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Editor:
Bradley S. Cobb

Regular Writers:
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Gantt Carter
Gerald Cowan
Adam Cozort
Kyle Frank
Chris Gardner
Bill Howard
William Howard
John Krivak
Richard Mansel
Mark McWhorter
Jim Mitchell
Mitch Robison
Jake Schotter
Michael Shank
Keith Stonehart

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The Quarterly

Volume 5 – Number 2 – April 2021

THAT WAS PAINFUL...

Welcome back to another issue of your favorite magazine, *The Quarterly*. We had several takers on the theme "Painful Lessons," and most of them sent an article. I learned a painful lesson in 2009 in Eureka Springs. I had worked many hours on a sermon, dealing with Isiaih 7:14, the Hebrew word used there for "virgin," what scholars say, the biblical evidence, and what the correct translation should be. I nailed it. I was so pleased with how it turned out. Then a sweet old lady in the congregation said aloud what I discovered everyone else thought: "I'm sure you meant well, but nothing you said made any sense." Ouch.

We have several new authors for this issue (thanks to each of them for submitting articles). Earl Kimbrough, former editor of the *Alabama Restoration Journal*, and preacher of over 60 years, has contributed two articles (both of which are "to be continued"), "Ten Events that Changed My Life in Seven Years," and a look at F.B. Srygley's Winters in Florida. Hiram Kemp gives us "10 Commandments of Social Media Use." Chuck Wyeth (co-author of a new book on baptism) shares how God saved him after breaking his Xbox. Zac Hall, preacher and podcaster, addresses Uzzah, and the command "Don't Touch." And David R. Kenney introduces us to an early leader in the Restoration Movement: Thomas Campbell.

Additionally, we have a "Debate" section, with a new *Quarterly* author on each side. Allen Bailey takes up the "one-cup" position, while Darin Chappell takes the "multiple cups" perspective. Please take the time to consider both articles, and share your feedback with us.

In addition to the newcomers, we definitely want you to read the article, "Pray for Our Brethren in Myanmar," and go to God on their behalf. John Krivak presents an interesting look on "The Suffering Servant" motif in Isaiah. Your editor presents an overview of the four main approaches to interpreting Revelation (consider it a preview to his upcoming volume covering the last book of the Bible). And to go along with that, Jake Schotter digs into what "White Robes" mean in Revelation.

You will also likely be shocked when you read "An Excommunication Document of the Roman Catholic Church," which first appeared in 1760. I am warning you now. Turn the page, you'll find a lot more to enjoy!

The articles contained in each issue represent the research and conclusions of the authors, and may not reflect the views of the other authors (or even the editor). But they are presented for contemplation by Christians who are dedicated to living for the one true God of heaven

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The Loss of a Child

A Guest Editorial by Adam B. Cozort

We were preparing for a gathering at our house one weekend when it started. A few spots of blood that became greater over the next few hours. My wife tried everything she could to ensure it was not what she was afraid it was. Yet, a few hours later we knew for certain. We had lost our child to miscarriage. Our firstborn son was, at the time, a little over a year old.

A few months later it happened again. We were devastated. What had begun with excitement and happiness before the first miscarriage, turned into a fear that we might never be able to successfully have another child.

It was a dark time for us as a family. We were hurting in ways that are difficult to describe. She felt like her body had failed, and that she had done something wrong. I felt utterly useless. There was nothing I could do to protect my family from what had transpired and nothing I could do to fix the hurt we were feeling.

It was during this terrible time in our lives that several important lessons were learned in our family. First, we learned that those who have endured miscarriage are often a part of a large, private club few know exists until you are part of it.

Almost nobody likes talking about tragedies that have occurred in their lives, until what they have endured can help someone else cope with their burden. When others found out about our loss, we began to hear from friends and family who strengthened us with their love and compassion.

We learned of losses we never knew existed, even from members of our own family. We understood the beautiful principle of Paul's message to the Corinthians when he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

We also learned that the pain of loss hits people in many ways. I tried to bury myself in my work. I tried to set aside what had happened by taking care of my responsibilities and getting back to "normal" almost immediately. It did not work. I could not explain what I was feeling to others. But maybe the most difficult part for me was that I also could not make my wife's pain any easier.

Thankfully, I had friends and family who saw where I was struggling and stepped in to kindly and lovingly help keep me from burying myself too far. They came to preach for me without my asking (with the blessing of the congregation, of course). They brought food and groceries. They called me regularly to check in and talk. I needed all of it, even though I would not have asked for any of it.

My wife's grief was very different. She struggled with many aspects of daily life. Her pain was both physical and emotional. There were many days over those months where all she wanted to do was sit and hold the son we had. She poured her love and tears into him, not knowing if there would be another child she would hold as she held him. There were many friends of all ages with whom she spoke regularly. They were patient, caring, and loving in the way they encouraged and held her up. They helped her in ways I could not, because

I had not been through what she had. With time, love, prayer, and the grace of God we moved forward one day at a time. But there were many days where our prayers sounded a lot like David's when he wrote, "I am weary with my groaning; all night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears. My eye wastes away because of grief" (Psalm 6:6-7).

We also learned that the loss of a child takes many different forms, and each one is its own special kind of blessing, curse, and pain. There are miscarriages that come early, before the full association with the child is made. There are no belly kicks or shifts from side to side. The child is simply there for a moment, and then gone. Its pain is often made worse because it is in prospect. What would he/she have looked like? What have I missed without this child in my life? These and a hundred other questions invade the mind of those who deal with so many unknowns.

Other miscarriages come later in the pregnancy when all the interactions of the child have begun. The pain of knowing that there was once life present because you have seen it, felt it, and experienced joyful interactions with it only to lose it is traumatic. But it is often another level of grief felt by the parents that experience this loss because of the emotional ties and memories they have already built with their child.

Yet, it is still another level of loss to lose a child that has been born. Whether the cause is illness, an accident, or some other reason, losing a child you have sought to fill with your love and care often leads to another layer of darkness and devastation. It impacts every aspect of life and the pain and memories never fully go away. While I cannot speak to the experience of *this* loss personally, I have seen several who have had to endure such loss and the fullness of the impact defies description.

In the years that have passed since our two miscarriages, God has blessed us greatly. He gave us four more sons in addition to our firstborn and our house is full of noise, laughter, tears, and activity every day. We know that every family, situation, and outcome is different. We still find our minds on the children we do not have with us. We have said on several occasions when asked how many children we have, that we have seven, but five we have been blessed to hold.

Over the years, we have sought to be there for our friends and family who have endured similar difficulties and pain as we did. There is plenty of pain to go around, but God be thanked there is plenty of comfort to be offered as well.

Be there for your friends and loved ones who endure these painful tragedies. Please do not marginalize the loss. Do not place the blame on God as though He has taken their child away from them.

Do not forget, there were two parents that lost a child. Both are hurting and grieving, though they are likely doing it in two different ways with two different sets of emotions. Be there for both of them.

I would like to leave you with a poem I wrote after our second miscarriage. I have sent this to several over the years when they have dealt with similar pain. I pray it has been helpful to them. I hope it will be useful to you as well.

A Longing for Eternity

It leaves me filled with sorrow and woe,
That I will never see my child grow.
I'll never see my child play,
Or see the twinkle in his eyes when I'm home for the day.

But I know that waiting in eternity,
Is a reunion with a child I long to see.
With this thought before me I press along,

For with eternity before me life doesn't seem so long.

I feel the tears well in my eyes,
At the thought of never hearing his cries.
Not having the chance to sing him to sleep,
Not being able to hear every peep.

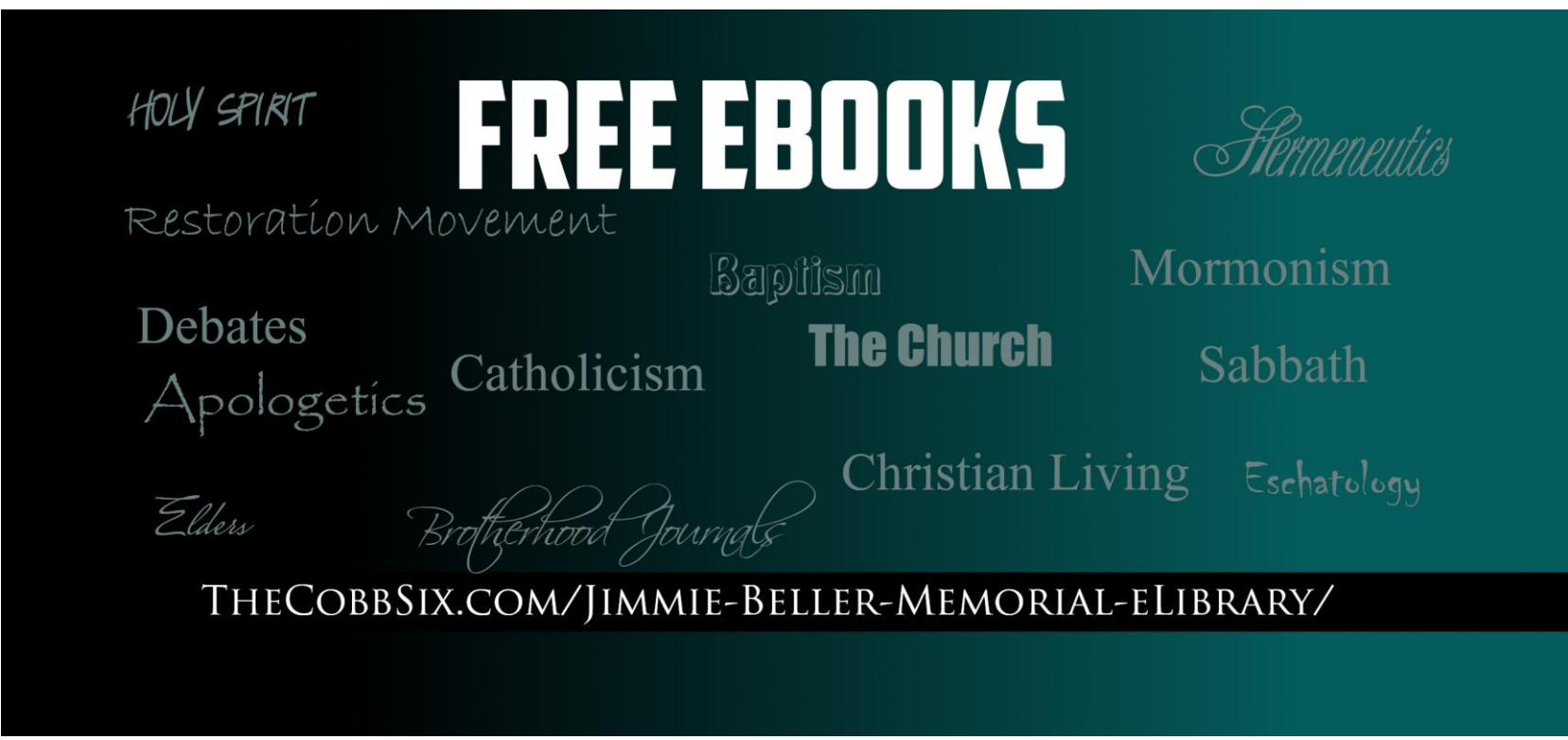
But I know that waiting in eternity,
Is a reunion with a child I long to see.
To stand before our Father's throne,
As our souls sing praises and we're never alone.

