exhaustion yet now we find that he could not sleep. He can't even utter a word because of his deep internal pain. Have you ever felt that pain? Have you ever faced a loss so unbearable that you had no power to speak? Before, Asaph cried out to God but now, he could not utter anything. He had nothing left in him. In this state of grief and exhaustion and doubt he remembers good times of the past and asks 6 questions. "Has God rejected me?" "Have I lost favor in His sight?" "Did He stop loving me?" "Are His promises still good?" "Has He forgotten to give me grace?" "Is He so mad at me that he cannot give compassion?"

If you have been through times like Asaph had, some of these questions sound familiar. These are the questions that drive many Christians away from God. These kinds of questions, when left unanswered, grow like a cancer within the heart. They

become a constant whisper in the ears. Asaph didn't leave them unanswered. He meditated. We now read the second "Selah." We are once again given a chance to process what we have heard.

Verse 10 marks the transition of the song. In verses 1-9, Asaph talked about himself much more than he talked about God. When he did talk about God, he was asking doubting questions. He made his pain clear to us. He described his situation and his failure to find comfort. The transition we now see in language mirrors a transition in his heart. Twenty-six times in 11 verses, he will refer to God. The entirety of the rest of the writing is Asaph remembering God.

He writes in verses 10-15, "Then I said, 'I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.' I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders; you have made known Your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah." Asaph found the answer to his problem. No amount of wallowing in self-pity, worrying about himself, feeling sorry for himself, wishing for the old days to come back when everything was ok, or anything else he had been doing could help him. The only comfort Asaph realized he could have was in remembering who God is. He had questions of doubt, now he seeks answers in the things he knew from history.

In verse 12 he resolved to meditate on the wonders God has accomplished. The word translated "meditate" has already been used in verses 3 and 6. In this case, instead of thinking about how big his problems were, he thought of how big his God is. He remembered there is no God like YHWH [Yahweh, or Jehovah]. He asks another question, "what god is great like our God?" but it is clearly not a question of doubt. He remembered the idols of bronze and gold and wood and stone that belonged to the nations around them. He must have remembered how silly those nations looked dancing before a piece of creation when he could worship the Creator.

He also called God, "the God who works wonders." As we grow out of childhood, our sense of wonder becomes more elusive. There are still some

things that can really make us pause, though. The birth of a precious new soul, the last pink rays of a setting sun, mist across grassy hills in the early morning, a tumultuous thunderstorm flashing in the distance: all these and so much more gives us opportunity to cry out "Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah!" Asaph remembered those things and it comforted his heart.

Closer to home, he remembered God's redeeming power. If God had not miraculously snatched his people from Egypt, Asaph would likely have been molding bricks in the hot African sun instead of writing and performing music before King David in the Promised Land. He owed his freedom to God. Again, he paused for mediation. He has given us a final opportunity to stop and think about these truths.

We can be touched by the natural world and know that God is real; but as Christians we have been touched with more. We know God's redeeming power. We have never been physical slaves to anyone, but we were once slaves to sin. Through Christ's sacrifice we have been bought out of a foreign country and been promised a homeland, Heaven. When we go through tough times, we can rest assured with faith in God that he is with us. We can know that because he has been with his people throughout all history. He has never let us down so long as we don't leave Him.

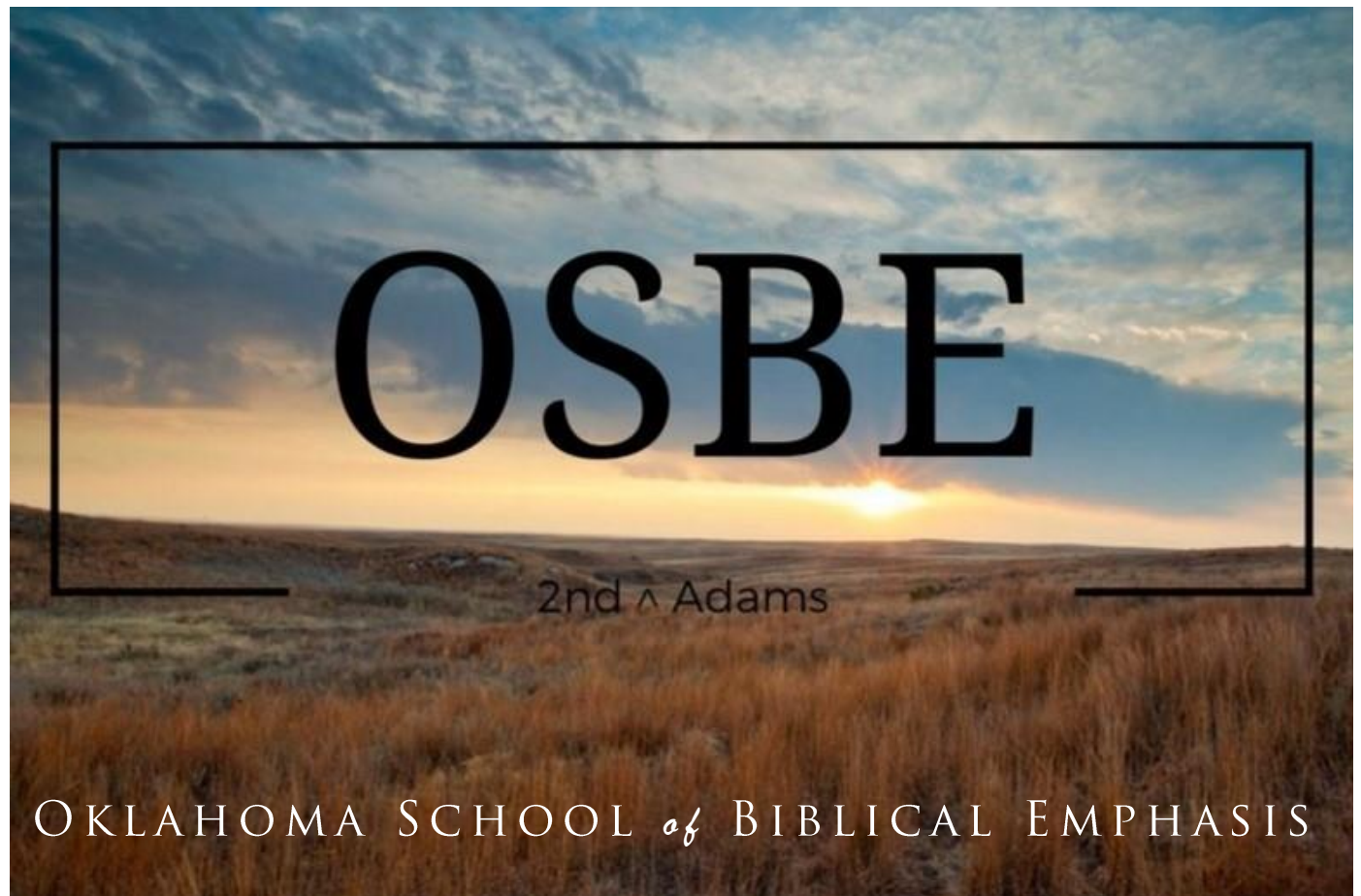
The final section reads, "When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies gave forth thunder; your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lighted up the world; the earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps 77:16-20). These are words of triumphant faith. There is no doubt in Asaph's mind who was responsible for the delivery of the Israelites from Egypt. He knew YHWH was responsible. He boasts in God's power.

He remembered the parting of the Red Sea and the storm on the mount of the delivery of the law. He knew the stories of how God had provided for them even at the height of their complaints. In the final words of the Psalm, Asaph looked at God as a shepherd. God had led his people like a shepherd

leads sheep. He provided for them at every moment of the journey. He fed them, watered them, protected them, and comforted them.

When Asaph struggled with doubt, then best thing for him to remember was that God is all-powerful and that He cares for His people. He had questions about who God was and those questions were answered when he remembered God's wonders. When we face struggles like Asaph faced, we have two options. We can wallow in our own pity and sink down into the grief and be eaten by the

cancer of doubt, or we can remember God. We can find comfort in the words of Hebrews 13:5–6. “‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’” We have an assurance from God that when we face tough times, He faces them with us. Even when we face doubt about who He is, we can still turn to Him for help. When we really understand that like Asaph did, we can face anything that comes before us.



Overseen by the shepherds of the Second and Adams church of Christ
216 North Adams Street; Elk City, Oklahoma 73644
580-225-0718 Koinewords@gmail.com

To glorify God, to edify Christians, to help preachers improve their knowledge and ability,
to strengthen church leaders, and to reach out with greater influence to the community.

Overcoming Temptation II:

1 John 2:15-17

By Gantt Carter

Have you ever been tempted? I imagine that is likely a strange question to you. Of course, if we are of an accountable age and possess a competent mind, we have faced temptation. We live in a world that sin has entered. Temptations are thrown our way every day we live on this planet. But what exactly is temptation? How do we overcome temptations?

In our previous article, we noted the three basic channels of temptation: Pleasure/passion, possession, and pride/place. These three often appear in the following construct: Sex, salary, and social status. Quite a number of advertisements in our society appeal to one or a combination of the three fundamental ways in which we find ourselves tempted to sin against our gracious Maker. Our culture is filled with billboards, TVs, magazines, etc. We are literally surrounded by various ads. Many of us own “smart” phones and we have quick and easy access to movies, TV shows, games, browsing, and more...all in a pocket size device. Some of us have our said device nearby 24/7...we have constant access to a lot of entertaining and possibly *idolatrous* activities.

Let us go back to the first sin, back to the Garden of Eden. It is interesting to consider how closely 1 John 2:16 parallels Genesis 3:6. We see how Eve saw that the fruit was “good for food” which sounds a lot like “the desires of the flesh.” She observed that the fruit was a “delight to the eyes,” and that seems to be “the desires of the eyes.” Finally, she saw that the fruit was able “to make one wise,” which should remind us of “the pride of life.” Pride seems to be at heart of most temptation/sin. We often desire to be like God in the wrong fashion, for we want to be our own god (cf. Isaiah 5:15-16).

Now the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in

the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:1-6).

As you study Genesis 3:1-6, you may discover that Satan convinced Eve to change the **focus**, to focus on the one area that God had restricted them. He also employed outright **falsehood** by lying to Eve about what would happen to them when they rebelled against God. Satan added his own **flourish** to the situation to persuade Eve that disobeying God was a promising idea after all. As Paul notes later, “the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Timothy 2:14). I suggest that this still occurs today in our temptations.

Our view of God and our view of His commandments will shape the way we respond to temptations. In fact, having a proper view of God is at the core of what it means to think, feel, and live properly.

Moses is another example of the working of these three avenues of temptation, but thankfully, a far more positive one. Please consider the following verses from the writer of Hebrews:

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting

pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them (Hebrews 11:23-28).

Consider how the life of Moses includes the temptations listed in 1 John 2:16. Moses gave up being “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” to lead God’s people out of Egypt. Could we conclude that he rejected the temptation of “the pride of life?” What about the temporary “pleasures of sin” or might we say, “the desires of the flesh?” Moses also made a value assessment and concluded that the suffering for the Messiah was greater than the royal treasure stores in Egypt. He overcame the temptation of the “desires of the eyes.” We can certainly learn a great deal from Moses and his actions.

But how did Moses overcome these temptations? We already noted that he made a value assessment and determined the true worth in his life. But there are two specific motivation statements given in the text above. The first one is “for he was looking to the reward.” Clearly, Moses did not engage in absolute self-denial. He was seeking a reward; he was seeking something immensely valuable for himself. Ultimately, he tossed aside the lesser value of sinful living to obtain something far better, even though that decision included some amount of pain and suffering. But what was the ultimate reward Moses was seeking?

The second and final explanation for Moses’ behavior is stated this way: “For he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” “Him who is invisible” is an obvious reference to Deity. May we all possess spiritual eyes to see the invisible. Moses overcame all three types of temptation because he was seeking the greatest treasure of them all—God Himself. Perhaps there is a reason James tells us to resist Satan and to draw near to God (James 4:7-10). What or whom are you seeking in your life?

*If anyone would **come after Me**, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and **follow Me** (Jesus, in Luke 9:23).*

While on this earth, our Master was tempted in the same ways all of us are tempted to sin. The Hebrew writer explains that:

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

After His immersion by John (Luke 3:21-22), Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness, undergoing the temptations of the Devil (Luke 4:1-13). Seizing the opportunity of His intense hunger, Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread to eat. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. This is a temptation relating to “the desires of the flesh.”

The Tempter then shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and claims he will give them to Jesus, if He will only prostrate Himself in worship to Satan. Jesus answers by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13. This temptation corresponds to “the delight of the eyes.”