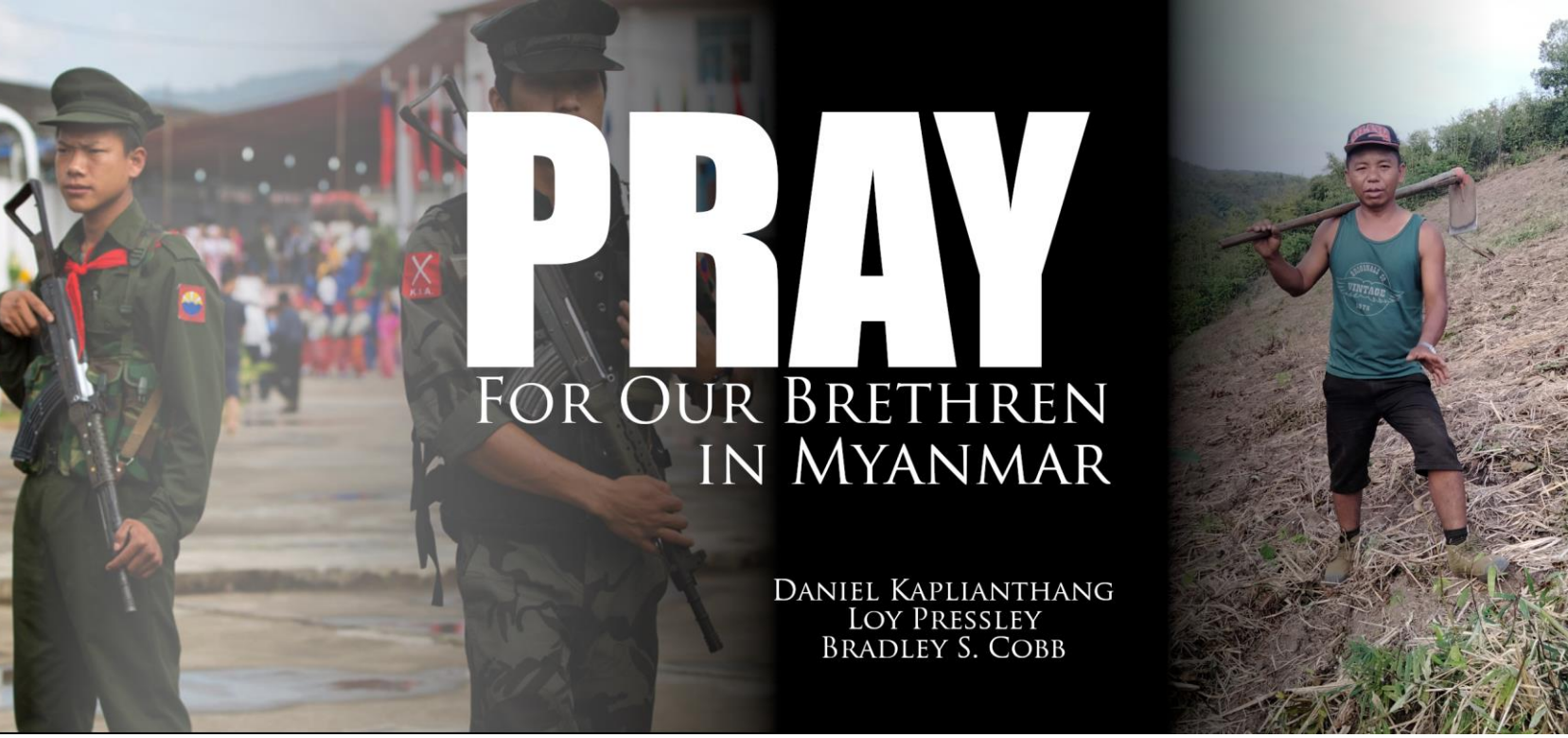
Even though I know not what I'd have seen,
Had that child been born to his mother and me.
I know that with beauty his unblemished soul,
Is ever inscribed on Heaven's entry roll.

For I know that waiting in eternity,
Is a reunion with a child I long to see.
It gives me, therefore, even more love,
For the gracious, tender mercy of our Father above.

I now and forever seek to live my life,
In conscious abidance, no matter the strife.
To live for the Master every single day,
To ever be watchful and never to stray.

Because I know that waiting in eternity,
Is a reunion with a child I'll ever long to see.
His mother and I ever long for that morn,
When all of our family will forever be home.





PRAY
For Our Brethren in Myanmar

Daniel Kaplianthang
Loy Pressley
Bradley S. Cobb

Myanmar (formerly called Burma) is in great turmoil. Not too long after they held an election, the military stepped in, overthrowing the government leadership and saying there was election fraud. Since then, the military is arresting anyone connected with the former government.

Some time back, a Myanmar citizen named Daniel Kaplianthang took an online Bible Correspondence Course via email, through International Bible Teaching Ministries (IBTM). He had never heard the gospel before, but kept asking for more information. He believed it wholeheartedly, and desired to be baptized.

Unfortunately, there were no brethren anywhere near to baptize him. So he found someone who would immerse him (because the one doing the baptizing isn't the important thing—1 Cor. 1:13-17), and he immediately got to work for the Lord.

After that, he began to baptize people into the church. The Baptists and the Pentecostals there began to persecute him and his family. They caused him to move (with his wife and three children) several times until he finally was able to buy a plot of ground and build his own home.

He began visiting the outlying villages to try to convert them. Many of the outlying areas still worship animals and ancestors. What a fertile field for converts! Problem is, in the villages, individuals must have the permission of the village chief to convert. The secret is to convert the village chief. That has only happened once, but Daniel is still trying.

He has built up this congregation to around 30 members.

Since the military took over, things have been difficult. Two teachers, formerly employed by the government's educational department, lost their homes, and Daniel took them into his house, along with their children, and has done what he can to take care of them. They are unable to go get work, because they are targeted for arrest if they are found (because they worked for the former government). He was given permission, thankfully, to start a garden near his house.

He sent this email (what he has to go through just

to get to a place where he can send an email is crazy) back in February. English is not his primary language:

> *How is your life and family there? I do hope and pray that all is going well with you.*

By the grace of God my family and all Christians in Tachikeik are doing well until today.

We can gather together for worship on Sunday not openly but secretly because the military coup made order not to gather more than 5 peoples in one place in the whole country of Myanmar.

I can visit and teach to some houses in the day time only. The military set ordered for curfew in the night 8:00 pm to till 4:00 am.

The situation in my country right now is very dangerous. Ten of thousands people are came out on the streets and protesting the military every day. Almost the whole people in Myanmar are protesting the military coup. Now 8 peoples were shot dead by police and soldier. The people are not afraid of their guns. They only want democracy and freedom from dictatorship because we were living under dictatorship ruling more than 70 years. Therefore no one like this dictatorship again. They decided to fight until the end of dictatorship in Myanmar.

Our leader Sung Dan Su Kyi and president are arrested by military on the first day of February. And also another more than 200 political leaders are keeping in the jail.

The government hospitals are closed because all staffs and workers stop working [to join] the Civil Disobedience Movement. Also all public banks are closed. Only we can use ATM card.

Please pray for my country continually. I am very much worry about that the Myanmar will become Communist because the Myanmar military is totally depending on China a Communist country.

I am working my farm. I will plant rice and vegetables.

I do pray for you and all your works and your family.

Thank you very much for your prayers.

With much love

Daniel

This morning (April 16, 2021) he sent a scary update.

I am very sorry to say that just now two Christians in Tachikeik are arrested by military coup. They are arrested along with 300 people those who are working with former government in the hospital and education department.

Before they are at my house but I [learned] that this thing will happen soon, and I arranged for them to move [to] another house. They moved from my house for four days now and they are arrested.

They left their children and also their daily food to me.

I will let you know what happens in the next. Just now I am very busy for their children.

I am working very careful for not to be arrested. If I am arrest and this is very dangerous for the situation of the Lord's Church at Tachikeik.

With much love

Daniel

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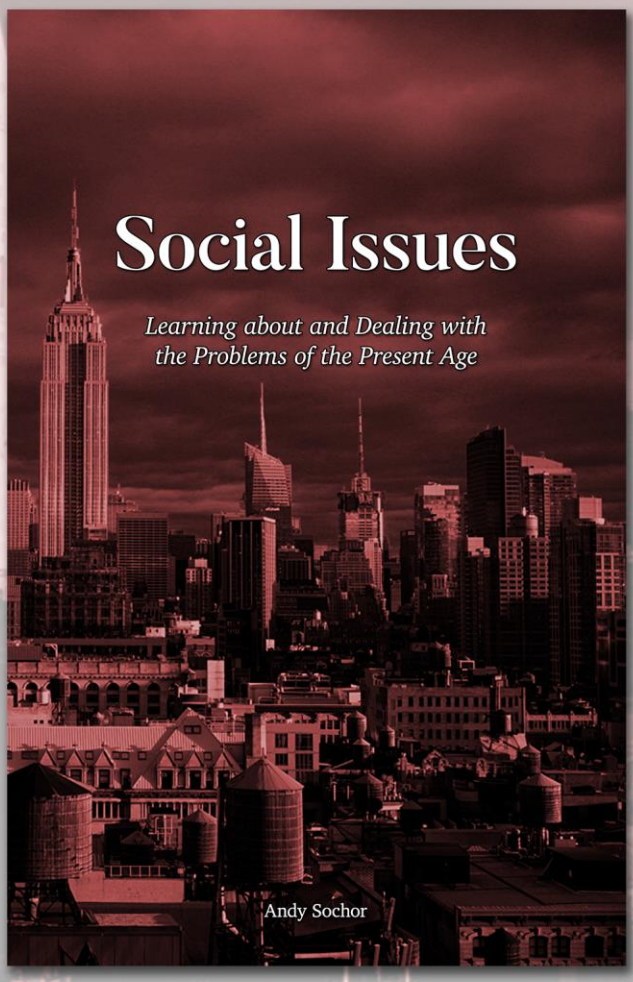

Social Issues

Learning about and Dealing with the Problems of the Present Age

Material by Andy Sochor

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One strategy coaches use to get someone to admit to something wrong they did, is to make the whole team run laps or endure some other sort of punishment. This causes the whole team to be worn down because of one person's wrongdoing. It's like sin—it causes hardships to the one sinning, but also to others.

In particular, the sin of lying causes great difficulties to many, and its negative effects are numerous. Jesus knew this when he told the Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Everyone knows chronic liars; just like the devil there is no truth in them. When they lie it hurts many people, not only themselves, in different ways. Lying causes (among other things) divorces, murders, and can ruin people's lives. The devil is the father of the lie—it is one of his greatest tools.

The seriousness of lying is seen all around as mankind has transformed it into a "get out of jail free" card and something used without any remorse or second thought. This is terrible to witness, because people are following the father of lies, the devil, rather than God the Father of life.

Scripture tells us just how much God despises the lie—he hates it! "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, **a lying tongue**, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, **A false witness that speaketh lies**, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19). Notice here it not only mentions lying once, but twice!