The Devil then takes Him to the temple mount and tempts Him jump by quoting Psalm 91:11-12. Jesus counters this time by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. This third temptation was an appeal to “the pride of life.” “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13).

You have likely noticed in the past that the way Jesus overcomes these temptations is by the power of the written Word. How often do we rely on the power of God’s Word to fight back against the attacks of Satan?

It is also interesting to note that Luke seems to organize the temptations of Jesus in this account theologically instead of in exact chronology (cf. Matthew 4:1-10 and 1 John 2:16).

*Since then we have a **great high priest** who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).*

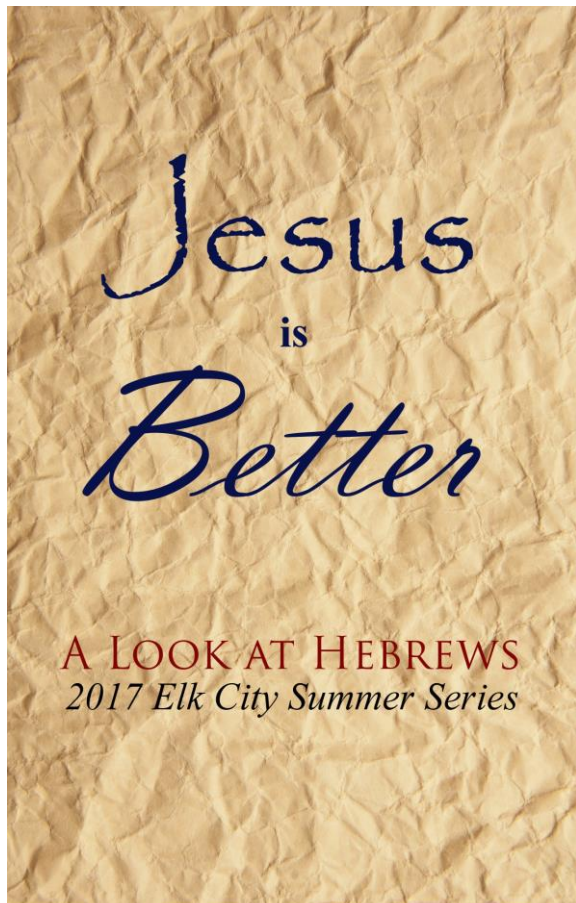
Here are five final observations concerning how to overcome temptation:

1. **Aware** ~ learn how Satan works.
2. **Avoid** ~ avoid places, activities, etc. that lend themselves to tempting you to sin. Do not let the door open—keep it intentionally closed.
3. **Arrogance** ~ fight over-confidence (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 and 1 Peter 5:8-9).
4. **Always** ~ know that there is always a way of overcoming the temptation (see 1 Corinthians 10:13 and James 4:7-10).
5. **Amazed** ~ see the goodness and greatness of Deity!

We can find several examples of individuals being tempted in the three avenues found in 1 John 2:26. We can learn from these examples, both from those who overcame (Jesus and Moses) and even from those who did not (Eve and Adam). We must learn to see past Satan's lies, know the Word of God, and strive make proper value assessments of what truly matters in life. We can overcome temptations, if we truly seek after God with all our heart.

May we all be born again by the incorruptible word of truth. May we all be eager to hear the words of God, but slow to speak our own opinions and slow in getting angry. The justice of God will never come by our angry opinions. May we all pull the words of God deep into our minds and hearts. The power of deliverance is in His words. But may we all hear and then practice the Word of God.

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (James 1:18-22).



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Starting Your Ministry

By James Sims Sr.

This article is for all that are starting out in the ministry field or that might consider becoming a minister in the future. These are a few things to think about that may be a help to you.

It is a good idea to start your ministry using a large print Bible. You may be thinking to yourself, *I don't need a large print Bible. I can see just fine.* You may not need the large print now but if you continue to preach when you are older, you will probably need the large print. It would take a lot of time and work to transfer your notes from the regular print Bible to the large print later. So plan ahead.

Selecting the version of the Bible you will use is important as well. A very good Bible to use is the Modern Literal Version (MLV). It is basically a Greek New Testament, just in English—distinguishing between different Greek words in the original by using different English words. For example the word love, the MLV gives you the type of love (phileo, agape, etc.) so the meaning is clear in the sentence. A very well-known preaching school uses the MLV and it is required as part of their curriculum. You will find that the MLV has wide margins for writing which helps for notes. It is also available in PDF form. At this time you will need a different version for the Old Testament as the MLV of the Old Testament is in the process of being completed.

Another thing you will need to spend some time working on is your resume. Many ministers use a skeleton (bullets and one-liners) type that is used by most people seeking worldly employment. The ministry is different. It is actually better if you use paragraphs to give as much information as possible to those that are screening the information for the

congregation. I suggest you write down everything you have done in your ministry and any work you did when attending the congregation you grew up in. This will give the congregation a better insight into who you are and what you can offer them. You also might want to include any past secular information. Why? This may let them know that you understand people and about your ability to work, thus a further connection with some in the congregation. They have to be interested in what they see

written down before they go any further, speaking with you or having you come for a visit.

Before you are contacted by a congregation, spend some time to figure out what exactly you will need, what you are able and/or willing to do for them and what your strengths and weaknesses are. Be honest with yourself. Do you want a congregation where you are only required to preach and teach class? Or, do you want a congregation that is looking for a minister, some

place you can preach and teach as well as minister and care for people, spend time visiting and counseling them? Maybe leading the men if they do not have elders. You spending time to be prepared will make it easier to clarify if a joining of you and the congregation will work. It will also show the congregation that you are able to lead them (especially if there are no elders). Also, by you knowing what the answers are, you will be able to answer any questions that come up. You will also be ready to speak up for yourself. It doesn't hurt to tell them that you are like Moses and not eloquent of speech, or that you don't know it all (which you don't). This goes a long way in telling the congregation you are an ordinary man preaching God's Word

This article is for all that are starting out in the ministry field or that might consider becoming a minister in the future. These are a few things to think about that may be a help to you.

and that you just want to preach the simple truth. It also tells the congregation that you can relate to the common person and that you are not unreachable. The biggest thing is for you to be yourself! They will find out in six months who you are anyway. Starting out in the simplest format is best and will ease the stress in the congregation and your acceptance to the congregation will be quicker.

When I try out at a congregation (and try out the congregation), the Bible class is always Galatians 1:1-11, tied into the book of Jude (verses 3-4). This helps the congregation see where I'm coming from; and every single time, the congregation loved it, and they could see that I was focused on speaking the truth. They know they won't have to second-guess the new minister. I make sure to tell them that I could preach on love and Jesus all day long, but I want them to know I stand on the word of God, and I seek to please Him—not man. It adds to the trust factor, which is especially important when teaching and preaching on a few more difficult topics.

Along those same lines, ask for what you want or need. Be straight up with the congregation and don't leave anything out. Some members think the minister should live in poverty or below everyone else. This is not true. It is best that you take the time now rather than six months to a year later. You will be unhappy or feel let down because you did not ask, and then find out there is no way of obtaining your needs. Even if has to be addressed later on in your ministry, plant the seed of that need or want. Plus it will give the congregation a knowledge of the obligation needing to be met.

You need to be upfront with the elders or men of the congregation. Remember, you are interviewing them as well. Sometimes that needs to be said (unless you are more worried about a job and not about preaching) and that it puts them on notice that this visit is a two way street. This will help in telling the elders and or men that they are being looked at just as carefully as they are looking at you. If asked a question, pose the same question back to the eldership and or to every man in the meeting. This again helps them see how they are to live as well as some questions that are not relevant. I at one time was asked to complete a Biblical 78 item questionnaire when going to a work in Florida for \$250.00 per week, full time. Many of the questions were repeated and it seemed this was

only to intimidate the person completing it, not that it had any relevance. The men also wanted the preacher to do it all and for them to not have any accountability.

You might ask why would I consider preaching for \$250.00 a week?

First of all, that is all that this congregation could barely afford. Also, I am a FROG (you will find out at the end of this article about being a FROG) and above all – remember, if you are looking for a job, you are in the wrong business! Preaching and/or ministry are a lifestyle one must take on. Money is the last thing on my list and the position should not be about the money. Don't get me wrong, I am not saying you should not get paid for the work you do, but it should not be the driving force.

You need to pray and go where God sends you and you will grow into the money needed because God will supply your needs. Seek the kingdom of God first! Isn't that what we are supposed to do anyway?

When you do go to meet a congregation, it is very important that you address the congregation. This is a must! Do this even if you have met with the elders or men beforehand. After your class and sermon are over, and just before the closing prayer, stand up as say "I would like to meet with the congregation for a few minutes after the prayer." At this point the congregation has heard you teach a class and preach at least one sermon. Start by saying, "I have talked to the elders or men of the congregation and have expressed to them a few thoughts that I have and would like to share them with the congregation." Then give them your thoughts. Be up front, lay it all out there. Some things you may want to let them know are: "if I am suppressed to preach the whole counsel of God, then I know where the door is and can walk out just as easily as I came in." Or "I cannot do it all by myself and I need your help" and "we need to work together as one," etc. Explain that you are not being rude, but that you are commanded to do such as you have to answer to God. Then include the other things that you want to mention (you can be forward somewhat but be nice about it). Give them a chance to ask you any questions they may have. This should give you a very good standing in regards to honesty and sincerity among the congregation. Being trusted from the start is good. Because

of the past minister actions while with the congregation or their actions on their exiting, sometimes the members do not trust the incoming minister. So anything you do to ease this will be helpful to you. The gist of it – be yourself. Show that you can relate to them and just have a good conversation with them, it goes a long way. All this will get the congregation on the same page from the start and keep them there in the end. Being on the same page is very important!

Some preachers will not do what I have stated because they are looking for a paycheck. They would rather offend God by not preaching the whole counsel of God and cower to men. Remember you do not work for the elders, or men, or congregation. You work for God.

If you currently are with a congregation and will be leaving to begin a new work, address the congregation and explain why. Why? It is better to hear the reason you are leaving from your mouth rather than someone in the church who may have misunderstood some things.

Once you are at your new congregation, be sure to address any issues that arise. Waiting on an issue will not make it go away. If there are no elders, the men need to handle things (often lead by the minister). They may need guidance. Step in and show them by your leadership skills. This will help build up the men. This will build the relationship between you and they will confide in you more and more, not only for spiritual things but also in aspects of their daily life. Congregations without elders are looking for a leader to help guide them and as the minister you are it whether you like it or not. Also, visitors (non-Christians) tend to look to the minister (even if there are elders) as the leader when they visit the congregation. They do not understand the way the church works. You will be filling that role.

Note: You are not setting yourself up as a pope or elder, just trying to lead the congregation the way that God would and helping them grow both spiritually and physically. Explain that there should not be splits in the church if people discuss the issues and stick with what the Bible says. Be open. Talk about issues even after a weekday class or sitting around in the building after services. Teach a class on Philippians and being humble. Show the unity of the book and use that as a mirror to the congregation. Make it known and keep expressing

that the congregation is a family. Be repetitive about it and it will start to sink in. You will see a difference.

If you are a preacher (speaking/teaching only) it will be hard to make the family idea sink in or take action to flourish within the congregation as they are only hearing you say it and not seeing you as an example. Some preachers think their job is getting paid to only study. There is more to this work than just studying. You need to minister to the congregation (take care of them, visit them) as God would do. Learn about them. Find out what everyone does in the congregation. Give them a list of things that need to be done to make the church function. Have everyone complete a sheet, marking the works they are willing to help with. Explain to the current workers it is not to replace them but to get everyone working and involved. This will get the congregation moving and working together.

A minister's wife can be the best support for a minister. It is important that your wife understand what is required of you and the effects that will have on her. Remind the congregation that they are paying you, not her. It is important that your wife be an active Christian woman. This is important for her own spirituality and her walk serving the Lord. People can be hard on a minister's wife. It is your duty to protect her.

Lastly, be a FROG (Fully Rely On God)! Preach the truth 100% even if it costs you your job. Do not cower to men and their traditions that supersede God's Word or negativity affect the congregation. "Just because" or "this is the way we have always done it" is not the right answer. Those are answers for men to do things they wish or want the church to be. Lean on God and His Word. Not man. And everything will work out as mentioned above.

So, as you start your ministry or continue an existing work, stand up, stand up for Jesus! Stand up, stand up for the truth and doing the will of God first. If you do, everything will be alright and God will bless you, your family and congregation where you are serving Him. Read the books of I and II Timothy and the book of Philippians to help get you started in your work. Thanks be to God and His wonderful love for us, for those who preach and teach His Word without addition or subtraction. Cast your cares upon Him as you minister to others and seek His guidance to continue.

An Introduction to Matthew

By Mark McWhorter

The Book of Matthew never identifies the writer. However, most of the ancient commentators agreed that Matthew was the writer (21 commentators by the end of the 2nd Century). His original name was Levi, the son of Alphaeus. Levi means 'Joining.' And indeed he joined Christ in his earthly ministry (Luke 5:27). Matthew was a publican serving the Roman government. Thus, he would not have been liked by the average Jew. Not much is really known about him other than being an apostle. It is impressive that God chose to communicate such an important message through a relatively unknown source. Matthew means 'Gift of God.' Matthew's written message is all about God's gift to mankind, Jesus Christ.

The exact date of writing is unknown. However, an examination of Chapter 24 indicates it was written before A.D. 70 and the fall of Jerusalem.

The book is known as the 'Old Testament Gospel.' Matthew makes 66 quotations and allusions to the Old Testament. The book is written to Jews, therefore, the high amount of references to the Old Testament makes perfect sense. A key word in the book is 'fulfilled.' He stated that Jesus came to fulfill (5:17). 'That it might be fulfilled' is used numerous times (2:15, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:35).

The book has also been referenced as the 'Messianic Gospel.' Nearly forty passages are drawn from the Old Testament to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.

A major point that Matthew presses is the Kingship of Jesus. He writes of the person and nature of the king (1:1-4:16). He is called the Son of David seven times, beginning with the first statement in the book. This relates his royal lineage. The Magi have been looking for this king. He spends time on

the king and his kingdom (4:17-16:20). He ends the book with the resurrection of the king.

Matthew has 55 references to the 'kingdom.' There are 32 usages of the 'kingdom of heaven.' The Jews were waiting for the kingdom and Matthew intends to demonstrate that the kingdom was coming through Jesus. He shows that the keys to the kingdom would first be presented through the Apostles (16:17-20).

This king is shown to be God's Son (3:17; 17:5). This king is the Christ (16:16). This king by his resurrection has all authority in heaven and on earth (28:18).

Matthew presents Jesus as the great Prophet (16:14; 21:11). This is highlighted with his Transfiguration (17:5). He was greater than Moses or Elijah.

Matthew also presents Jesus as a great teacher, one who taught with authority. He records the wonderful Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29) as well as other discourses.

Jesus was shown to have no fear in teaching on difficult subjects such as marriage and divorce, materialism, judging, and proper attitude toward fellow men. He was able to use parables to make important points.

Matthew records some of the powerful miracles showing that Jesus had power over health (8:1-4; 9:27-34; 12: 9-13), power over demons (8:16), power to multiply food (14:14-21; 15:32-37), and power over the elements of nature (8:23-27).

Matthew records the events of Christ's crucifixion, showing his willingness to obey his Father.

And of great importance is that Matthew ends by telling the Jews that his Kingdom was for all mankind ("go ye therefore and teach **all nations**"), not just the Jews.

*Matthew makes
66 quotations and
allusions to the
Old Testament.*

"These have been Written so that You may Believe"

SEEING JESUS AS GOD IN JOHN'S GOSPEL OF BELIEF

Jake Schotter

INTRODUCTION

John is the only gospel that is not part of the synoptic books. Matthew, Mark, and Luke present Jesus from a human vantage point (whether it be Jesus as a king, a servant, or a man). However, John gives us the divine perspective of Jesus—Jesus is God.

AUTHORSHIP

The Gospel of John is interesting because the author does not identify himself in the book. However, there is a primary consensus that the author is John. "Iraeneus (c. AD 185), a student of Polycarp who was a student of the apostle John, effectively argued this very conclusion (as did Justin Martyr, Origen, and others). Criticism of Johannine authorship practically ended with the discovery of the John Rylands Papyrus (or p52) in Egypt."¹

RECIPIENTS

There is no identification made by John in the book. Based on what was written, and the purpose of the book, it is reasonable to conclude that it was written to anybody who did not believe in Jesus as God, those struggling to believe, and for those who already believe. Thus, John had in mind everyone, as he was writing.

¹ Powell, David. *Behold the Lamb: John's Gospel of Belief*. Ed. David L. Lipe. Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman University, 2008. 413.

PURPOSE

There is, perhaps, no book that provides a clearer purpose statement than the book of John. This statement is found in 20:30-31: *"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."*

John could have given lots more information, but what he included was enough for someone to have faith beyond a shadow of a doubt. If a non-believer reads John, he should leave with a faith that Jesus is God. If a struggling believer reads John, he should leave with a rejuvenated faith. If a mature Christian reads John, their faith should be encouraged and strengthened. John's gospel was written with the intent that what you read is sufficient—more than enough evidence to believe that Jesus is God and the means to salvation.

*John ... included
...enough for someone to
have faith beyond a
shadow of a doubt.*

KEY TERMS

"Signs" — are used to point people to the truth. Signs are to be displayed, so people can see them and lead you to do something. In the book of John, "signs" will point you to Jesus as God and will lead to belief in Him (2:11; 3:2; 4:48, 53; 5:36; 6:14; 7:31; 9:38; 11:45; 20:28-29). There are 7 miracles ("signs") in this book: 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 5:1-13; 6:1-14; 6:16-21; 9:1-12; 11:1-46). This word appears 17 times total.

“Believe” — Appears 98 times in the book. As was seen in the purpose statement, “believe” is the key word. We need to believe that Jesus “is the Christ, the Son of God.” The signs the people saw, and what we read of, leads to belief. This belief leads to salvation (“believing you may have life in His name.”).

“Life” — the result of believing in Christ that leads to a life of obedience. This is the faith that saves us. John wrote in 10:10, “I come that they might have life, and have it abundantly.” Earlier, we saw in 5:24, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment...”

OUTLINE²

- I. Prologue (John 1) — Jesus is Special
- II. Public Ministry of Jesus (John 2-12) — Jesus is Spectacular
- III. Private Ministry of Jesus (John 13-17) — Jesus is Sentimental
- IV. Passion of Jesus (John 18-21) — Jesus is our Savior

CONCLUSION

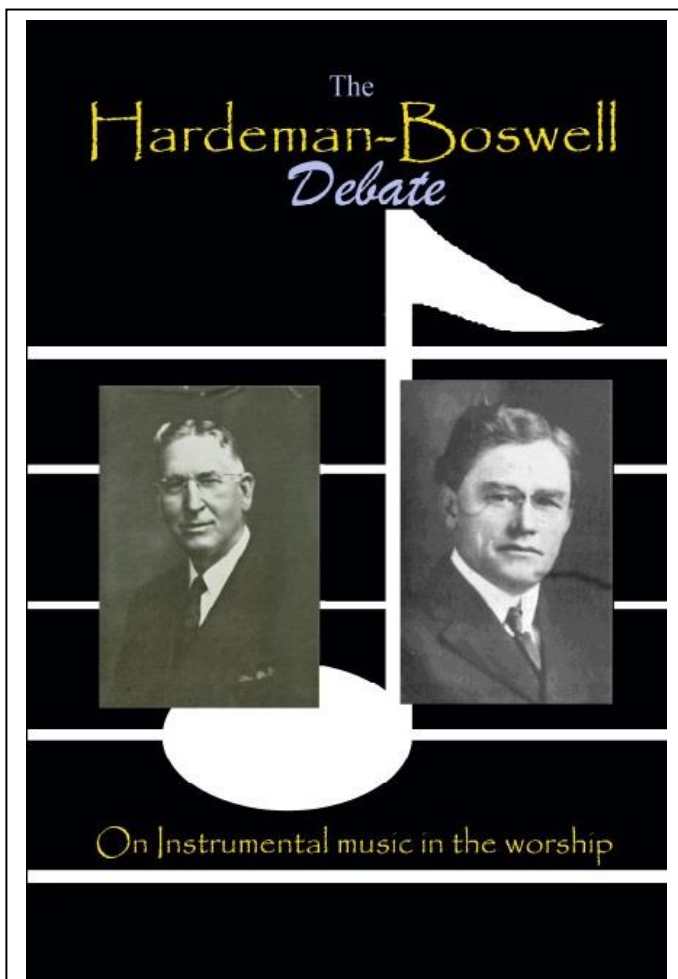
“The Gospel of John is the most unusual and perhaps the most valuable member of the quartet of canonical gospels. Although it deals with the same broad sequence of events to be found in the pages of the others, it is quite different in structure and style” (Merrill C. Tenney).³

“John is the greatest book in the Bible. Give it to the new Christian because of its straightforward simplicity. Give it to the scholar because of its deep profound mysteries. Give it to all because its message is Jesus Christ. It is the greatest book in the Bible because, when honestly encountered, the reader will come to realize Jesus as his Lord and God. He will fall to his knees and worship the person of the book — Jesus Christ” (Elmer Towns).⁴

² Winkler, Dan. *Behold the Lamb: John's Gospel of Belief*. Ed. David L. Lipe. Henderson, TN: Freed-Hardeman University, 2008. 265-278.

³ Towns, Elmer. *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1990. 10.

⁴ Ibid. 11.



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“Hey Guy, What Did You Say?”

An Introduction to the Minor Prophet Haggai

By Stephen Scaggs

One of the landmark moments in the Hebrew Bible is the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a dismal time in Israel’s history and the Story of Redemption seems to fade into the haze of Exile. The period of Haggai and Zechariah does not receive much attention from Christian readers because it is so dismal compared to the faith of Abraham, the rise of Joseph, the exploits of Samson, the victories of David, the proclamations of Elijah. Even the disobedient prophet Jonah and the story of the great fish attract more attention.

In circa 587 B.C., the city of Jerusalem fell to the Babylonian armies. After the fall of Jerusalem, the Israelites would never again regain independence from foreign powers until the Maccabean revolt – and even then, it was only a fraction of the glory of its size from Solomon’s time. After seventy years in Exile, Cyrus of Persia gave the emancipation decree for the Jews to return home. And this is the timeframe where we meet the contemporary prophets Haggai and Zechariah. In the Hebrew canon, Haggai forms part of “the Twelve” (*Baba Bathra* 14b), a grouping of prophets that could fit on one scroll.

AUTHOR

Returning from Babylon, Haggai was a post-exilic prophet that encouraged the returning exiles to rebuild the temple (see *Ezra* 5:1-2; 6:14). Haggai urged the initiation of the building (*Haggai* 1:1-15), encouraged the continuation of the building (*Haggai* 2:1-9), and affirmed the completion of an important stage (*Haggai* 2:10-19). The name Haggai (חגי) means “festival.” Sometimes the Hebrew *yod* (י) is an abbreviation for YHWH, so Haggai’s name could mean “festival of the LORD” (1 *Chronicles* 6:30). His name may suggest that Haggai was born on one of the main Jewish festival days (*Deuteronomy* 16:16). His name is fitting, for the temple (the subject of Haggai’s prophecy) was the context for the Jewish festivals. *Haggai* 2:3 might also suggest that Haggai saw the former (Solomon’s) temple, which would put him in his older years during his prophetic ministry. The Hebrews trans-



The Fall of Judah and the Exile to Babylon

literated this name into Greek *Haggaios*, which evolved into our English Haggai.

A unique factor about Haggai is that we know precisely the length of his preaching ministry. Haggai dates each of his four messages (*Haggai* 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20). It spans from August 29 (first day of the sixth month) to December 18 (twenty-fourth day of the ninth month). Haggai uses rhetorical questions to highlight key issues (*Haggai* 1:4, 9; 2:3, 19). Haggai also uses rhetorical repetition (“Consider your ways” [1:5, 7; 2:15, 18]; “I am with you” [1:13; 2:4]; “I will shake the heavens and the earth” [2:6, 21]).

BACKGROUND

When Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon in 537 B.C., the king issued an emancipation decree, allowing all exilic Jews to return to their home and rebuild the temple. With Zerubbabel as their leader, 50,000 Jews journeyed home to begin work on the temple (*Ezra* 2). About two years later, they completed the foundation of the temple, which resulted in great rejoicing (*Ezra* 3:10-11) and paradoxically great sorrow (*Ezra* 3:12-13). But their success aroused opposition to the building project, causing the work on the temple to halt for several years (*Ezra* 4:24).

The work on the temple began again during the second year of King Darius, which was also when the contemporary prophets began their preaching ministry (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1). Haggai does not blame the Jewish opposition for their cessation of work, but the Jews themselves. He tried to arouse the Jews from their lethargy. And when the opposition tried to cease their efforts again (Ezra 5:3ff), King Darius fully supported the Jews (Ezra 6:1-12). After a few years, the Jews finished and dedicated the Temple (Ezra 6:13-18) – and even celebrated their first Passover after the Temple (Ezra 6:19-22).