A "lying tongue" is one that is used to lying, almost as if lies flow from it with ease—it is soaked in the lies. A "false witness" is someone who does not give a truthful account of another person, often in the context of a trial. Everyone knows the nickname given to Abraham Lincoln, "Honest Abe," as he was known for being honest. It is sad there are so few people that could earn a nickname like that today. In a lot of careers and businesses the lie has become just a tool of the job. Many would rather use this tool than handle the results of telling the truth.

Jesus was never afraid of telling the truth. Christians should not let this fear should enter the mind either. We know Jesus was not afraid of telling the truth because of his response to the Jews: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (John 8:58-59). Jesus knew the outcome this statement of truth would have, but he told them anyway, as he tried to get them to realize who he was and get them out of the foolishness of their own closed-minded ways. Some would argue he was afraid when it says he hid himself, but this is not the case. Christ would have stood there through the stoning if that was what needed to happen, but he had a bigger purpose to fill in going to the cross.

Jesus had this courage because he, like God his father, also detested lying lips. "Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22). An abomination is "a thing that causes disgust or hatred." This shows clearly what the Lord thinks about lying lips—he cannot stand them, and they are disgusting to him! With good reason too, because of all the pain that lying causes. All you have to do is remember back to the devil and the Garden of Eden, and look how long mankind has had to suffer due to those lies.

On the other hand, those that deal truly are his delight, or in other words he takes joy in those that are truthful. This isn't to say that it is always going to be easy to be truthful, but every Christian must strive to tell the truth in all situations and let there be nothing

that man can hold against them. Lying brings about guilt, anxiety, lack of trust, as well as many other things that can be held over one's head. But if on the other hand someone is always truthful, there is no need to worry or quarrel with thoughts of doing right or wrong, because they have done right in telling the truth. This is why Jesus says: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). What does he mean by "the truth shall make you free"? This means there is freedom in knowing the truth that cannot be had by lying. Those that lie must live with that guilt and be bound by the lie that was told. This can cause them a great deal of hardships when the lie is found out and can lead to painful arguments and situations.

Also, those who live by lies will be punished. "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish" (Proverbs 19:9). Here again it is evident just how much God cannot stand a false witness or a liar. A false witness will receive their punishment, the liar will perish—that is what is guaranteed here in Scripture. Neither receives that freedom described by Jesus in John 8:32. Instead for lying they are going to receive the punishment God has ordained for "all liars," the "lake of fire" (Revelation 21:8). Therefore, it is an essential task that Christians stand for the truth and teach others that lying is never good no matter the situation.

There is hope for a society lost in lies.

Many think a liar is one that just tells lies regarding themselves, but a liar also is one that claims to know God yet does not follow his commandments. 1 John 2:4 says, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." This is widespread. People claim to know God or be in good terms with God, yet they act on their own accord and do not live their lives to reflect God's commandments. These people are liars just as much as those that lie about their own actions. The truth is not in them, therefore Christ also is not in them.

John 14:6 says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus stands and represents the truth, so those proclaiming to know God yet living their life as they desire are not walking with Christ. This is like folks saying Christ is fine with their sinful ways—these people do not truly know God. If they did, they would know he does not tolerate or give out passes to certain people's sins. He expects everyone that loves him to keep his commandments.

Often it is hard to tell what the truth is in this world where lying has become such a common trait. The news will give you different stories from one channel to another, social media will tarnish the truth, and people will put their own twist on occurrences to justify their actions. This can be challenging for those who don't know where to turn for the truth. In our lost world, it is an ease of mind to know that one thing contains the truth, and has from the beginning—the word of God. In John 17:16-17 Jesus tells us about this comfort: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Those that follow the practices of this world and use the world's guidance to set their paths are those that are of this world. True followers of Christ are not of this world. They follow Christ's leadership to guide their footsteps, and in turn they know his word is what always gives the truth. The world may manipulate, lie, be filled with deceit, and do many other sinful acts, but God's word does not change or fall to the whims and sinful actions of man. It can be trusted for the truth now as much as then. It is and has been and ever will be the words of truth.

In concluding our thoughts on these scriptures that show the truth about how God feels about lying and truthfulness, consider another scripture that shows there is hope for a society lost in lies. This scripture is Hebrews 6:18: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." God does not lie for this is the character of the devil. Consolation means "the comfort received by a person after a loss or disappointment." So even though the world is filled with liars and deceivers who need to be shown the way of God, there is no need to lose hope because there is that strong comfort of God on the side of his followers. Even though the world may not be trustworthy, God can be counted on every time. It isn't just a saying on our currency; we should all live out "In God We Trust".

The Bible gives us everything we need to enjoy a life of godliness and righteousness (2 Pet. 1:3). The Bible calls for Christians to do good works (Eph. 2:10), but it also equips us to do the good works that God requires of us (2 Tim. 3:17). Though the writers of the New Testament obviously do not speak specifically about social media, we should expect to find principles that help us to use it in a way that honors Christ. No Christian *must* have or use social media. But, if we do use it, here are ten commandments or principles that we should keep in mind.

#1 Thou Shalt Not Post Sinful Things

Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:22 ESV)

Christians are to abstain from evil in every form it takes. God desires that we model the same holiness that is characteristic of him (1 Pet. 1:15-16). When we use social media, we should be sure not to post pictures of ourselves doing sinful things. We should not post pictures of us or others drinking, statuses with cursing, or quotes that promote ungodly behavior. We live in the world and cannot escape the presence of ungodliness, but we do not have to engage in it or promote it (John 17:15; 1 Cor. 5:9-10). We should be mindful of what we post and refrain from posting and endorsing things that are contrary to life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-25).

#2 Thou Shalt Let Thy Light Shine

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Jesus commanded his people to influence the world as salt (Matt. 5:13). Instead of hiding our light under a basket, we are to shine it for all the world to see and point the glory to our Heavenly Father (Matt. 5:14-16). On social media, we should do all that we can to let our light shine. This does not necessitate that every one of our posts includes scripture or that we always share a sermon, but it does mean that our post should lean toward positivity. We have good news to share and should be people of godly optimism. Beware of being the "doom and gloom" person on social media (or anywhere else for that matter). Our speech must be seasoned with salt and so should our posts (Col. 4:6). We should ask ourselves the following before we post:

Will this reflect positively on the Lord?
Will this encourage others?
Would Jesus post something like this?
Will this attract others to Christianity?

#3 Thou Shalt Not Covet

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Social media is great for posting good things happening in our lives and in our congregation. Sometimes, as this happens, people look over the fence at what others have or are doing and develop a sense of jealousy or covetousness. Be sure to congratulate

others, be genuinely happy for the good others are enjoying, and celebrate the milestones being reached by friends and neighbors (Rom. 12:15). If a sister congregation is enjoying success or doing a good work, we should learn from them and be happy without wishing we were them or coveting their success. Social media should be used to commend and encourage not to compare and covet (cf. Exod. 20:17; Col. 3:5).

#4 Thou Shalt Not Bite and Devour the Brethren

But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. (Galatians 5:15)

There is nothing wrong with healthy discussion or even disagreement, but we must not destroy, belittle, and embarrass one another on social media. The world is watching, but more importantly, God is watching (Prov. 15:3). As parents sometimes tell their children, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all." Surely there is a time and a place for rebuke, but perhaps social media is not the best place. If we have an issue with a brother or sister, it would be better to go face to face rather than to go to Facebook (Matt. 18:15-20; 3 John 13-14). The church is an advertisement for the Lord, so let us put our best foot forward for the world to see (John 13:34-35).

#5 Thou Shalt Pray for Others

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. (Colossians 4:2)

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. (James 5:16)

There are so many prayer requests that come across one's social media feed, these must be viewed as a great opportunity to pray. We will grow closer to God as we pray, and we can intercede on behalf of others. Be sure to actually pray! It is easy to type a comment like "praying" or "I'll be praying" and never get around to actually praying. Pray right then and there and keep a list on your phone or elsewhere where you can add names and pray for them in the morning, at the red light, or before bed (1 Thess. 5:25). Use social media as a place to pray for others. As you scroll down, even if someone does not post a request, pray for friends you see and their families (1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Pet. 4:7).

#6 Thou Shalt Not Lie

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)

Lying has always been wrong and has always been condemned by God (cf. Lev. 19:11). However, even some of God's most faithful children have struggled with telling the truth on occasion (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-33). When we are online it is possible for us to present ourselves as something we are not. Or, we may be tempted to say things that simply are not true. As Christians, we should be committed truth speakers whether we are online or in-person because we have crucified the old man of sin along with his dishonest practice.

Also, we should be careful to make sure we are not promoting false or dishonest information. Christians have God's approval and therefore there is no one left for us to impress. We do not have to lie or pretend like we have things that we do not have or have been to places we have not been.

#7 Thou Shalt Redeem the Time

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)

Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. (Colossians 4:5)

Even with all of the good social media can be used for, I think anyone who has used it for any amount of time would agree that it can be a great time waster. As Christians, we know that our time is short (Ps. 89:47). We need to redeem or make the best use of the time that God has given to us. We must not allow our social media use to crowd out time for prayer, Bible study, or fellowship with Christians (Ps. 1:2; Heb. 10:24-25). We also must be sure that our interaction with social media does not rob us of quality time with our spouse, children, or friends. People in our lives should not have to communicate with our screens. A neighbor who is nearby is better than a brother who

is far away (Prov. 27:10).

Social media can be good for relaxation, laughs, and engagement with distant friends and relatives, but if it becomes an obsession, we must reel it in. We must refuse to be mastered by anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:12). We should remember there is nothing wrong with being bored. We do not have to fill every moment of our lives with content. We should learn to "be still and know" that God is God (Ps. 46:10). Use social media from time to time, but do not let it consume you. Let's all do better about not living through our screens and being better stewards of the borrowed time given to us.

#8 Thou Shalt Be Humble

> *But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)*
>
> *Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you. (1 Peter 5:6)*

God is attracted to the humble and repulsed by the proud. Confidence is not a negative thing, but we must abstain from pride (Prov. 16:18). We can get to the point on social media where we are willing to do anything for "likes" or followers. Jesus described himself as meek and lowly in heart and we should emulate his spirit (Matt. 11:29). Let's not use social media to elevate ourselves as better than others or more spiritual than others. Self-righteousness is both unattractive and uninviting. We should shine our light, but we can do so without turning others away because of our haughtiness (James 4:10). Humility must characterize us as God's people—even on social media.

#9 Thou Shalt Assume the Best of Others

> *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)*

We do not know everything about people just because we are "social media friends" with them. This means that we must give people the benefit of the doubt and assume the best of others as often as we can, as long as we can. We should not be naïve or foolish, but let's not be quick to jump to conclusions. We tend to think our educated guesses about others and their motives are 100% accurate but we probably have been wrong more than we have been correct. Look for the good in others. Do not judge people by one mistake or by what we think a post or a like suggests (Matt. 7:1-5). We should try to really get to know people, especially other Christians before we formulate an opinion about who they are and what they stand for. Give the benefit of the doubt because one day you will need it from others.