TEACHINGS

Haggai and Obadiah are the two shortest books in the Hebrew Bible. But although small, Haggai's teachings are powerful. Haggai outlines the disastrous effects of disobedience (Haggai 1:6, 11; 2:16-17) and the blessedness of obedience (Haggai 2:7-9, 19). Haggai quotes from a list of covenant curses from Deuteronomy 28:22-40. Haggai shows the blessing of prioritizing first-things-first (see Luke 12:31). And when we give obedience to the LORD, we receive encouragement and strength from our God (2:4-5).

Although Judah is a fraction of its former glory and they are now a much-reduced community under the boot of a powerful world empire, the LORD promises that the glory of His future temple will be without rival. And even though it was but a fraction of Solomon's temple (Haggai 2:3), the LORD promises that the glory of the latter temple would surpass the former (Haggai 2:9). This is a Messianic prophecy – and much likely a reference to Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:32). The treasures (or “desired”) is a messianic prophesy of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the church (Isaiah 60:5; 61:6; 66:20).

A decaying temple meant a decaying relationship with the Lord, which brought weakness rather than holiness to the people (Haggai 2:14). An oft repeated phrase is “the LORD of hosts.” It occurs fourteen (14) times in thirty-eight (38) verses. This emphasis tells us that the LORD is sovereign over all. He controls the fortunes of His people (Haggai 1:9; 2:17, 19); He controls the nations (Haggai 2:6-8); He directs nature (Haggai 1:10); He motivates His people to action (Haggai 1:14; 2:4); and He

sets up and removes kingdoms (Haggai 2:20-23; see Hebrews 12:26-29).

If blessedness were to come to Israel, then they must work, for a restored temple would bring glory to the Lord (Haggai 1:8) and blessings to the people (Haggai 2:19). And so, Haggai urges the Jews to get to work (Haggai 1:7-8; 2:4-5). But Haggai also recognized they had heart work to do in addition to manual work (Haggai 1:5-7; 2:15-19).

OUTLINE

First Message: Haggai Urges Them to Rebuild the Temple (1:1–11)

- *The people give pitiful excuses (1:1–4)*
- *Poverty fills Jerusalem (1:5–6)*
- *Why this is the case (1:7–11)*

The Response of the People to Haggai's Message (1:12–15)

- *The people heed Haggai's words (1:12)*
- *The Lord gives strength to the workers (1:13–15)*

Second Message: Messianic Glory Will Fill the Temple (2:1–9)

- *The people draw courage (2:1–5)*
- *Promises of future glory and peace (2:6–9)*

Third Message: The Need for Purification and Blessedness (2:10–19)

- *The rapid spread of defilement (2:10–14)*
- *Their disobedience causes their poor harvest (2:15–17)*
- *The blessings that come after they finish the temple (2:18–19)*

Fourth Message: Messianic Hope to the Davidic Line (2:20–23)

- *God brings judgment on the nations (2:20–22)*
- *The messianic significance of Zerubbabel (2:23)*

INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE CONCERNING A SHEPHERDING PROGRAM AVAILABLE TO CONGREGATIONS AT NO COST TO THEM

Dear Brethren,

I regularly have conversations with gospel preachers as well as members of various congregations around the country telling me of leadership issues and asking, “How can we improve and strengthen leadership in the Lord’s church?”

Because of his education and world-wide experience in evangelism, his love for the lost and for the people of God, and the need he also sees in helping the leadership become more effective and fruitful leaders, I have encouraged brother Ivan Stewart to research and compile a practical experience of study (or “practicum”) which I believe to be unique within the body of Christ. Titled **“As Go the Shepherds So Go the Sheep”**, the format is neither lecture nor role-playing. I helped test the practical experience in this practicum and know that it is not only Biblical, but also an effective approach in meeting leadership needs currently faced within the church.

I encouraged him to prepare this material so brethren throughout the brotherhood can guide participants through the course without needing someone from outside their congregation to come conduct it. To those desiring to become effective guides with this material, please call Ivan or myself so that we can “connect the dots” between the questions you have and the material this practicum addresses. We can send a four page overview and/or the 81 page Practicum Guide. These can be emailed or sent at no cost. This is a contribution to the Lord’s church which we love and about which we care deeply.

Thoughts from the Practicum Guide:

When there is no preaching, there is no preacher.

When there is no “shepherding,” there is no shepherd.

(YES) – (NO) *Can a man be a Shepherd when he does no “shepherding”?*

For the cause of leading more souls to Christ,

James P. Mitchell (Mdiv)
(405) 639-9472
JamesPMotiv8r@yahoo.com

Ivan Stewart (Dr.)
(405) 341-7716
ivanmaryfern@cox.net

ON A PIRATE SHIP

By William Howard

It is an old adage that sin will take you farther than you wanted to go and longer than you wanted to stay. Consider what is stated in Hebrews 11:25 which Moses chose **to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.** The word translated as “passing” in the New King James means temporary, momentary or a brief time. Though sin may take you farther and longer it does not mean you will enjoy the trip for very long at all. If sin is not dealt with correctly the trip will be eternal. Reason suggests that we correct ourselves as we can when we can. Life and the uncertainty of it demand that we resolve all matters with sin as quickly as possible. We must use the present for the best purpose.

Let us now talk of pirates as a means of illustration. Pirates wanted basically three things: wealth, pleasure and power. There were two things they did not want: death, however it comes, and God’s judgment soon thereafter. The life-long plan of every pirate was selfish and short-sighted. No matter the cleverness, or skills in seamanship and theft there were two options in the conclusion of every pirate’s career: It ended in death or a voluntary withdrawal from piracy. The idea in the minds of most of the men involved getting rich and quitting ahead. So the question for each man is: when do I quit? The steps to quitting are always blocked by a number of enticements in the way. The business of piracy appeared to offer freedom, escape from responsibilities, and easy wealth. Those are powerful temptations. One could always rely on the vastness of the ocean to protect you. That is a powerful sense of security, false though it was. Some claimed their actions were done by being official privateers (a legal pirate), or doing said thievery only against the enemies of your king or even in loyalty to a deposed royal family. Justification makes everything seem right. It would be easy for each man to get caught up in a sin he would never get free of. Many would never see the light of day again. If there is any excitement in the flaunting of sins they would have found it. They were commit-

ting themselves to every type of evil while sailing on God’s oceans that could swallow them up in a second. God will not be mocked. The season for the pleasures of sin passed all too quickly. But the sins remain.

Some of the most infamous and ruthless men in the golden age of piracy had careers that were extraordinarily short. They made their names in history because they were coldblooded, intimidating and very successful – but only for a short period of time. Blackbeard is perhaps the most famous in North America but his career spanning from captain to death was only two years. That was it. The first man he teamed up with as co-captains was Stede Bonnet. Bonnet had a career of about eighteen months and he was hanged. Samuel Bellamy went from a small group of men to a naval force feared by all to complete destruction and death in about six months. He died in a storm. Others were not much better. Captain Jack Rackham lasted two years. Captain Charles Vane was three years. Though the time was brief I doubt any of these men had too much pleasure in sin as quick as it was. And certainly none of them enjoy any of it now.

James 4:13-14 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.



BIBLE READING AND BIBLE STUDY

By Kyle Frank

The scriptures must be a part of our lives. Psalm 119, which, is the longest chapter in all of holy writ, has a lot to tell us. *Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: Oh let me not wander from thy commandments* (Psalm 119:10-11). That part comes right out and tells us that God's Word guides and directs us. We need to listen to it and accept the guidance that it willingly gives to us if we are ready to hear. *Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee.* Verse 11 tells us that we are to take it in and use it when we need it. We must learn from it and apply it when the occasion comes. Any other way would be as James tells us: *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves* (James 1:22). We are deluded—mislead—if we don't do something with what he tells us. Hear it, then do something with what you have heard.

Next, we are told: *I will meditate on thy precepts, And have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word* (Psa. 119:15-16). Part of taking it all in is to meditate. Meditate means: to dwell

on a thought; to contemplate. We are wise if we meditate on God's word because it can enrich and educate us in God's higher ways.

How often is often enough when it comes reading the Holy Scriptures? If we find ourselves having to ask that question, than we are already ex-

pressing the wrong attitude. We should hunger and thirst after the Word. It is a food that our blessed Father has given to us to sustain our souls, especially when it comes to hard times that we each must face.

Next, we are told: *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: So shall I meditate on thy wondrous works* (Psa. 119:27). There is that M-word again. Meditate on the word and we will become wise and prudent in all of our dealings. Proverbs 1:4 says: *To give prudence to the simple, To the young man knowledge and discretion.* These

words keep on piling up, prudence, knowledge, discretion. I could spend half the day giving definitions but they keep piling up when it comes to studying and understanding God's word for our daily lives.

Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of thy statutes; And I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; For therein do I delight (Psa. 119:33-35). Taking this section in the context of reading the scriptures daily, what are we being told? God is

teaching if we are learning. Obedience comes from walking according to the path which God has laid out. There is safety in that path because God sees what will occur, and will direct us as we walk therein. The word *delight* is used. There is delight when we know that God is watching out for us. I

The denominational world is guided by the words of a few scholarly men who are very serious, but seriously wrong. Are we to follow these into perdition by letting others do our thinking for us?

recently interviewed for a job that I could have easily done but before I went in to the interview I asked God that his will be done, no matter what. I did not get the job but I can rejoice in the fact that there must have been something unsafe for me and that God was keeping me safe from whatever it was that was a hazard for me.

And so it is when it comes to reading, and understanding the scriptures. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path* (Psa. 119:105). Walking in the dark can be a real hazard. There are obstacles that can trip us up and make us fall. God's word is the flashlight of our lives. With it we can see and be safe no matter what is there. Use it and you can see.

Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies; For they are ever with me (Psa. 119:97-98). *Deal with thy servant according unto thy loving-kindness, And teach me thy statutes. I am thy servant; give me understanding, That I may know thy testimonies.* When we love something we find ourselves being drawn to it. It is our delight. We find ourselves thinking about and longing for it. If we have this attitude about God's word and study of the scriptures, they then control us and we can rejoice and be delighted with the joy which only God can give.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly is an inspired exhortation which has never lost its significance. Some others are: *Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time, And if Christians are required to stand fast in the Lord, and be a habitation of God through the spirit, and speak the same thing, and be of one accord, and press on toward the heavenly mark,* there are inducements and reasons most serious, and numerous to become constant, apt, and diligent readers and learners of the divine volume.

On the subject of religion, however, there is a most slippery philosophy. The arts and sciences, and all that pertains to human learning, require study; but the Christian religion and the whole volume of heavenly light and wisdom, may be learned in a moment!?! The wide scheme of redemption—the immeasurable compass of God's love, the height and depth of Heaven's purposes in reference to a world of woe—and all that the Almighty Father has said and done, from the birth of time till now, of his Son, may, in a few dreaming moments, or in a number of elect days, according to custom, be fully understood, fully learned, and fully accepted! There is not a subject in the whole world of subjects on which the generality of men reason so erroneously as upon the subject of Christianity. Let us not fall into this dreamy mistake for which most of those who follow religion do. The denominational world is guided by the words of a few scholarly men who are very serious, but seriously wrong. Are we to follow these into perdition by letting others do our thinking for us? This is the mindset of those who have “done the thinking” for most “religious” men throughout history.

Finally, when it comes to Bible reading and Bible study, let us rejoice in the freedom that our heavenly father has given us. It is a treat, nay, it is a **privilege** to have a Bible! We have more divine light shown to us than in all of human history! Men and angels sought to know what we have “betwixt the lids of the most holy tome.” There it is, on that dusty shelf, pick it up and offer thanks to the God of the universe that he has blessed us with a complete copy of the scheme of redemption. Spend some serious time with it, learn from it, live with it and you will find the blessings of heaven showering down on you! Amen!!



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Honor Your Parents when Young *and* Old

By Perry Hall

The absence of something reinforces its importance. Obvious examples are money and oxygen. Another “something” emphasized by its absence is *honor*. I checked two books in my office on ethics with such cultural topics as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, sexual morality, pornography, discrimination, genetic engineering, and more. *Honor* is not one of the topic headings. One General Index goes from “homosexuality” to “hooker.” If *honor* is mentioned in the book, it isn’t enough to even garner a page citation! Its absence is glaring in our society today and obvious.

Unfortunately this is a necessary topic, maybe even more so than we know. Is it possible as Christians living in the world, we are more influenced by the *world* than the *Word*? If we say no, may I politely say we are ignorant, in self-denial, or lying! Every book in the Bible shows humanity influenced by their environment.

Cultural studies of Eastern societies emphasize an ethical system of Shame versus Honor. That is a slightly different emphasis than the Western Right versus Wrong. The concepts are not as different as the emphasis. In Eastern cultures honor does the right thing; and wrong actions bring shame upon the individual and family. Adding the Bible’s teaching to our children’s education, we need to emphasize that right actions are honorable in God’s sight; while wrong actions are shameful or dishonorable.