#10 Thou Shalt Do All to the Glory of God

> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

No matter what we find ourselves doing in life we should do it to the glory of God. All of life is not worship, but all of life is to be lived as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2). These principles are given to help guide our use of social media in a wise and Christlike fashion. However, if we can keep before us the goal of glorifying God, we will be wiser in all of our endeavors. Ask yourself, "Does this comment or post bring glory to God?" "Will this harm my influence or effectiveness?" "Will this cause unnecessary division?" "Is this true?" These are the types of questions we should be asking as we engage on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. (Col. 3:17). The glorification of God is the goal of the Christian, even on social media!

You do not have to use social media to go to heaven. However, one's use of social media could possibly keep them out of heaven. Let us be Christians in every area of our lives. May we be guided by the Word of God in everything we do. Social media seems like it will be around for a long time, so if we choose to use it let's use it like God's people should.

Speaking the truth in love…

TEN EVENTS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE (IN SEVEN YEARS)

Earl Kimbrough

My father died when I was sixteen during World War II. My older brother had been drafted into the army. This left my mother with me and a younger sister and brother to provide for on a meager income. When I finished the tenth grade, I dropped out of school with no plans to return. I do not know why I did. No one talked to me about it, gave me any counsel, or encouraged me to remain in school. I think I felt a need to get a job with sufficient income to pay my own way. Anyhow that's what I did! I found work in a stone company that had been converted to a munitions factory to make mortar shells for the war effort. My job was to inspect the hot, greasy shell casings flecked with slivers of steel, as soon as they came from the giant machine that molded the open ends. I only worked there for a few months. When the war in the Pacific ended, the munitions plant closed and the workers were laid off.

Soon after, I went to work at an old-fashioned soda fountain in Bradford's Rexall Drug Store. I worked there six days a week and two hours on Sunday morning for two or three years.

When I quit high school I had no serious thought about my future. This was a low time in my life. Prospects did not bode well for an occupation beyond being a day laborer. I suppose I would have followed my work at the drug store by going to work in some phase of the building trade. My grandfather and five of his seven sons were carpenters, painters, decorators, and building contractors. Even before working at the drug store, I did a little work helping my grandfather hang wallpaper. I also helped paint a hospital. The latter was unsafe work, two stories up while standing on the rung of a tall extended ladder with a bucket of paint and a brush to cover the woodwork with a coat of paint. There was the likelihood at the time that I would have lived out my life following a family tradition with a hammer in my hand and a carpenter's pencil behind my ear.

However, things that may seem relatively minor at the time have a way of changing one's perspective and even the course of one's life. That's what happened to me! My life was changed by ten events that took place within seven years. These events began after I had quit school and was working at the drug store.

I had been out of school for two years and was just living from day to day. I was fairly oblivious to what was actually occurring in my life. It was not until I began to look back on it many years later that I came to see these ten events as connecting links in a chain so interlocked that if any one of them had been missing, my life would eventually have gone off down a different road. When I began to reflect on where my life was headed when I was seventeen and where it was a good many years later I began to wonder what made the difference.

The more I thought about each of these ten events, which I came to see as having an important influence on my life, the more clearly I saw them as bound together in directing the path of my early years. I have tried to look at each these events from different perspectives, yet they all still come together like an unbroken chain. The whole matter, when considered consequentially, seems far too intensely involved to regard as accidental. Without being too over awed, it seems more reasonable for me to see these ten connected events as a working of divine providence.

The path one's life takes in its journey through time is no doubt continually altering its way according to circumstances that are both unplanned and unexpected. There also may be factors involved that one is unaware of at the time, which have a bearing on it. However, when I reflect on the ten events of my life in those seven early years, considering the way it was headed when I quit high school and where it wound up by the time I was more mature, I began to see how these ten connected events made the difference in my life that they did.

I see these ten events, each distinct within itself, yet vitally connected with the one before it and the one following it. They are as separate links in a chain

that are so bound together as to form a particular path. Yet, each link within itself may be an explicit turning point. If the chain stopped there it would turn one's life in a different direction from where it would go when linked in the chain. However, when all ten events are linked together, they form an inflexible pathway.

The First Event: Returning to High School

The first event of the ten happened after I had been out of school for two years and was working at the drug store. There was a woman in our town, Elizabeth Dearing, who was a well-known artist, a graduate of a fine arts school in New York. She taught art once a week in her home. I became interested in art and decided to take lessons. This went on for a while and she thought I had some talent. She told me one day that if I would return to school and get my diploma she would get me a scholarship to an art school. This appealed to me and I began making plans to return to school, and in fact I did return, finished the last two years and graduated in the spring of 1947. At this point, no matter what direction my life then took, having obtained a diploma would surely have made some difference in my life. But the difference it actually made was beyond all expectations.

However, my finishing school after being out for two years came close to not happening. It was not as easy as it might seem. Mrs. Bradford was not too happy about it, but she allowed me to continue working at the drug store after school and on Saturdays. The principal of the high school, Mr. Leroy Williams, helped me make the adjustment of reentering school. But the war in Europe was still on and I was approaching 18 and the draft. Three times during my last two years in high school the local draft board called me up for military service.

The first time was not long after I had returned to school. I was sent, along with a bus load of draftees, to Fort McClellan, Alabama, to spend about three days being examined, it seems in every way possible, to see if I was fit for military service. I fully expected to be inducted, but the principal, who had taken an interest in me, wrote the draft board about my having returned to school and got me deferred. A little later the draft board called me up again and I had to repeat all the examinations at Fort McClellan. This time I was put in 1A Limited Service because of poor vision, and expected to be inducted when they found a place for one with poor eyesight. They mentioned a desk job. This again delayed my induction for a time. But the impatient draft board, I suppose, thought the third time is a charm and sent me back to Fort McClellan to be run through all the examinations for a third time. I was sure I would be inducted this time. However, before that happened, the war ended. So I was able to graduate from high school.

While returning to school was an important event in my life, I had no time to keep up the art lessons and this, in addition to another matter that came up at the time, wiped out any further interest in an art school. Not long after I returned to school, the manager of a department store (with whom I had become acquainted at the drug store) offered me a job connected with a new school program called Diversified Occupations, an on-the-job training program. I could take a course in store management half a day at school and work on the job at the store from noon to closing time and on Saturdays. Arrangements were made with the school for me to do that, and my life made a move toward what might have become a business career. Just as the art school faded from view after I returned to school, store management faded, when something else happened.

The Second Event: My First Sermon

The second event that had a life-altering effect on me came to pass the summer I finished high school. For some reason my finishing school and becoming a little better educated caused me to renew my longtime desire to be a preacher. I certainly had made no effort to that end before this and I never considered it a possibility until after I finished high school. I now began to realize, with the additional schooling, that it was possible. I attribute my renewed desire to being a preacher to my returning to high school. There was nothing I did in school the last two years that was done in anticipation of moving toward that goal. In fact, I gave no thought to it as a reality until after graduation.

However, the renewal of my desire to be a preacher became so strong in the summer of 1947 that I went to see Brother Granville Tyler about how I might get started. The help I needed had to be from scratch. He spoke sympathetically, but all he actually did to help me may have been the best thing he could have done under the circumstances. He made an appointment for me to preach one Sunday afternoon to a little country church over in the next county. He also made arrangements for one of the elders of the Russellville church to take me to the appointment and

to lead the singing. Other than that, before I preached my first sermon that Sunday afternoon, I had no encouragement from any source to even think about preaching.

I preached my first sermon without having ever done anything to give me any experience before an audience. I had never led a prayer, read the Scriptures, or helped wait on the Lord's Table. I had never made even a one minute talk before the church, or in a Bible class. None whatsoever! And no class in school gave me confidence in speaking. I was so distressed in speaking that I was ill at ease when called on to answer a question in class.

So as a result of returning to school and realizing the possibility of my desire to be a preacher becoming a reality, I preached my first sermon that Sunday afternoon way out in the country at Ligon Springs, Alabama, without any preparation except that which I made myself. Yet, before that month was out, I had preached four sermons on as many Sundays and foresaw my future as a gospel preacher. While other factors were involved, the main event I refer to here is what happened the afternoon of August 10, 1947. I became a gospel preacher! (The day of my first sermon, incidentally, turned out to be my future wife's birthday.)

The Third Event: Going to College

The third event came about without any preliminary prospect of it taking place. I went to college! This was directly connected with my now being a preacher. When I graduated from high school I had no thought of going to college. If I had no encouragement beforehand in becoming a preacher, I had even less in regard to going to college. I am sure that I gave some *faint* thought about college, for others were talking about it, but as a practical matter I considered it impossible for me and so any thought I may have had about it was dead on arrival. Yet here, only three months later, I found myself on a passenger train from Chicago, that passed through Franklin County, headed for Tampa, Florida, on my way to college. How could that have happened?

About the time I began preaching, Don and Kitty Porter came to Russellville for a summer visit. Kitty Porter (formerly Jordan), was a Russellville girl married to Don Porter of Hollins, Alabama. I had known her at church and knew her family fairly well, but she had been away from Russellville for some time, so I was not well acquainted with her and had not met her husband until that summer. But to make a long story short, I met and talked to Don and Kitty at church.

Don was an ex-service man going to college in Florida on the GI Bill, which many veterans of the recent war were doing at the time. He was then attending a little college that had only begun the year before in a small community near Tampa in a bend of the historic Hillsborough River. The school was then known as Florida Christian College. Don was a preacher for the church at Dover, near the college, as well as a student of the college. Kitty was employed by the college as the supervisor of the girl's dormitory, and her mother lived with them. They were in Russellville that summer for a home visit. Knowing I had just finished high school and had started preaching, they naturally asked me about my going to college, supposing I was considering that.

I do not remember our conversations, but learning that I had no plans at all for college, they told me about the little school in Florida. I had heard the president of the college, L.R. Wilson, speak on a lecture program at David Lipscomb College earlier that summer. My being there had no connection with my going to college. I was simply there on a short trip I made to Nashville and, because of mv interest in preaching, I went one day to the lectures when Brother Wilson happened to be speaking. I had read something in the *Gospel Advocate* about the new college in Florida. So I knew a little about it, but I gave no thought to going there or to any other college at the time. Going to college was simply not on my mind! However, Don and Kitty encouraged me to consider going to Florida Christian College and they thought I could find work at the school to help pay my expenses. I do not remember what they said that finally convinced me of the possibility of my going there.

I give Don and Kitty Porter credit for my writing the school about enrolling, obtaining work, etc. To my pleasant surprise, I received a favorable reply, offering me work, sending me the necessary papers for enrollment, and accepting me as a student without anything whatever being said about money to pay for it. I do not to this good day know how this was possible or how it came about. I did consider some things later that may have had a bearing on it. The school was new! It only had 115 students, including two years of high school. So they were in need of students. Further, L.R. Wilson took a special interest in preacher students and I heard him say, at a later time, that he would make a way for any boy who wanted

to preach to go to college. I was a good friend of his daughter and learned a lot about him in talking to her. She said he grew up dirt poor in Cord, Arkansas, and knew how hard it was for one in such a situation to get a college education.

I sincerely believe that without these attending circumstances, and others that I may not know about, that I could not have gone to Florida Christian College, even after Don and Kitty encouraged me to make an effort to that end. Nor do I see how I could have gone to that college, in the manner I did in 1947, if I had tried to go there at a later date. Nor was there any other college operated by Christians that would have accepted me as student at that time. This is confirmed by the experience of George W. DeHoff, a poor boy from Black Oak, Arkansas, who tried to get into one without any money in 1927. He wrote to Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb explaining his desire to attend but had no money, although he was willing to work his way through. He said both wrote back to him declining him admission without his being able to pay for it. That I believe would have been my lot if I had tried then to attend any other Christian college, or even the one I attended, if I had tried to enter at a later date.

Before leaving home for Tampa, I managed to borrow $150.00 from a private source, but a student loan from any source was out of the question. And if such a program had been available I could not have qualified for it. So I left home for college near a thousand miles from home with only a check for $150.00, plus a few dollars in my pocket from my last check from the store where I worked. The manager graciously doubled my last check to what I earned, but that was not very much. When I matriculated at the college I gave them my borrowed money. I did not then know where the rest would come from, except from the work I would do at the college. That would hardly pay for my tuition, room and board, and other necessities (books, supplies, etc.) that were involved. My mother was employed as a clerk at a dry cleaner and received a pension as a veteran's widow (from World War II) after my father died. She was able to send me a few dollars now and then. That provided for some personal needs, but did not go to pay any on my schooling.

I have noticed in regard to each of the ten events that changed my life, that there were other incidents that made the event itself possible. I could name numerous incidents, along with those already mentioned, all of which merged in the summer of 1947, to lead to my going to college. Add to that the fact that I did not even anticipate going to college just three months before I went.

What makes my going more especially remarkable is the place where I went. The place itself might be considered another life-changing event, for the rest the ten events referred to had a direct bearing on my going to a little college that was only one year old, with only twelve faculty members. Further, the college was in a state to which I had never been, in a little bedroom community of about 200 houses, with only one small store and one service station that had one or two manually operated gas pumps. The busses of the county transportation system resembled school busses. It had no schedule after 10 p.m. daily and none on Sunday. In addition to this, there was no Church of Christ in the town. I include the school's environment in the event of my going to college.

Another thing might be noticed: due to the school becoming a four year college for a short time, I returned each of four years (1947-1951) and earned a BA degree. I was able, by favorable circumstances, to literally work my way through four years of college. When I left the school in the spring of 1951, I signed a note for the balance I owed for that year, and within a few months had paid off the last dollar, and so ended the event of my going to college without any debt.

When I consider the incidents that blended to make this event possible, I am amazed that it happened at all. Aside from the effect going to college had, it brought me to Florida, which also had a direct bearing on the rest of the ten events, which in seven years changed the course of my life. It eventually resulted in my spending more than half of my life in the state, serving four Florida churches as their regular preacher for a total of forty years, and holding numerous gospel meetings in the state, generally, from Pensacola to Jacksonville in the north, and from there to Miami in the peninsular. I have preached in all parts of the state, including these and other major cities: Panama City, Tallahassee, Orlando, Ocala, Lakeland, Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Naples, Miami, and other places.

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Restoration Movement History:

Christian Schools in a Land of Dreams

Jimmie Beller

NOTE: Jimmie Beller passed away in 2015 after a decade-long battle with cancer. He had done extensive work on a history of the church of Christ in Oklahoma, and compiled it into a 300-page book called *Oklahoma Dream Makers*, which he planned to have us publish when he made final tweaks. Unfortunately, he passed away before finishing. This article is a chapter from his book.

MANUAL LABOR ORPHAN MISSION SCHOOL (1888)

R.W. Officer and B.S. Smiser started a Manual Labor Orphan Mission School in Atoka in 1888. The school was under the control of the leaders of the church in Atoka. Brother Officer and the church at Paris, Texas helped find Bible teachers. Brother Officer also established an Indian Industrial School. He sent many Indian children to Christian families.

EL-META CHRISTIAN COLLEGE (1889)

With the fading of time, very little is known of one of the first Christian Colleges in the Indian Territory (later known as Oklahoma). El-Meta Christian College started on September 8, 1889, at Silver City, by Miss Meta Chestnutt. During this time the Rock Island railroad extended its line across the Canadian River from Silver City, so the community, school, and the church moved to Minco. Miss Chestnutt was from North Carolina, and had a dream to provide education for the Indians. The first enrollment consisted of seven pupils, children of settlers in Silver City, but grew to nearly 200 students. The college offered courses at the elementary and high school levels.

The school had little support at this time so Miss Chestnutt appealed to American Christian Missionary Society, who tried to raise funds through the *Christian Standard*. The Bureau of Indian Affairs approved funds for the school, meaning Miss Chestnutt needed no support from the pro-missionary society churches. After a few years the name of the school changed to El-Meta Bond College, honoring one of the families that had assisted her in the work there.

The school was closed in 1920. Its grounds were made into a state park. Sister Meta Chestnutt-Sager went the way of the Christian Church and died in 1948. Brother J. D. Tant describes the school as a "mixed school of the highest order for girls and boys." He said of the school

> "I found it successfully managed by Sister Meta Chestnut. I learned from her that this school had passed the danger mark of failure and the prospects of a fine school are now brighter than ever. Board and tuition are so reasonable that I think our Brethren of Oklahoma should have at least one hundred boys and girls in the El-Meta Christian College every year, instead of sending them to the three or four months school in the country. I hope many of our boys and girls of the Indian Territory will

write Sister Meta for terms, and be ready to enter the next school term there." [1]

CORDELL ACADEMY

Shortly after Southwest Oklahoma was opened to the white settlers, Jim (J.C.) and John (J.M.) Harrel became interested in the establishment a Christian school. Others joined in, and they hauled timber in wagons from El Reno and built a three-room school, called Cordell Academy. On Sundays, the Church used the building until they were able to build their own place of worship. Though the enrollment reached 130 its last year, Cordell was too new to support an institution of that type, and the school closed in 1900. Though the school's life was short, it was the beginning of dreams to come.

CORDELL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE[2]

After the closing of Cordell Academy, dreams for a Christian College still existed. Brother O.H. McGavock, a native Tennessean, watched the progress of both the Nashville Bible School and the Potter Bible College and wanted to have a school like this in the area. McGavock had six children for whom he wanted a Christian education. About 1905, He talked to J.D. Tant of the possibility of a college around the area. Both men called a meeting in Hobart, and they decided to establish a school in Cordell. They obtained 160 acres.

They laid it off in lots and blocks and reserved ten acres for the college building and sold the remainder for residences for brethren, and the money from the sale went into a building; fund. A "magnificent building was erected at a cost of $20,000 composed of fifteen classrooms and a chapel capable of seating 300 and a dormitory for boys. Over the next few months there were added a thirty-six-room dorm for girls. Brother John E. Dunn was unanimously agreed on by the: Board to be the President, but he disagreed with the Board's requirement on the study of the Bible. By September 17, 1907 the school opened with J.H. Lawson as president for one semester. Friction between Lawson and two of the members of the board led to his resignation.

The job was offer to R.C. Bell, who declined but mentioned Brother John Nelson Armstrong may be interested in the job. The board urged Armstrong to visit Cordell and talk with them. Brother Bell also wrote Armstrong about the troubles at Cordell.

Armstrong loved this kind of work and had dreams. He saw a great future for this work. After he returned, he talked with Mrs. Armstrong. They both agreed, so he wrote the board about two requirements he had. First, "If I come, I want every student to carry at least one Bible class daily," Second, "If I accept the presidency, I am willing to be subject to the board in my work as president, and as a teacher of Greek, Hebrew, English, and so forth, but when I teach the Bible in your school I will be subject to no board or other authority save Christ and his church."

August 1908, Brother Armstrong and his family moved to Cordell to begin a new work and make his dreams come true.

He continued this work until 1918. His students spread the gospel all over the world and the church spread over the state.

When Armstrong was a student in Nashville school a regular college meeting was held every Monday night in which young men discussed any question of interest. The meetings were usually closed by Harding himself. Brother Armstrong started the same thing at Cordell on Monday nights. Many of the questions that were causing the divisions were discussed.

These classes were to try to heal the divisions and factions among the disciples and to create a more brotherly feeling. Armstrong declared

> "We hoped for unity, for harmony; we hoped for a more brotherly spirit in our differences. The spirit throughout the meeting was of the very best. Brethren who have heretofore been regarded as radical showed a real anxiety to find union ground and manifested a willingness to surrender preferences and choices that they might agree with brethren. Perhaps nobody was converted by the discussions, but he at least discovered that there were two sides to a question and saw the possibilities of his being wrong."[3]

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN[4]

The school was located near Bartlesville, Oklahoma, on a tract of land consisting of 150 acres. Perhaps a more beautiful campus could not be found for such a school. There are several nice buildings on the

[1] Yater Tant, J. D. TANT TEXAS PREACHER, p. 203

[2] This section adapted from L. C. Sears, FOR FREEDOM (The Biography of John Nelson Armstrong), pp. 97ff.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 125.

[4] *Firm Foundation*, April 24, 1951, p. 6

campus, one of which was a luxurious mansion containing 32 rooms that were being used to further Christian education. The girls' dormitories were among the nicest to be found. The equipment, including other buildings not mentioned, was of excellent quality and facilitates this work. Central Christian College is especially to be commended because it in no way tries to form a connection with the church. Brother Wilson and all associated with him know the difference between the church and a school. Brother Wilson clearly stated the "aim of Central Christian College is to furnish young people a liberal arts education on the junior college level with additional courses in Bible, Business Administration, and Home Economics. Above all that it will teach them to be honorable upright Christian citizens." Let the church do the work of the church; let the school do the work of the school. If it is the work of the church let the church do it; if it is not the work of the church let the church stay out of it. To these principals the Board of Trustees and Brother Wilson, the president of the school, were thoroughly committed.

The faculty of Central Christian College is composed of a fine group of Christian men and women who are well prepared for their tasks. They hold degrees, which vary, from the lowest to the highest. In spite of this there is no pride found among them. You do not hear these professors or the students going about the campus or in their chapel services referring to one teacher as "Bachelor," another as "Master," or another as "Doctor." The spirit of Christian humility is an outstanding characteristic among this fine group of leaders. Personally, I have often wondered why it is that we call one man "Doctor" when he has just a few more hours of school work than another, and at the same time we don't go about calling some men with a Bachelor degree "Bachelor So and So." How would it sound to introduce the faculty after this fashion? This is Bachelor Jones, Master Smith, and Doctor Brown. It is refreshing to visit the campus of a school where this spirit of humility is ever manifested.

Central Christian College needs the help and support of brethren who are interested in Christian education. Certainly any father or mother will do well to place their son or daughter in this school where they may get an education under Christian influence.

THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF CENTRAL CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

On Thanksgiving Day it was our privilege to speak at the homecoming celebration of Central Christian College at Bartlesville, Okla. A capacity crowd was present to hear President James Baird deliver his report on the progress of the college and outline plans for the removal of the plant to Oklahoma City in 1958.

Having been reared in Southwest Oklahoma, the fortunes of the church and of the brethren in that state are of unusual interest to us. In the past thirty years the church has grown from a few almost struggling congregations along the southern border, plus a few in the cities to a chain of strong congregations in practically every town and city in the state. Perhaps in no other state has the church grown as it has in Oklahoma in that time.