Honor is one of the universal of mores (i.e., the fixed morally binding customs of particular groups). Universal innate morals are used within apologetics as the Moral Argument for the existence of God. While universal, each culture exhibits its own interpretation. In college I was told of one culture which believed eternity was spent at the age you died. So loving children honored their parents by killing them before they got (eternally) ancient and decrepit. Unfortunately today, “honor” is mostly used in a negative sense, such as in Islam’s “honor killing.” Even in this, the warped sense of a value shows its importance.

We are living in a society in which honor in any form is a disappearing virtue, which means it is disappearing in families too. In past times hand-

shake deals were based upon a man’s honor. Marriage was based upon honoring a pact made to one another “until death does us part” – not “until you want to kill the other.” It is a common occurrence for children to yell at their parents in public. And if the children are dishonorable in public, what do you think they do in private?

Honoring your parents is such a central morality; it is at the center of the 10 Commandments – #5. It often stated #1-4 are theocentric; and 5-10 are anthropocentric. Truth is, learning to honor our parents teaches us to honor others, including God.

WHAT DOES HONOR MEAN?

Honor (*kabad* – Hebrew) literally means “weight” or “heavy.” I don’t think that would make a good Mother’s Day card, “In my heart you are heavier this year than last. I hope every year you get heavier and heavier!” Honoring as heaviness seems foreign to our ears; and yet we have equivalents in our language. When a team loses it is said, “We took them too lightly.” In slang, “heavy” means serious, intense, and ponderous. The term “gravitas” (think gravity) was used when George W. Bush ran for the Presidency. The press did not have much respect for him; hence, they said he needed a vice-president with gravitas.

Practical applications of honor are: Obey, Respect. *Obey* and *respect* are different. A child can obey without respecting; they just don’t want to get into trouble. As a child matures they hopefully learn obedience is worth more when done out of respect and love, than fear. Authority and obedience are intertwined parabolically (Matthew 21:23-32) at Jesus’ triumphal entry. Which son honored his father?

Honor for a child means obedience brought about from respect. A judge is called “Your Honor” as a title of respect and submission. However, honor does not mean love. That might sound completely wrong; but nowhere does the Bible command children to love their parents. My question is why, and should this influence the way we parent?

In *Jewish Wisdom* (by Joseph Telushkin) it was suggested love is a roller coaster of emotions (although *agape* love is guided more by intellect than

feelings). That is why – in actions – it is more uncomplicated to obey the command to love a stranger or a neighbor than it is to love your parents. There are no hurt feelings, no emotions acting contrary to the will, interfering with the command.

Instinctually, children are born loving their parents; especially the mothers because they spent 9 months comforted from her heartbeat and voice. Non-instinctual love is deeper, and yet can be lost in the parent-child relationship. In this sense is it easier to learn obedience than love? I suggest obedience teaches love as children learn parents have the child's own best interests in mind. That means the process is: first obey out of fear (of punishment) – then obey out of respect (for the position) – finally obey and respect out of love (for the parent).

Now let me speak to the children directly: Your parents love you more than you love them. Parents have a deeper love for their children than the children have for their parents. If that sounds strange, you that you will understand, if and when you become a parent.

“The love of parents goes to their children, but the love of these children goes to their children.” — Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 49a (Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Wisdom* p. 148). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.)

Here is a biblical example of a father who loved his son more than the son loved him (2 Samuel 18:33; 19:4):

“When Absalom died, David reacted with fierce cries of pain. He cried, “My son! My son!” seven times. Even though Absalom had tried to kill his own father, still David cried, “B’nee! B’nee! My son! My son!”... Imagine! A murderer so fierce, that he was out to kill his own father, and yet David cried, “My son! My son! I have lost you forever.” Father and son. Who emotionalizes more for whom? (Mordechai Menachem Reich, *The Crown of Wisdom*, Vol. II, pages 298– 299 (Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Wisdom* p. 149. HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.)

Originally this command of honoring and respecting parents was given to the Israelites, so let's see how some Jewish scholars understood it.

- Our Rabbis taught: What is “revere” and what is “honor”? “Revere” means that a child must neither stand nor sit in his [father's] place, nor contradict his words, nor tip the scale against him [by siding with his

opponents in a dispute]. “Honor” means that a child must give him [i.e., his parents] food and drink, clothe and cover him, and lead him in and out [when they are old and need a helping hand]. —Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 31b (*Jewish Wisdom* pp. 147-148).

- If a father unwittingly transgresses a Torah law, his child should not say to him, “Father, you have transgressed a Torah law.” He should say, “Father, is that what it says in the Torah?” But aren't both expressions equally insulting? So what he should really say is, “Father, the Torah says such-and-such” [and let the father draw his own conclusions]. — Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 81a (p. 148).

How does that interpretation compare to how modern children treat their parents?

WHY HONOR YOUR PARENTS?

One, God commanded it (Deuteronomy 5:16; Leviticus 19:2-3). If we honor our parents because we honor our God; then if we dishonor our parents we dishonor our God.

Two, what parents have done for their children. While not every parent deserves respect for their actions; the majority does, because what they have done and sacrificed. If you have parents deserving of honor, consider yourself blessed with possibly the second greatest blessing besides being in Christ. Many of the world's problems come from dysfunctional families.

In teaching a VBS class, I challenged the teenagers to think of all their parents had given them: housing, food, and more. When I mentioned “clothes,” one teenager proudly said she bought her clothes with her own money. I asked her where she got her own money. “My allowance” she said. I asked her where she got her allowance. “My parents” she said. I smiled, and everyone laughed, as she gained a new awareness.

According to Jewish lore, once the emperor Hadrian was walking along the road near Tiberias in the Galilee, and he saw an old man working the soil to plant some fig trees. “If you had worked in your early years, old man,” he said, “you would not have to work now so late in your life.” “I have worked both early and late,” the man answered. “And what pleases the Lord, He has done with me.” “How old are you?” asked Hadrian. “A hundred years old,” the man answered. “A hundred years old, and yet

you stand there breaking up the soil to plant trees!” said Hadrian. “Do you expect to eat the fruit of the trees?” “If I am worthy, I will eat,” said the old man. “But if not, as my father worked for me, I work for my children.” —Leviticus Kabbah 25: 5 (pp. 153-154).

Three, they discipline their children. Now some younger folk might be thinking “Perry has finally lost it. Respect and honor our parents because they discipline us?” Yes. Parents are following our heavenly parent God the Father (Hebrews 12:3-13).

As an example, we train our dogs for their own safety. One dog, Rascal, was exceptionally trained (she had an agent and was in commercials). She would not leave the yard without being released. A neighbor asked if she could play with dog. She called Rascal to follow her home across the street. Rascal walked to the edge of the yard, looked back at her owner waiting. Only when they said, “OK” did she leave. Training saves lives.

Four, children learn respect for other’s authority by learning to respect and honor their parents’ authority. Leviticus 19:3 uses *yare*, commonly translated *fear*, *revere*, and *respect*. It is the same word used for how we should treat God. Sarcastically I could say, “Finally success for our nation! Children treat their parents the way their parents treat God! Sigh.” Maybe we learn a valuable lesson here: How parents treat God teaches children how to treat parents.

Parents are the first experience with authority children have. A rebellious attitude against parents often leads to the same against other authorities, including God. Just look at our schools today which need police officers (SRO’s). What does having the police in schools say about overall behavior? Discipline starts with honoring those in authority.

When reading Romans 1:28-32, I am amazed that, among many of society’s ills, it includes “disobedient to parents.” Read Ezekiel 22:6-16, and notice what not honoring parents is connected to, and even leads to. Commenting on that, Zacharius Ursinus, the primary author of the Heidelberg Catechism wrote:

The design or end of this commandment is the preservation of civil order, which God has appointed in the mutual duties between inferiors and their superiors. Superiors are all

those whom God has placed over others, for the purpose of governing and defending them.

Consequently it is not surprising the 5th Command, “honor your father and mother,” is followed by a promise of life. This is seen again in Ephesians 6:1-3. Dishonoring parents can carry life-long consequences. Take time to listen to Merle Haggard’s, “Mamma Tried.” He wrote it about his own prison experience and how he did not honor his mother.

Going back to the 5th commandment among the 10, this promise of life is followed by a command to not take life; which is the 6th. The rest of the commands are familiar but missing in much of society today: Do not commit adultery, steal, tell false witness, and covet our neighbor’s possessions and wife. All of these, 6-9, are commands against crimes (in most societies). The 10th, coveting, can lead to crime.

While all classes or categories of people commit crimes, where do we find the urge to resist more difficult? Statistically it is undeniable. Where there are not two parents, a father and a mother, living and working together, in a stable home, crime goes up; because the child’s emotional stability goes down. A broken home, or a home never built, hurts the children. In fact, statistics show, there is almost a reverse promise – children who dishonor their parents too often will live short lives. If you want to protect your children let them live in an honorable home. Honoring parents begins with honorable parents.

Five, parents know more than their children. Parents are not as dumb some children think they are. Your parents might not be cool, or down with it. But when it comes to real life, they have the real 411. Using a sport analogy, why do grown-ups coach, and not the kids? Why are most coaches older than their players even in professional sports? With age comes wisdom (usually). And wisdom deserves honor.

HONOR WHEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN DISAGREE

Benjamin Franklin said, “In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” Franklin should have added, “and children disagreeing with their parents.” His own son, William Franklin, would become the staunch loyalist Gov-

ernor of New Jersey and tangled with his father over politics until he fled for England at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War.

Disagreements begin as early as a baby who cries it is time to be fed again. Or like when a crawling baby heads for touching an outlet, like my first-born, and you have to swat their hand. Or how about when they get their first vaccine shot and they look at the parent, and not the doctor, with betrayal in their eyes, “Why did YOU let THEM do this to ME?”

Necessarily then, many disagreements come because the parents are being good parents. If children ran the home – and some do – the children are living without proper guidance. It is like a car without a steering wheel or brakes, but with an accelerator.

Why do parents and children disagree? God gave everyone brains; and parents should teach their children to think independently of each other. Disagreements are inevitable and even good. They help the children learn how to think if conducted properly. The question is what do we do when parents and children disagree?

First, children need to listen to their parents. Second, parents need to listen to their children. Third, children need to obey their parents in the Lord (Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3). “In the Lord” is an important phrase. Parents might ask their children to do something which violates their conscience; parents can make honest mistakes and dishonest demands. “In the Lord” means both parents and children need to know the will of God.

“In other words, one does not owe one’s parents control over one’s conscience. As a popular nineteenth-century code of Jewish law, the Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh, rules: If a child is told by his father not to speak to, or forgive, a certain person with whom the child wishes to be reconciled, he should disregard his father’s command.... —Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh 143: 11 (pp. 149-150).

When the parents are not disregarding God’s laws, children obey your parents because: God commanded it; What they have done for you; They have disciplined you; You learn respect for your God, elders, police, and all other authorities in the home.

How family members handle disagreements is just as important as parents telling their children to honor them by obeying them. How you disagree must be done just as honorably as how parents want their children to treat them (Proverbs 20:20; Ephesians 4:29-32).

HONOR WHEN PARENTS GROW OLD OR MENTALLY IMPAIRED

An important conflict between Jesus and the Religious Leaders led to the topic of honoring your parents (Matthew 15:1-9). To these Jewish leaders, older parents were a nuisance. What Jesus referred to, as far as the practice of the Pharisees, is based upon the authority of the Mishnah (not the authority of the Bible):

“The sorting out and writing of Oral Law was a practice termed Mishnah, meaning to repeat and study, since it was originally memorized and recapitulated. The Mishnah consisted of three elements: the midrash, that is the method of interpreting the Pentateuch to make clear points of law; the halakhah, the body of generally accepted legal decisions on particular points; and the aggadah or homilies, including anecdotes and legends used to convey understanding of the law the ordinary people.” (Matthew, Johnson, via Kenneth L. Chumbley footnote 1, p.276-277)

The tradition of Corban created a convenient loophole. That’s a dangerous practice. “Corban” is the Hebrew word for gift. When a Jew dedicated or consecrated his property to God they could not use it for the benefit of others, including their parents. Except they could still use it for their own benefit. They used greed as a religious motive. Jesus’ condemnation is echoed by Paul in 1 Timothy 5:8.

“When a man could teach the law as to permit a son to leave his old parents destitute in spite of the what the law explicitly said, that man ‘knew’ the law too well! We have all heard of Lawyers who made use of the law to enable crooks to escape punishment; who used the law to their own private advantages. It was their very ‘knowing’ of that law which served their wicked ways and their ‘knowledge’ of that law was a greater condemnation for them” (Matthew, McGuiggan via Chumbley footnote 2, pg. 279,)

Not all Jews used the law of God to their parent's disadvantage:

"A man once came to Rabbi Hayyim of Brisk (an early 20th-century sage) with the following question: He had heard that his father was ill, and felt obliged to visit him. But since Jewish law rules that a child need not spend money honoring parents, perhaps he was not obliged to make the journey, since he would be forced to purchase a train ticket. Rabbi Hayyim answered tersely: "Correct, you are not obliged to spend the money. Walk!" —Based on Gerald Blidstein, Honor Thy Father and Mother: Filial Responsibility in Jewish Law and Ethics, page 72 (Jewish Wisdom p. 151).

In Grimm's Fairy Tales is a story of an older man who lived with his young son and his son's wife. They also had a 4-year old boy. The old man's eyes blinked, his hands shook. When he ate food the silverware would rattle against the plate. He often missed his mouth. Food would be spilled on the tablecloth. This upset the young wife. She appealed to her husband to do something. They decided to move their dad to a corner at meal time away from the family. He would set alone in the corner eating out of a bowl, sitting on a stool. The old man would look sadly at the others and desired to be with them. One day the man dropped his bowl and broke it. His son and daughter-in-law said, If you eat like a pig then we will serve you like a pig. They made a wooden trough for the old man to eat out of. Not long after, they came upon their son playing with some pieces of wood. The dad asked what he was doing. The boy looked up, smiled and said, "I'm making a trough to feed you and mama when I get big." The next day the old man was back at the table eating with the family again and no one ever scolded or mistreated him again.

This reminds me of a chimney-corner scripture: "Once a man, twice a child." Because children were taken care of by their parents, children sometimes have to return the favor (Proverbs 19:26; 30:17). Listen to this Jewish proverb: When a father gives to his son, both laugh. When a son gives to his father, both cry. —Yiddish proverb (*Jewish Wisdom* p. 150).

I didn't understand this proverb at first, and maybe still don't; but here is what I think it means.

When a parent supports and helps his children, everyone is filled with joy. When a child has to support or help their parent, there is a sadness due to the afflictions of age. Honor is found in supporting your parents. Dishonor is wishing them dead to free you of your support.

Go back to the parable of the Prodigal Son. When he asked for his inheritance, in that culture that was the same as saying I wish you were dead.

"It is natural for old people to be despised by the general population when they can no longer function as they once did, but sit idle, and have no purpose. The commandment, "Honor your father and mother" was given specifically for this situation. —Gur Aryeh ha-Levi, a seventeenth-century commentator, on the Fifth Commandment, in his Melekheth Mahshevet; cited in Francine Klagsbrun, Voices of Wisdom, page 198 (Jewish Wisdom p. 152).

"The difficulties experienced in many parents' older years might have been behind this unexpected reflection: [Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai said that] the most difficult [to observe] of all the [613] commandments is "Honor your father and mother." —Tanhuma, Ekev, 2; the word Rabbi Shimon uses for difficult, hamur, can alternatively be translated as "serious." (Jewish Wisdom pp. 152-153).

One last passing thought. Some grown children can't wait to get rid of their inconvenient parents (Proverbs 23:22). But more common is children agonizing over whether to put their loved ones in a place of professional care. If this applies to you, no one knows you better than yourself. If you did this to honor your parents by giving them the best of care, then God blesses you.

HONOR BOTH YOUR PARENTS

When children play one parent against the other, that trickery is dishonorable to each parent and the child. When one parent allows the other parent to be disrespected and disobey the other, they are not helping their children learn to honor both the father and the mother. If they dishonor one parent they dishonor the entire command. Dishonoring the command is dishonoring the One who gave the command. Parents, be honorable if you want to

help your children to honor you. Parents honor one another if you want your children to honor you both (Proverbs 1:8; 10:1; 15:20; 30:11; etc.).

HONOR YOUR PARENTS WHEN THEY DON'T DESERVE IT?

Shaq (Shaquille O'Neill) wrote a rap song titled "Biological didn't bother." His real father deserted him and his mother when he was 6 months old. He hasn't talked to him since. Once at a NBA ball game his biological dad showed up and Shaq was asked about him. Shaq's smile disappeared, "That man doesn't exist to me."

Do you honor parents who don't deserve it? I know what I want to say. In my research all biblically-based answers basically said the command to honor is unqualified by the parent's behavior. I want to agree. The truth is, I don't know. Should you "respect the uniform when the officer doesn't deserve respect?" This is so easy to say for people who have had good parents. Many children don't live that reality. They have addicts, abusers (sexually, verbally, emotionally), absentee fathers (there are many ways to not be there), deserters (dead-beat dads), cheaters (the best gift to a child is for the father to love their mother), and more.

With a wife who did not have a good home life, and two sons rescued from both their biological parents and foster homes, I have been thinking of this topic for years. Unfortunately I don't have an answer. Here are some of my thoughts.

1. You honor your parents who do not deserve it because there are no qualifiers. True, but the word "honor" carries with it the concept of worthiness. We honor our parents, because they deserve it.

2. You honor your parents who do not deserve it by being nothing like them. That sounds clever. But again you are not honoring them based on what the word *honor* means.

3. You do not have to honor your parents because they do not deserve it. If that relieves unwarranted guilt then I am happy to oblige. However, if you are still under their roof (their authority), then you still must obey. Another "however" is: you are obligated to love them, pray for them, do good for them, forgive them, and more. We are supposed to do those things even for strangers and enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:17-21).

So are we to honor our parents if they do not deserve it? Currently I don't think the Bible com-

mands it. But I do know we are to act honorably (Romans 12:17) even to undeserving parents. What you are doing is giving grace. Maybe that is honoring. Maybe that will lead your despicable parents to honor God. Then you will easily and thankfully honor your parents.

In our family we have both biological and adopted children. For our adopted children, suffice it to say their biological parents were not qualified. So the State removed them. Despite that we have taught them to pity their biological parents, and respect them by praying for them every Mother's Day and Father's Day together as a family. We have also taught our children that even though their parents could not take care of them, they loved them enough to be willing sign over custody to the State. Maybe that is part of the "trick" in learning to honor parents who don't deserve it. Find something good about them.

The word "honor" means heavy; it is a weighty responsibility. Honoring parents might be, as one Jewish scholar said, the most difficult or serious command God gave. Honor might be the most central biblical concept; maybe even more than love or grace. That is because behind honor is the reality upon which it is built, and that is covenant. When referring to God keeping the covenant, the Israelites used words like faithfulness and loving-kindness. This means God honored His covenant. Isaiah says in Messianic prophecy that Jesus is our covenant (42:6; 49:8). Covenant is sacrifice. Covenant is honor. Honor is sacrifice.

When I preached this I gave both the parents and children assignments. For the parents, when your children obey you, thank them and commend them for honoring you. For the children, treat your parents the way you would want your children to treat you. Basically, practice the Golden Rule with your parents.

I conclude every sermon by asking "Where's the Gospel?" When we see "honor your mother and father" as the 5th command, and repeated in the NT (Ephesians 6:1-2), we are seeing the essence of family – covenant sacrifice through honor. Isn't this the essence of the gospel? Jesus established the covenant of sacrifice by honoring his Father. When children of all ages honor their parents, they sacrifice in upholding their covenant and thereby relive the honor of Jesus.

Paul Darst:

A Novel

By D.R. Lucas

CHAPTER EIGHT: HERESY

“Did you ever hear such heresy?”

“It is rank infidelity!”

“Poor Love! he ought to know better.”

“What shall we do?”

These and numberless other expressions of a similar character were heard at the close of the Lord’s Day services in one of our old, staid, and popular New England churches. The sermon of the young pastor, Arnot Love, had excited intense feelings. Some were astonished; others greatly alarmed; while none could tell what the result would be.

Love had been reared in the community, and after graduating with high honors at college, had studied theology, and, receiving a call from the church of his native village, had settled down as pastor of a thoroughgoing Calvinistic church. For some years he had gone in and out before them, preaching the system of Calvin, to the great delight and satisfaction of all.

Sometime before the delivery of the sermon that created such excitement and called forth so many ejaculations of surprise, he had heard some of the peculiar tenets of his creed called in question, and had commenced a thorough investigation, to enable him to sustain them, if called upon to do so. The result was that he became convinced that the ground he occupied and the things he was preaching were not in accordance with the word of God. Examine the subject in whatever light he could, the result was still the same.

The investigation was a long and patient one, with the single question before him, “What is truth?” All the operations of his mind would be impossible to detail here, however interesting they might be to those who think. But it is not my pur-

pose to detail all the doubts and conflicts through which he struggled to a conclusion.

The fatalists teach that man is no more responsible for his belief, his prejudice, or partiality, than he is for the color of his hair or the length of his nose; but surely a man must be responsible for the manner in which he examines testimony to produce that belief. If he is not, then the word responsibility is superfluous in the language of man.

Love felt the responsibility, and, unbiased by prejudice, fear or favor, alone with God, the Bible, and his own heart, he pursued his investigation until he reached a conclusion. That conclusion was: The word of God alone, without a supplementary statement of articles of faith and human rules of church government, is sufficient for the founding, organization, and perfect government of the Church of Christ. If this were true, he saw there was no authority, no necessity for any such organization as the Presbyterian Church.

With him, to reach a conclusion was to act, if action was required. It mattered not to him if it did require that he sacrifice all, his honor said that he must make his change of views public. He knew that to presume to interpret the Bible for himself would bring down upon his head the anathemas of some of his brethren, the scorn and contempt of the ruling powers in his ecclesiastical relation — for religious power makes all men tyrannical — it would sever not only his church relation, but there would be those who would try, by all the arts of pen and tongue, to blacken even his fair fame and Christian character. He would be driven from the pulpit, his salary would be forfeited, he would be called a renegade and by every other opprobrious epithet that the ingenuity of bigotry could devise. Nerving himself for the trial, he would say, “It must be right; it can’t be wrong. I will speak as

God's word speaks, and I will be silent where its voice is not clearly and unmistakably heard."

He may be called rash by the prudent, who tremble at enthusiasm; may be denominated an egotist by those who have always accepted everything upon trust, without examination; but there are some natures that must decide, that must act, and Love was one of that kind. Whether right or wrong, no power can stop them or swerve them in their adherence to what they firmly believe to be right. Luther would go to Worms, "though there were as many devils in the streets as tiles on the houses," because he believed he was right in so doing.

Tom Paine attacked kingcraft in his "Rights of Man," and when he saw that a corrupt priestcraft was the real support and ally of kingcraft, he wrote his "Age of Reason." Wrong he undoubtedly was, but he could not help speaking his honest convictions. Integrity to convictions of right, "as God gives us to see the right," is always commendable, if the right spirit is manifest in their promulgation. Paine had the wrong spirit. Sneering ridicule is a weapon no logical reasoner ever uses with an error held with conscientious convictions by another.

There are some men that, when wrong, are fearfully wrong in their earnestness. They are positive men. If they are right, however, they are radical also. Nothing in their nature is conservative. Love belonged to this class. Did he have no misgivings as to the step he was about to take? Certainly, he would not be human without them.

Before his purpose was fully fixed, one issue made him falter. The visions of his youthful days, when queen Mab with all her fairy crew over his imagination held her sway, gave him a beautiful cottage home, in which he always pictured Mary Brown as its most beautiful adornment. Mary was the daughter of Elder Brown, one of the ruling elders of the church, and had been his playmate from childhood. If time and space permitted, I would tell of the times when he carried her books to and from the village school, of the happy hours they spent together in after years, of the long letters written while Love was at College, but as I write for another purpose, it is sufficient for me to say that the beginning of the next year Love expected to claim Mary as his own and the dream of his childhood would be fulfilled. Then indeed he would have a home, home with all its endearing associations. Dr. Ware has truly said: "The permanent union of one

man with one woman establishes a relation of affections and interests which can in no other way be made to exist between two human beings. Strike out from the life of man all the hopes, interests, and motives which grow out of this relation, and what were left him but a cheerless and desolate existence."

When Love thought of the future in its relation to Mary Brown, he did falter. The cottage home must be given up, and Mary — perhaps she, too, would forsake him. It almost unnerved him. He would not do it, he would investigate the matter once more; but the result was the same. Another thought. He would call the things about which he differed from the church non-essentials, and say nothing about them. No! that would be cowardly and he would feel guilty all the time. Duty said, go straight forward and do the right; but ah, how hard! How smooth the road when duty, love, honor, and interest, go hand in hand with us upon our journey! But ah, how we struggle when duty and honor say go, and love and interest say stay! Abraham loved Isaac. Duty said make him an offering. The struggle was a terrific one, but the victory of duty was complete. There are more Abrahams in the world, more victories gained than human calculations estimate. The Lord looketh on the heart, he sees and knows them all. He saw that of Love when he sacrificed home and friends, position, and his life-love for what he thought God required at his hands in his Holy Word. Accordingly the next service of the church he prepared and delivered from second Timothy, 3:15-17, the sermon that occasioned the comments at the opening of this chapter.