Back when there were not enough brethren to support it, and when they weren't sold on Christian education anyway, there was a Christian College at Cordell. It lasted but few years, but it left its imprint on the western and southern sections of the state—that's the church is still strongest.

No other educational efforts were attempted by the brethren until about eight years ago when Central Christian College had its beginning. It was not an auspicious beginning—but it was a beginning. It did not begin in an army barracks out in the country, near Prior, which was the first thought. But it did begin on the edge of the small, oil rich little city of Bartlesville. It was too far from everybody and everything. It was doomed to limited size and limited service to the brethren from the day it began.

It was good news to us when we learned that a large, well-located tract of land had been purchased for a new campus at the edge of Oklahoma City. It was inevitable, we believe, that the school either move to such a center, or else be very greatly handicapped. We used to build church buildings across the tracks and down on the creek, until we learned that the cheapest money a church ever spends goes into

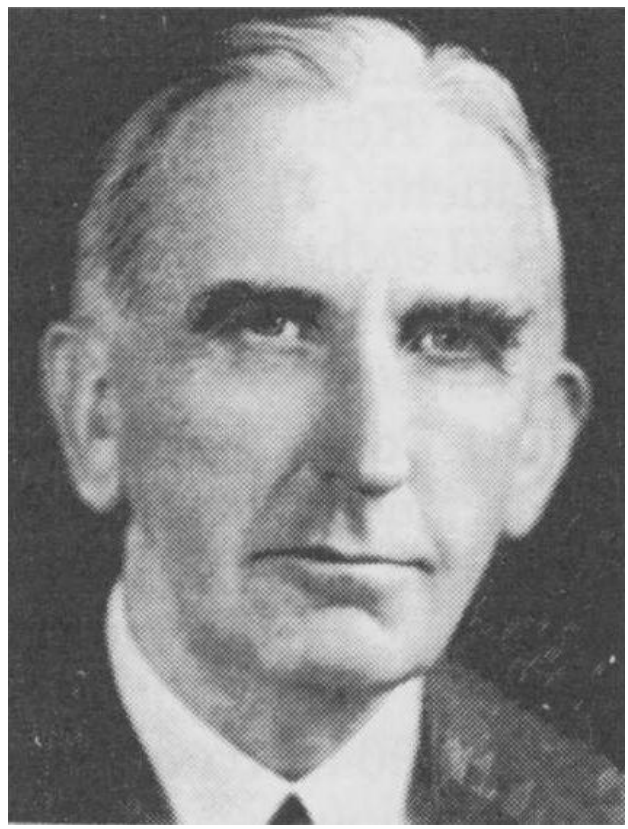
the dirt under its building. A good location is a congregation's greatest temporal asset. And so it is with a school. We are learning by sad and costly experience not to build them on the edge of some little town. We have thirty dead colleges that testify to the folly of such a practice.

We confidently believe that the move to Oklahoma City will be the turning point in the struggle of Central Christian College for survival. The ground had been broken for several of the beautiful new modern buildings that will grace the sunny knoll on the northern edge of Oklahoma City where the new campus will be located. Very near the geographic center of the state, and within a half dozen miles or so of the junction of the state's main highway arteries, it is ideally situated.

James O. Baird

The task of rising the necessary funds for such a move is tremendous, and Brother Baird, the president and Brother George Benson, the chancellor of the school, make a good team. Benson is a native of Southwest Oklahoma also, and his efforts in behalf of the school, like our own, have very good reason for justification in this fact. The success of the campaign is a signal triumph. The fact that more funds have been raised for the initial stage of campus construction than at first was though feasible indicates that we still underestimate our brethren!

It is heartening to see the general response to the campaign. No very large gifts have as yet been made. Funds have come from thousands of "little people." It demonstrates the solid backing of the brethren, and the confidence they have in the administration of the college.



J.N. Armstrong

It will take hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of dollars to build the kind of college we need in Oklahoma. Already reservations for next fall have overflowed the two proposed dormitories upon which construction has just started. It will be next to impossible to build buildings fast enough to care for the hundreds of students that will be knocking on the door for admission in the next ten years. We believe that the recent demonstration of support on the part of the masses will encourage those who are able to make really large gifts to the future of the youth of the land, and especially of the church, to do so.

The college is not the church and the church is not the college. But it is foolish not to acknowledge what a powerful influence for good our schools can be and how helpful they can be in helping to train, in a Christian environment, those who will comprise the membership and direct the course of the church tomorrow.

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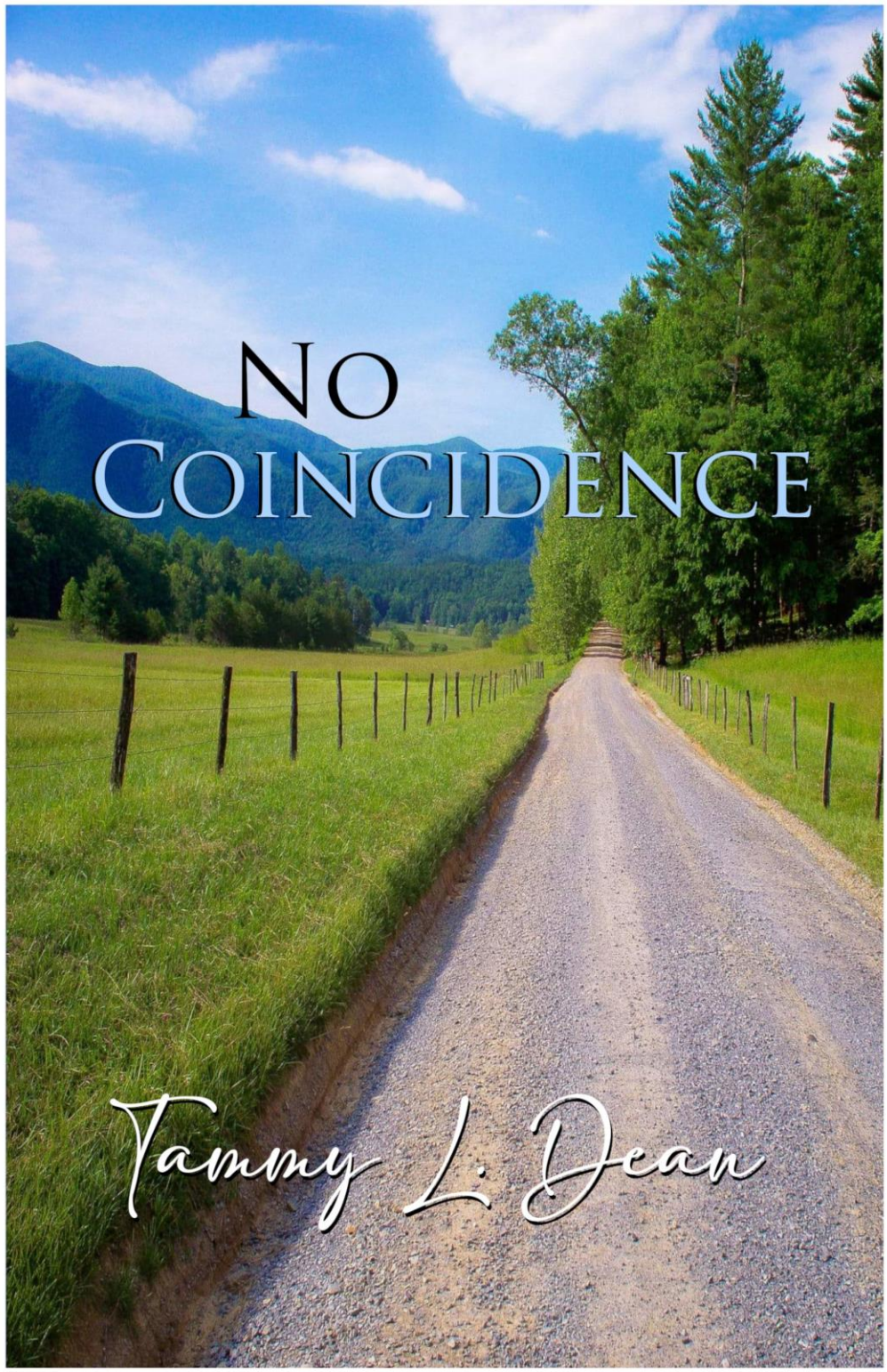

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A New Life

Gantt Carter

Have you ever started over? In Genesis 6-8, the Creator starts over with His creation. "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually… But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:5, 8). The flood that He brought upon the earth was a reversal of creation, and the aftermath left a new creation (heavens and earth) for Noah and his family (see 2 Peter 3:5-7).

After leaving the ark, Noah builds an altar and offers worship to God (Genesis 8:20). God received it quite acceptably, and then promises the following:

> *I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease (Genesis 8:21-22).*

God will soon make the first recorded official covenant; a covenant with Noah, all living creatures, and us all. This covenant God connects to what we call a rainbow (Genesis 9:8-17).

With this new life, new world, and new covenant, there are some specific ideas/principles set forth by God to Noah and the human family. There are no indications anywhere else in Scripture that these principles change or that they are not still in effect today. We might view them as settled truths for the new creation.

#1: Can We Eat Animals?

While it might be considered a small issue, one basic truth expressed in this text is that it is okay to eat meat. God states:

> *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood (Genesis 9:2-4).*

This statement echoes back to God's prior instruction to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:26-31). Despite recent claims in society, humans are not equal to animals; humans are above the animal world in the order of creation. Animals are for human use (note: that does not say "abuse"), and even human consumption.

Some claim God requires us to be vegetarians or vegans, but God makes it clear such is not a requirement. Other texts provide additional insight into this discussion regarding food (1 Timothy 4:1-5 is a great example).

Does that mean we *have* to eat animals? No. It mainly means that we can choose what we eat or do not eat (Romans 14). The Mosaic covenant contains several food laws, but no one today is bound by those (Hebrews 8).

#2: Life is Sacred

Although God tells Noah that animals are fine for human consumption, He does specify, "you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Genesis 9:4). This instruction/restriction is echoed throughout the Scriptures, even in places like Acts 15:22-29. The life of all flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), both medically and theologically.

Blood is even considered a spiritual cleansing agent, and the shedding of blood is essential for a covenant that allows sins to be forgiven (Hebrews 9:22, cf. 11-28). The blood of Jesus is the power to provide us with such a covenant; this is one of the reasons salvation is only found in Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:4-6). May we ever treasure our Savior and His life-giving blood!

The teaching regarding blood/life leads into a larger truth about the value or sacredness of life (Genesis 9:5-6). One is not to eat something with its blood, since life is in the blood. Going back again to Genesis 1:26-29, humanity is created in God's image (Genesis 9:6), to serve God's image-bearers in His temple/world. Because of the Creator, human life possesses immensely inherent value. The term "sacred" fits well here, too, since it denotes something special and not something to be treated just however one desires. This all originates with the Creator. What a difference there would be in our society if more individuals truly began to view life in this way!

Without a Biblical worldview, there is no legitimate reason to think any life is of inherent value or significance. One may believe it to be so and feel it should be so, but if one removes God from the picture, one has no real reason to conclude such is the case. As much as some wish to reject the Biblical worldview and still maintain the value of human life (or life in general), the two are mutually inclusive. Of course, we also see as a society becomes more secular, the less that society tends to value individual human lives.