The discourse contained his reasoning on the all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, and the rejection of human creeds as bonds of union and communion among Christians. It may be briefly stated as follows:

1. If human creeds differ from the Bible they must be wrong where they differ.
2. If they are exactly like the Bible they are useless, for we have the Bible.
3. If they contain more than the Bible, they are wrong for the Bible is sufficient.
4. If they contain less than the Bible they are wrong, for they only contain a part of the truth.
5. If they are made to make the Bible plainer, they are insults to God, for he has made the Bible as plain as he intended it to be.

6. If they are mere expedients of human devising, men do wrong when they make them bonds of union, for no human expedient ought to be elevated into that dignity.

7. They obscure and put in the background the real confession of faith of the Scriptures that “Jesus is the Christ, the son of God,” and thus make a rallying point aside from the Divine personality of Jesus, which is the central and basis fact or truth of the Holy writings.

CHAPTER NINE: THE RESULT

As might necessarily be expected, the “heresy” of the eloquent preacher created great excitement in the community, and he was summoned before the Presbytery to answer to the charge of having broken his ordination vows.

He appeared, not in a spirit of rebellion or fear, but in a consciousness of the rectitude of his purposes and positions. His intention was not to deny the allegations made against him, but to present before that body the reasons that actuated him in the course he was pursuing, almost persuading himself that they were so strong that all those who heard them must at least treat him with respect, if they were not convinced that he was right.

Waiving formality, and being permitted by courtesy to say something in answer to the charge, he spoke as follows:

“The first question propounded to me as a candidate for ordination was the following: ‘Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?’ — Confession of Faith, page 441.

“This I answered in the affirmative, and still most profoundly believe with all my heart. I am also still ready to preach the gospel, the word of God, just as it came from the hands of the apostles and prophets, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“The second question was, ‘Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?’

“This I then said I believed, and it was true then; but I do not believe it now. I have since more fully examined the question, and find that instead of being the system taught in the Scriptures, it is in many things in conflict with the teachings of the

Scriptures; and having found such to be the case, I can only say now, I do not believe it.

He was about to proceed, when the moderator of the Presbytery interrupted him to say that the investigation had proceeded far enough. There was no need of witnesses, for the brother had plead guilty, and the only thing for the Presbytery to do was to proceed to affix the penalty.

Mr. Love, however, before the sentence was passed, desired to give the Presbytery a history of the investigation that had led him to reject the Confession of Faith, saying he could show in what the contradictions between it and the Scriptures consisted.

Elder Brown and others, whose sympathies were with what they regarded as the unfortunate situation of Love, desired to hear him. But the moderator settled the question by reminding the Presbytery that it depended for its existence upon the Confession of Faith, and if they allowed that to be called in question they would be partakers of Mr. Love’s sin, and would be called to account by the Synod and Assembly. The question of the truth or falsity of the Confession was one that could not be agitated in the Presbytery, for it was the foundation on which the church rested.

Many members sympathized deeply with him, and could see nothing so terribly wrong in simply preaching the Bible, and telling persons to believe just what the first Christians believed, to do what the apostles commanded, and to hope for the same inheritance; and had they been consulted, would have voted to retain him; but the Presbytery knew their duty too well, for no human creed can allow a man to remain under its domination if he presumes to outgrow the divines that made it.

Mr. Love was asked if he desired to speak farther. He could talk if he desired, but would not be permitted to discuss the question as to whether the creed was in harmony with the Bible or not. He might discuss the abstract question as a matter of courtesy.

Love therefore took occasion to say a few words, when a running colloquy ensued between the moderator and himself, as follows:

Moderator. — “Why is it that you have formed such an antipathy to human creeds?”

Love. — “Because it is one step in the great apostasy. I believe the Bible; but you say I must find your creed in the Bible or I can’t remain with

you. If you have a right to dictate what a man shall find in the Scriptures, you are, in principle, like the Catholic, who says I shall find nothing there but what the church finds."

Moderator. — "But we inflict no penalty upon you, we only decline to retain in our ranks one who does not agree with us."

Love — "No, you do not propose to do me any harm; you only propose to leave me to my fate. You will only whisper that I am unsound, heretical, unevangelical. I will be respectfully, silently, and politely crushed. My means of livelihood gone, the rack and torture of an agonized mind at the loss of friendships. For daring to say that I do not receive your creed as the doctrines taught in the Bible; for saying what God has said, that the Bible alone is perfect, I am to sacrifice all!?"

Moderator. — "But you ought to have thought of all this before you took the position you have."

Love. — "Yes, I might have been a slave. I presume I ought to have been; my conscience ought to have been placed in the keeping of those who execute the will of the Westminster divines. The case of Rev. John M. Duncan, of Baltimore, in the year 1825, ought to have been a lesson to me. Did he not believe the Bible? Did he not believe substantially even the Confession of Faith? And was he not, for daring to say that to require the reception of the creed as a test of ministerial qualification was an imposition, brought to trial, condemned, excommunicated, and his pulpit declared vacant? I presume I ought not to have investigated the subject with such a case upon the record."

Moderator. — "But, certainly, the church must be kept pure, and believers must agree, in order to dwell together in anything like harmony."

Love. — "Yes, that is the old cry of Rome. We must keep the church pure. God said the Bible was sufficient for this purpose, and the church for near three centuries thought so too, but since the Nicene council we must have a creed in addition. Heresy must be kept out. Heresy is the opinion of the minority. Men who are disposed to think for themselves must be cut off. "Orthodoxy is my doxy, heterodoxy is your doxy." Romanism kept the church pure by cutting Luther off, because he could not think in the same groove with the Pope, and his fate has been the fate of all men who have dared to think for themselves after they have adopted a human creed!"

Moderator. — "Well, you ought to have studied the matter before you subscribed to the Confession of Faith."

Love. — "Perhaps I ought, but what chance or opportunity to do so? During the seven long years of my study as a candidate for the ministry, I never heard one statement of my creed called in question. There was placed in my hand an authorized statement of what I must find in the Bible, that I was told all that the good, and wise, and learned men of my church had adopted. I accepted it unquestioned, for the motives to me then seemed overwhelming, and the only wonder to me now is that I am free to think for myself."

Moderator. — "You might as well say that liberty of opinion does not belong to Protestantism."

Love. — "I can only say on that subject with Dr. Charles Beecher, a Presbyterian preacher. He says: 'Liberty of opinion in our theological seminaries is a mere form. To say nothing of the thumb screw of criticism, by which every original mind is tortured into negative propriety, the whole boasted liberty of the student consists in a choice of chains — a choice of handcuffs — whether he will wear the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, or other evangelical handcuff. Hence, it has secretly come to pass that the ministry themselves dare not study their Bible. Large portions thereof are seldom touched. It lies useless lumber, or if they do study and search, they dare not show their people what they find there. There is something criminal in saying anything new. It is shocking to utter words that have not the mold of age upon them.'

'For through the ministry the same spirit has been conducted to the people. The same penalties hang over them. The denominations are so nearly balanced, the strife for power is so keen between them, every fancied departure from the creed is seized to make political capital as really as in a political campaign. Houses must be built; salaries must be raised. This requires wealth. Wealth requires members and patronage. This creates a servile dread of novelty, for everything that another party can get hold of, strikes at the gold. Therefore, the people watch the minister and the minister is afraid of the people. For, if he studies independently, if he goes outside of the creed, if he slips the handcuff, the people tremble — it will not please — the opposition will seize it — we shall be unpopular — we shall not succeed!'

‘Thus are the ministry of the evangelical, Protestant churches, not only formed all the way up, under a tremendous pressure of merely human fear, but they live, and move, and breathe, in a state of things radically corrupt, and appealing every hour to every baser element of their nature, to hush up the truth, and bow the knee to the power of apostasy.’ Sermon preached in Fort Wayne, Ind. A.D. 1846.”

“Mr. Beecher, as well as myself, knows what he is talking about. Knowing it, I anticipated your decision and do not know but I ought to have resigned my charge at once. I have no feelings of personal resentment, it is only my change of views on religious truth that has prompted my course. I doubt not you will deem me sincere, when I say that I have a personal desire that you may all be brought to see the truth.”

He closed. An oppressive silence fell upon all. Then Love quietly walked out of the room, leaving the Presbytery to pronounce its decision of excommunication.

CHAPTER TEN: TO THE WEST

As Love reached the open air he became conscious that he stood alone in the world. An indefinable spirit of loneliness oppressed his heart, slightly tinged with something akin to despair, but the sturdy approval of a manly conscience sustained him. Aware of what prejudice, bigotry, insinuation, and Jesuitical malice would attempt, he still felt that the path of duty was the path of safety. But where should he go and what should he do? Until now he had not calmly considered this question, feeling that “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” He had often thought that he would love to go to the West and mingle with its people, fully believing that Providence would open a place for him to make his way in the world. Now the opportunity was afforded and he would go. But ere he departed he must see Mary Brown once more, to know how she regarded his course. The sadness depicted on her countenance made the introduction of the subject a matter of some embarrassment to Love when they met; still the same, old, frank reception she gave him did much to assure him of her sympathy, if she could not altogether understand the motive or the reasons that prompted his action.

“Mary,” said Love, “I want you to tell me truthfully how you feel about the course I have pursued?”

“Arnot,” she said, in an impulsive way, “I have only one question to ask first. I ask it only to hear it from your own lips, not that I doubt your integrity in the least, but so much has been said; do you feel that you have acted truly and conscientiously before God and man in the course you have taken?”

“Most assuredly I have,” replied Love, in a tone that Mary well understood expressed the convictions of his inmost heart.

“Then it makes no difference in my feelings toward you. I cannot see why the religion of my father and the great and good men of our church is not good enough for me, but I have never studied the subject of religion anyway. There is so much of mystery about it, I do not know sometimes whether I have ever been converted or not. I think I love the Lord, I know I love you, but whether I am one of the elect or not is more than I can say.”

“Ah! Mary, you are too pure and good to trouble yourself about such questions,” said Love. “If you would find out and understand God, you must find him in Jesus. You can understand him.”

“Yes, but I am not good. Even this morning, when Sister Prim said that your course showed that you were one of the non-elect, and did not know what religion was, I told her I felt like I would rather be one of the reprobates with you than one of the elect without you. I know you may not esteem me as highly, or may even despise me for it, but I cannot help it. It is in my heart, and I must tell you, let the result be what it may.”

“No, Mary, I shall not despise you for it. I know it is but the outgoings of your nature, and it is not wrong. The religion of your father is a philosophy, and you are not a philosopher, and, while you accept it because you have been taught it from your infancy, it does not meet the wants of the soul, in your case. O, that the world would only go back to the simplicity of the New Testament, and leave its formulated theology!” The last sentence was uttered more as a soliloquy than as if addressed to Mary.

“But, Arnot, was not the religion of the New Testament age a systematic theology?” asked Mary, with intense interest.

“By no means. It was on one side exceedingly simple. The preachers of that age preached facts,

simple, marvelous facts, if you please, to move the hearts of men. The life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus were the basic facts. They were not speculations, theories, or suppositions, but facts. Whoever believed them, forsook his sins and changed his life, beginning a new one, pointing to a higher destiny.”

“And was that all there was of conversion in that age?” asked Mary.

“Certainly,” responded Love. “The new life in that age began in faith in the person of Christ, and not in anything about him, or the mode of Divine existence. Instead of seeking amid the stars, or in the realm of the mysterious for God, they accepted Jesus as God manifest in the flesh, and put their trust in him.”

“O, if that were only true now, I could see some beauty in religion. I read how ‘Jesus wept,’ how

‘Jesus loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus,’ and when I feel that he must love me too, it seems like I am very near to God and heaven, and that I could love him always.”

“Then,” said Love, interruptingly, “just do so, and let the speculations go; they are but husks, while Christ is the bread that came down from heaven, of which you may eat and never hunger more.”

But it may not be profitable to the reader to follow the subject further now, nor is it pleasant to detail the parting scene. Those who have passed through such a parting, where true love bound two souls together, the one to go out into the world to seek and find a future home and return, the other to wait, to weep, to pray, can appreciate it; while those who never have, cannot tell how evenly full a cup can be of sorrow and joy at the same time.





What about the “Lost Books of the Bible?”