#3: Consequences

Because of the value of life, God will require a reckoning for human life that is taken/ended (Genesis 9:5). God is a god of justice and rightness. Our actions have consequences; there is a balance of justice God sets forth in life. One specific part of that balance is found in this text. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man his blood shall be shed" (Genesis 9:6a). We learn later that this principle is not left up to personal vengeance. We also see that God makes a distinction between the intentional taking of innocent human life (murder), and what we typically refer to as manslaughter (Numbers 35:9-29). Protection/defense is another aspect of this discussion, too, a situation where one may need to take actions that could take a life in order to protect innocent life (cf. Exodus 22:2-3).

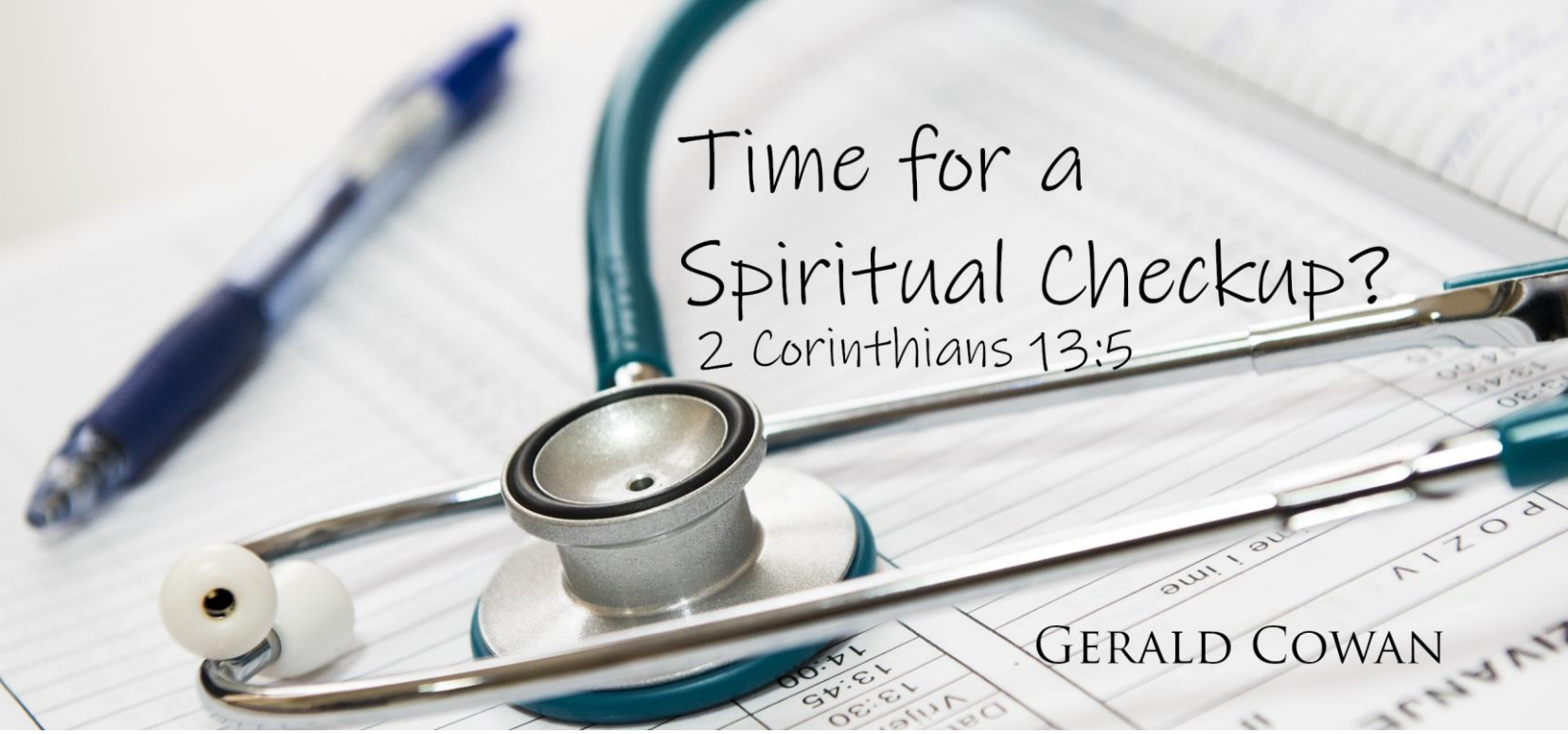
The Law of Moses serves as an example of how God views these matters, especially within a legal system. Please note the complexity and carefulness of these teachings:

> *If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness. Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death. And you shall accept no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the high priest. You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel (Numbers 30:30-31).*

As we reflect on the issue of capital punishment, this author is reminded of Paul's words while under trial as recorded in the last few chapters of Acts. Paul recognized there are some things worthy of such a consequence:

> *If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11; cf. Romans 13:1-7).*

Genesis 9 is a great passage to aid us in possessing a true Biblical worldview. May we be encouraged, and perhaps even challenged, by these truths from God regarding animals, life, death, and consequences.



I was thirteen years old, hoping I had some special calling from God. A preacher — I have forgotten his denominational ties — came twice a month to our rural Oregon community and conducted a religious service in the school building. With my mother I attended — no others in the family did. The preacher allowed me to read for him and to sing solo songs that he chose to be included in his service. I admired him and wanted to be like him. He once asked if I would like to present a lesson — he didn't call it preaching, but I did. Though I worried and agonized over the preparation I struggled through the delivery. I had chosen 2 Corinthians 13:5 as my text: *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates* (King James Version).

I then set out what I thought were qualities that should be found in Christians, evidence to prove to oneself and others that he was a true Christian called by God to be His servant. The preacher — I won't mention his name, though I remember it clearly even 76 years after the event; he is more than 50 years dead and his name probably no longer matters to anyone but God — told my mother that he would never have thought of preaching that as a proper sermon text. Because he knew how crushed I was at my perceived failure, he assured me that God's calling would be self-evident and was not something that had to be proved to anybody. I told him I thought the apostle Paul's reference applied to all Christians, not just preachers. But he said we are not supposed to judge anybody, not even ourselves. So I quit him and his little extension-church — probably a good thing since, if I had stayed with him, I would have become like him. But I accepted the fact

I was not called to preach, and I muddled around, dabbling in religion and not coming to the truth until I was 26 years old — so much time, energy, and latent ability wasted. Do I still preach from 2 Corinthians 13:5? Oh yes. In fact I'm doing it now by writing this little essay. I think a complete and intensive spiritual checkup is mandatory for all Christians — more important than physical examinations.

EVERYBODY RECOGNIZES THE VALUE OF A PHYSICAL CHECKUP.

When did you last have a physical checkup? Not just visiting a doctor for some problem. A routine physical checkup is a good idea. You may sense something is "not right," or you may simply want assurance that you are in good health. Sometimes there are problems for which you are not having symptoms. A thorough check including blood test and various scans can reveal problems you weren't aware of and also reveal potential problems that can develop if preventive measures are not taken. There are many things you can watch for and some things you can correct on your own. Preventive measures pay off in the long run. But self-diagnosis and self-medication can be dangerous too. Some things require an expert. The body is worth taking care of. The value of good health and physical ability cannot be measured in terms of money.

A property checkup is a good idea too — on

your house, car, and other property. Things depreciate rapidly enough, but wear and tear, damage, the market, the changing value of money and a host of other matters can affect all physical property. Many possible problems, as well as the presence of unsuspected problems, can be detected by a simple inspection or checkup. You may be able to do some repair and maintenance yourself, but some may require the services of a trained expert.

Why can't we see the similar value of a spiritual checkup? Probably because the problems are not visible the way they are in the body or in physical property. The loss of spiritual strength is not openly problematic in the way a broken bone is, or a cancer, or a failing heart or other organ. Spiritual problems don't cause your sewer to back up or your foundation to settle and break, or your roof and walls to sag and rot. But if we could see our souls, see the actual condition of the spirit, we might be very much alarmed and worried. You can hire someone — an expert of some kind — to check your body, your car, and other physical property, and to make repairs as needed. But, other than God, only you yourself can do a checkup on your spiritual condition, and nobody but you can make the corrections or take the precautions needed.

Yes of course God knows all about you, but He is not going to talk to you the way a doctor or other specialist would do. In His Word of scripture He tells you everything you need to know to do a thorough job of self-examination and maintain good spiritual health. Symptoms of spiritual problems are described in the scripture. The remedy for such problems is also prescribed there.

Read again 2 Corinthians 13:5. **Examine yourself. Put yourself to the test. Prove to yourself that you are a proper Christian and that you are keeping the faith, continuing faithfully in the way God teaches and requires.** You surely will be able to know whether you are faithful or not. You will know whether you have become reprobate, whether you have become indifferent or lazy, whether you have drifted from the truth or become inactive, or failed to grow. You will surely be able to tell if you have grown and become stronger. You will know the extent of your interest in godly things. You will know if you pass the test of God or fail it. If you are concerned about your soul you will do the checkup. As the apostle John says, we are to test any and all spirits, the teachers and preachers, to verify that they are true to Christ. But he surely admonishes us to test ourselves by the same standard we hold others to (1 John 4:1-4). We don't want to be seen as antichrists, reprobates, dissenters, and deserters from God's words.

Four areas need to be checked frequently: (1) Your relationship with God. (2) Your spiritual growth and development. (3) Your function in the church and your relationship with other Christian members. (4) Your relationship with those outside church as a representative of Christ.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MATTER FOR THE HEALTH OF YOUR SOUL (Matthew 6:31-34)

In some way this point includes all the others. Make this matter right and the others will follow. *Seek God's kingdom and righteousness above all else, and all other things will be added* (Matthew 6:33). It is worth remembering that a relationship involves yourself and some other(s). A proper relationship depends upon both or all parties in it doing what is required to make it right and good. You cannot do another's part. Nobody else can do your part. You cannot do God's part. And even God cannot do your part — at least He will not.

Seek God's kingdom — the kingship, rule, dominion, and sovereignty of God as administered in and by Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). Seek God's righteousness. Do what God says is right to do and be what God wants you to be. Love God and be one of those called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). What God says is right is found scattered throughout the New Testament scriptures, and all of it can be called "the gospel of God" or "the gospel of Christ." What God wants for you is summed up in one statement, from Romans 8:29, *That you may be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.*

YOUR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT (2 Peter 3:13-18)

Remember what we are seeking, what we are aiming for as God's people: God's righteousness and a place in God's kingdom. Peter calls it, *New heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells* (3:13). Ultimately that is a reference to the heaven of God where we want to be, not just to some renovation or improvement of the present world. In order to have a place in the new order, one must make a diligent personal effort (3:14)...

- To be found at peace with God, with no sin separating us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).
- To be blameless, spiritually clean and spotless before God (Isaiah 1:18, Philippians 2:15).
- To make proper use of the scripture, the word of God, to understand, apply, and not twist or pervert scripture — even the most difficult-to-understand things written by Paul (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Peter acknowledges that the insightful wisdom of Paul was given to him for us by God. Ignorant and unstable or unreliable people twist the words of scripture. But they end up destroying themselves. They cannot destroy God's word. We must continue the diligent effort Peter recommends: To avoid being led astray by the errors of others, and so losing your own ability to stand firm with the Lord (2 Peter 3:17), and to grow both in what you know and understand of God's word, and also in the gracious acceptance and approval of God for your life (3:18).