Question: *I keep hearing about “Lost Books of the Bible.” Should these books be in our Bibles?—anonymous.*

Thanks for the question! I, too, once had the same question. I have a book in my library that claims to be “Lost Books of the Bible.” It sounds sensational, but the title is misleading. When you hear about supposed “lost books of the Bible” on TV, radio, magazines, or internet, that’s also quite misleading. Here’s why:

First, these books were never part of the Bible to begin with. Books like *The Gospel of Peter*, or *The Gospel of Judas*, or any of a hundred more with similar titles were never considered part of the Bible. There is no historical record—none whatsoever—that these books were ever put on equal standing with the Bible. No Christian in history ever believed these books were actually part of God’s word.

Second, these books were written far too late to be an actual part of the Bible. With only a few possible exceptions, every one of these supposed “lost books of the Bible” were written in the mid-second century or later. Jesus told the apostles that He would guide them (the apostles) into all truth by means of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). When we read what the apostles wrote, we will have the same knowledge that they had (Ephesians 3:3-5). The apostles were all dead for close to 100 years before these so-called “lost books of the Bible” were written. Any books written after the apostles died are not inspired by God.

Third, these “lost books” weren’t ever really lost. They were known and mentioned by writers for hundreds of years after they were written. The fact is, they weren’t really of any value, so people eventually stopped reading them or even mentioning them. So, after a while people basically forgot they existed. Then hundreds of years later, some archaeologists found some of these books in Egypt. They were never “lost.” They just got put away and never used again.

Something else you might find interesting regarding these no-so-“lost books” is this: One of the reasons Christians knew these books weren’t really from God is that a lot of them are ridiculous. Take, for example, this quote from the book called *The Gospel of Thomas*:

Simon Peter said to them, “Mary should leave us, for females are not worthy of life.” Jesus said, “Look, I am going to invite her to make her male so that she too might become a living spirit like you males. For every female that makes itself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Women must become men in order to get to heaven? Now you can see why it was never considered to be from God.

So, the things that people claim as the “Lost Books of the Bible” weren’t ever really lost, and they were never part of the Bible to begin with.

—Bradley Cobb



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About the Authors

Jamie Beller has been a preacher in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and South Carolina. He presently works with the church of Christ in Prague, Oklahoma, while also working full-time at Tinker Air Force Base. He loves discussing the Bible with friends and strangers alike.

Jeremie Beller has lived in the great state of Oklahoma his entire life. He has spent more time in school than any person should, receiving three degrees from Oklahoma Christian University (BA, MA, and MDiv) and a PhD from the University of Oklahoma (Communication and Social Influence). He has served as congregational minister for the Wilshire church of Christ since 2007, and also serves as an adjunct professor at Oklahoma Christian University. Jeremie's wife, Delaina, teaches 4th grade at Oklahoma Christian Academy. They have one son (Keaton) and one daughter (Kayden).

Gantt Carter is married to the former Julie Johnson. They have two young children and reside in Elk City, OK. He has been preaching for about a decade, and he is currently the preaching servant for the 2nd & Adams congregation in Elk City. He enjoys fishing, martial arts, and spending time with his family and friends. Gantt delights in God and in studying the Word of God. His greatest desire is to glorify God with his life and to encourage others to do the same.

Gerald Cowan has been preaching the gospel for over 50 years. In addition to many mission trips to Albania, he has also taught in the British Bible School, and has spent the past 2 ½ decades working for the Lord in Southern Illinois. He has an email publication (Gerald Cowan's Personal Periodical) that he sends out for free to all who are interested.

Bruce Daugherty preaches for the Beville Road church of Christ in Daytona Beach, Florida. He has served as an instructor for the Florida School of preaching and the West Virginia School of Preaching. He has a Master's Degree in church history,

and runs the website: OhioValleyRestorationResearch.com.

Kyle Frank is a Christian, Restoration Movement enthusiast, and book lover. His writings have appeared in *Gospel Light* as well as *Faith and Facts Quarterly*. He has edited a three-volume set of the Life and Letters of Jacob Creath Jr., two volumes on Elder Benjamin Franklin, the autobiography of Daniel Sommer, as well as compiling *The Lost Sermons of H. Leo Boles*. His latest book is *A Life Richly Lived: The Life and Writings of Tolbert Fanning*.

Perry Hall has been preaching over 30 years, with a degree in History and Philosophy. He has been married since 1984. When not having back surgery, he enjoys riding motorcycles and adopting children. He can be found online at PerryDox.com.

Bill Howard has been serving the Lord for more than half a century, preaching in small congregations, and presently serving as an elder in Dale, Oklahoma. He has written two books to aid new converts in Christian growth: *Believest Thou This*, and *Whom Seek Ye?* He has also written a series of detective novels (*Rick Wade: Investigations*), set in the 1950s/60s, which he is proud to say are good, clean, old-fashioned detective stories without filth.

William Howard lives with his family in Dacula, Georgia. He spends much of his time absorbed in books arbitrarily chosen. Currently he is reading *The Complete Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, *The Making of the American Essay*, and *Terry and the Pirates 1934 to 1936*. William enjoys writing while eating sushi – but that was expensive so he had to stop. He walks in the woods, composes jazz and preaches on Sunday.

John Krivak preaches for the church of Christ in New Castle, Pennsylvania. His family includes Becky, his wife, two daughters, three grandchildren, and occasional foster children. He's been a Restoration Movement enthusiast since the baptis-

mal waters flooded over him, and he has a special appreciation for Alexander Campbell. His studies of the Bible at Harding University emphasized Biblical Languages, and his favorite professor was Dr. Paul Pollard. He may be contacted at jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Joseph McWhorter is an Alabama native turned Texan. He is a graduate of the Southwest School of Biblical Studies in Austin, and preaches for the Canyon Lake church of Christ. He and his wife, Michelle, are currently raising two dogs, multiple chickens, and the occasional stray cat.

Mark McWhorter is a former medical professional, a research fanatic and history nut, a missionary, a book-seller (with his wife, Teah), and that doesn't even come close to all that he does. He has written for several brotherhood periodicals, spoken on several lectureships, helped present Restoration Movement seminars, and was integral in starting Roundhouse, an annual gathering of members of the church who homeschool. He also has, from time to time, gone dumpster diving. (Editor's note: He's also an overachiever and a great friend.)

Jim Mitchell obtained his Bachelor of Arts from Freed-Hardeman University & Master of Divinity from Oklahoma Christian University, and has been preaching for more than 35 years and has worked with congregations in Florida, Virginia, and Oklahoma. He served as the minister for the church of Christ in Harrah, OK, from 2006 to 2014 and is now the pulpit minister for the Cherokee Hills church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

Roderick Ross, better known as "Rod," has been married for 42 years, with three grown children (married), and nine grand-children. He is known for knowing "everything nobody wants to know, and everything nobody cares about." He suffered a stroke in 2011, which left him legally blind, unable to drive, read and work; but, he still believes that everyone should do what they can. He maintains a website, three Facebook groups, three Facebook pages, sends out an email lesson Monday – Friday, teaches Bible class, preaches every Sunday morning and evening, and does a weekly radio program. He does each of these in small time frames, followed by power naps.

Stephen Scaggs preaches in Virginia, is married with two children, and is a grammar nerd.

Jake Schotter is an aspiring preacher in Goodyear, Arizona. He loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching, and writing about the Truth. He has been preaching since 2009. He has been very fortunate to be able to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them for cheap prices. He currently attends West Valley church of Christ and can be contacted at jakeschotter@gmail.com. He is planning to attend Freed-Hardeman University in a couple of years, after he graduates from high school.

Devin Self is a member of the Gravel Hill Church of Christ in Dover, Arkansas. From a very young age he knew he wanted to serve the Lord. Going to church camps, youth devotionals, and vacation bible schools were part of his favorite childhood memories, as well as the many great influences that kept him growing stronger. He is married to his wonderful wife of 2 years, Kelsey, and they hope someday to have children to be raised up with Christ as their foundation.

James Sims excels at working with small congregations, and building them up in the faith. He has worked with congregations in Nevada and Florida (currently working with the church in Floral City, FL), and has much practical experience in reaching the lost for the Lord.

Darryl Wingo is the preacher for the Farrell Street church of Christ in Shawnee, Oklahoma. He loves to serve the Lord and encourage others to do the same.

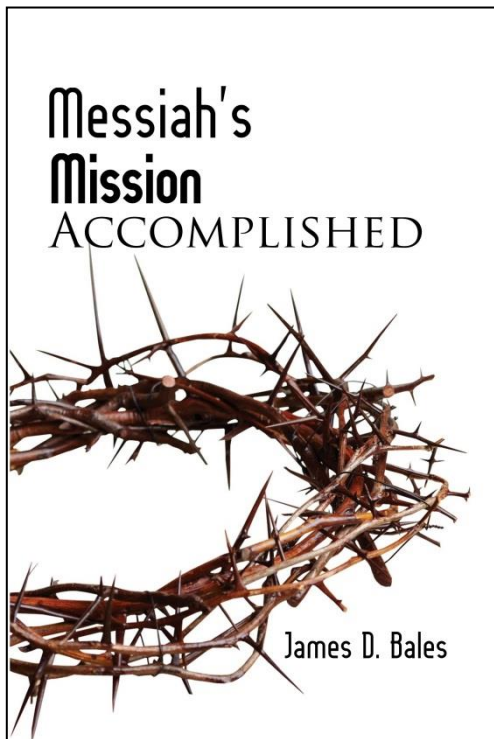
Bradley Cobb is married to his best friend, and they have four Christian children. He is now working with the church in Charleston, Arkansas. He has had many careers—media distribution (aka paperboy), stacker of dead, frozen chicken (aka worked for Tyson Foods), dumpster diver, janitor, student, busboy, and some other, less exciting ventures prior to becoming a preacher. He likes to write, play guitar and piano, and spend time with his family and with other Christians. What he doesn't like doing is moving...

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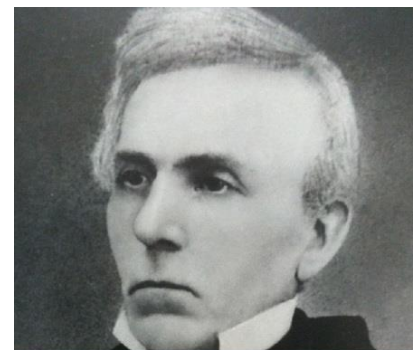
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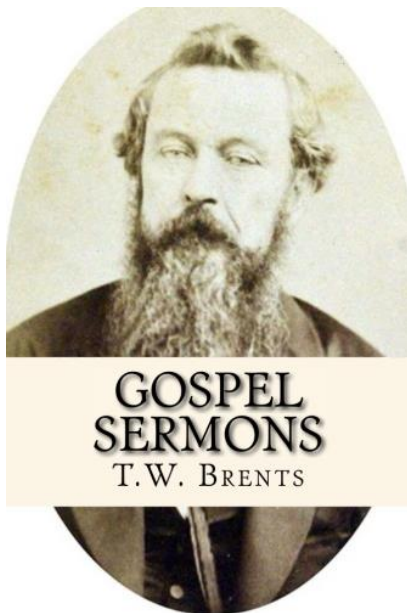
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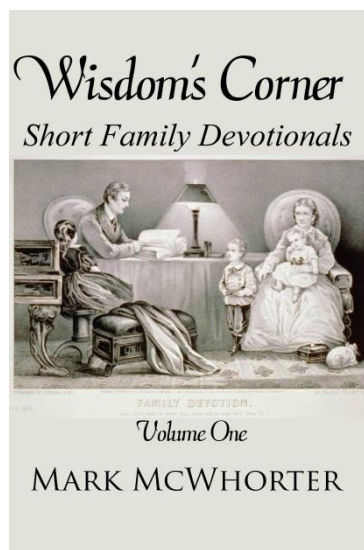
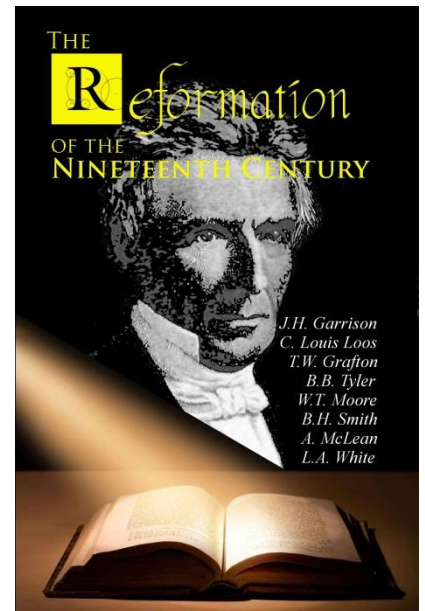
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