You will also grow spiritually by: personal devotion and commitment to God (Romans 12:13); personal attention to and involvement in worship and praise (Hebrews 13:15); personal communication with the Lord in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Philippians 4:6); personal service to the Lord, in the church and outside the church (Matthew 25:34-46).

YOUR FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS (Ephesians 4:15-16)

Every member has an important function in the body of Christ, the church. It may not be obvious to you what your place is and how you can participate most efficiently and effectively. You may have to try many things before you find your proper place, find where you fit best. But remember, the work of the church is not just having a leading part in the public worship or service projects.

The relationship to other Christians involves work, building friendship and fellowship. People will usually treat you the way you treat them (Matthew 7:12). Spend time together. Fellowship means being together and doing things together, expressing concern and offering to help when needed, ministering to others, doing little things that indicate your appreciation and affection, encouraging, exhorting, teaching, and admonishing each other (Ephesians 5:19, Hebrews 10:24).

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, AND YOUR ABILITY TO REPRESENT CHRIST AND THE CHURCH EFFECTIVELY.

Evangelism is every Christian's business (2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Peter 3:15). You may not know everything, but you can share what you do know. It is expected of Christians that they be able to tell others how to become a Christian, to tell them about the church and at least invite them to become part of it. If you cannot be a teacher you can at least be supportive of those who do teach — pray for them and for the ones they teach.

Christ and the church may be judged by what others see in you and hear from you. Not fair? Of course it isn't. But, fair or not, it is a fact we have to deal with. So the question is, what do they see in you? What do they hear from you?

Here is a short list of qualities the world can expect to find in a Christian:

- First honesty and integrity. Illustration: a clerk gave the new preacher too much change, to see what he would do with it and to determine whether he wanted to visit his congregation and hear him preach.
- Also on the list are kindness, gentleness, consideration, a strong desire to see others saved, and active involvement in the church's life and works. “Stay at home” members do not make a good impression in behalf of the church.

CONCLUSION:

Give of your best to the Master — begin by giving yourself to Him. If you really seek his kingdom and righteousness you will put him first in everything. You will give yourself to him as a faithful living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-3), and then you will give your things — all that you have, all that comes into your hands — according to what you know is his will (2 Corinthians 8:5 and 12). As long as you live, try to become better and better, to be more and more of what God wants you to be — always conforming more closely to the image of Jesus Christ.

A spiritual checkup every day will help you reach your goal to be with the Lord forever.

The Suffering Servant

John Krivak

The literary domain of the Suffering Servant is Chapters 40-55 of Isaiah. As the crucified Lord who truly glorifies Chapter 53 into fulfilled prophecy, Jesus *par excellence* embodies the Suffering Servant persona. Yet, who is that Servant in his original context? What is his role in the book of Isaiah?

The Servant's Identities

His is a fluid personality that will not be bound only to one particular host. Most commonly, the Servant exists as the corporate personality of the nation Israel. Yet at times, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah identifies as a single individual—a persona sometimes adopted by Isaiah himself (Chapter 50). Four texts have been identified as "servant songs" (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; and 52:13--53:12). In them, an individual identity often emerges. For whoever wears the ID of Servant, it carries honor and prestige with God precisely because of suffering that had been endured—Isaiah suffered; Israel suffered; Jesus suffered.

It is an artificial coincidence[1] that a major turning point falls in the book of Isaiah at Chapter 40—and a quotation lifted from here lands in the 40th book in the Bible, the Gospel of Matthew. Thus, a Suffering Servant text from Isaiah divides OT and NT. Here, its function is to declare the personal mission statement of John the Baptist:

> *Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'" (Matthew 3:1-3, NASB).*

Now, back in Isaiah, the promising intro to the Servant texts reads:

> *A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 40:3-5).*

These 15 chapters, so rich with meaning, provide about 40 quotations for NT writers. In Isaiah, the voice announces the coming of God—preparations must be made! The wilderness voice in Matthew announces the coming of Christ Jesus—our Suffering Servant!

The Severity of Suffering and Isaiah's Task

We must comprehend the deep suffering to which Isaiah speaks. After a lengthy discussion of God's dealings with Israel, Paul summarizes: *"Behold then the kindness and severity of God"* (Romans 11:22). Have you truly considered what severity has been suffered at the hand of God? Exiles defeated in bloody war—torn from home and family, poorly fed and chained to cruelest slavery, sent into dungeons and put to death with no justice at all. And all of this, while knowing that God did nothing to stop it. No—worse than that! God admits that He caused it; He made it happen (42:24-25; 48:10; 51:17-20). We don't like to think about God this way. Isaiah had no choice. How do you convince people to accept caresses of love from the same Divine hand that drove the whip that shredded your back, your wife's back, or your children's back? God made them suffer.

[1] The numerical organization of the Bible into chapters and verses was not devised until the 16th century. This organization was artificial, devised by humans. The same can be said for the canonical ordering of books—both OT and NT.

Isaiah had a most difficult assignment. After what had been experienced at God's hand, many turned instead to idols. Now, the prophet was to announce that the dreaded Deity was approaching! Make preparations! This time, however, Yahweh would take new roles toward His historically chosen people—comforter, protector, redeemer and restorer, covenantal husband. The page was being turned on the past, when conflict with God had brought retributive punishment that made Israel the Suffering Servant of God. All of this is encapsulated in the opening lines of Chapter 40, and it requires the next 15 chapters to attempt to reassure Israel—whose pain is still fresh—that it is safe to return to God.

Isaiah must work as a disciple to learn *"how to sustain the weary one with a word"* (Isaiah 50:4). The people are beat-up, fragile—needing skilled ministry. The flock scattered by the fury of God are now promised a shepherd's nurture and protection (40:11): *"The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking"* (Isaiah 51:14; cf. 42:7, 61:1 and Luke 4:16-21). Isaiah himself will take abuse in attempting ministry to people who, like abused animals, also could turn vicious. In this, the prophet becomes the Suffering Servant:

> *"I gave My back to those who strike Me, and My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting" (Isaiah 50:6-10).*

Throughout, God shows utmost sensitivity to Israel's weakened and fragile condition: *"A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish"* (Isaiah 42:3). The relationship with God was nearly broken and extinguished—could Isaiah work a mending?

Why Return (from idols) to Yahweh?

Regaining acceptance for Yahweh after the exile will require from Isaiah careful and sustained reasoning. The idols have become serious competition against God. However, for anyone who thinks it through, the gods are a farce! Think about it: a man chops down a tree—he builds a fire with half of it (to cook his lunch)—and of the other half, he makes an idol! And he thinks this "god" will rescue him when dangers threaten! Doesn't this get things backward? The deity should create people, not vice versa. Yahweh is the only worthy replacement for an idol—for three reasons: First, Yahweh is Creator of everything. That is an indicator of power, of primacy. Second, only Yahweh forecasts the future (this claim is repeated over and over in these chapters). Before an event ever happens, this God has already spoken of it. Third, Yahweh has such power to dominate—and even to decimate—the oppressive nations over Israel's exile that still cause terrible pain and anxiety.

The chief exhibit demonstrating God's mastery of the future is Cyrus (41:2, 25; 44:28; 45:1, 13; 46:11). He is the coming king of Persia who will reverse the policies of Babylon, to rebuild the destroyed Temple in Jerusalem. He is the only non-Israelite to be designated an "anointed one" of God (christ or messiah). Even before his day in history dawns, God's prophetic word announces him as a hope to reverse the Servant's exile. No idol could do this!

Israel also is assured that, like a bad storm, God's wrath is done. Like the covenant-promise after the flood (54:9), it will not repeat. Instead of dreadful punishment poured out in anger, now they can expect from God favor, blessing, and protection. Yahweh recommits to covenantal obligations including the "retributive protection" under Abraham (*"I will curse those who curse you"*—41:8-16; 49:25-26; 54:15-17) and the dynastic continuity through David (55:3). By committing himself to covenantal obligations, Yahweh shows Himself predictable and escapes the chaotic ways of the idols. These sworn oaths and promises offer a way to measure God's faithfulness.

The Surprising Accomplishment of the Servant's Suffering

The Servant had a justified complaint before God (bear with me for a few paragraphs). Israel had sinned and God was right to punish His Servant. Ala Proverbs 17:10, the sufferers failed to learn from punishment. The Servant thus proved deaf and blind (42:18-25):

> *Who among you will give ear to this? Who will give heed and listen hereafter? Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they were not willing to walk, and whose law they did not obey? So He poured out on him the heat of His anger and the fierceness of battle; and it set him aflame all around, yet he did not recognize it; and it burned him, but he paid no attention.*

The Servant was keenly aware—both of the searing pain and of who had caused it. But they failed to learn a moral lesson.

However, the Servant suffered excessively, more than deserved, more than justice allowed—even more than God condoned! In an oracle against Babylon, God complains about the way His people were abused (even though He arranged their punishment):

> *"I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage and gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy to them, on the aged you made your yoke very heavy" (Isaiah 47:6).*

Picture that suffering—God himself found it worthy of complaint! Although Babylon is the chief oppressor, Assyria likewise punished Israel inappropriately (52:3-6):

> *"For thus says the Lord GOD, 'My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there; then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause'."*

Such complaints mitigate the blameworthiness of God. If the Servant felt excessively thrashed, God would agree! This justifies the earlier evaluation:

> *"Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God. "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed,* ***that she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins"*** *(Isaiah 40:1-2).*

This injustice, like the cries that prompted God to act in the Exodus, provides the reason that Yahweh is coming and the need for preparing His way in the wilderness. Moreover,

> *"those who wait for the LORD* [to correct this injustice] *will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary" (Isaiah 40:31).*

The righteous God evens things up in a most unusual transaction—He allows the excessive suffering of His Servant (Israel)—for which He is partly to blame—to vicariously atone for the sins of others! This act of atonement is described in Chapter 53 (Isaiah's final "servant song") in expressions very familiar to us:

> *Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.*

We may be tempted to scissor-out Isaiah 53 as exclusively referring to Jesus, reluctant to allow Isaiah's Servant (Israel) to share that glory. However, Chapter 53 is sewn right into the larger message. Follow the thread of "the arm of Yahweh" (40:10-11; 51:5, 9; 52:10) that stitches 53 into the larger fabric: *"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?"* (Isaiah 53:1). We are taking nothing away from our Lord's glorious fulfillment by suffering the Cross—but we still need to hear this text in its more immediate context. The Servant here is Israel.

Who Bore The Sins of Whom?

Don't think of Jesus—not yet! The NASB translation encourages our anticipation of the Cross when it capitalizes the Servant's pronouns. But remember, the Servant already has an identity, centuries before Jesus. What did this mean in Isaiah's day? Who suffered to excess and so atoned for sins? The Servant (Israel)! This occurred during the harsh exile.

This is where it gets tricky, so follow carefully. And, who—through the Servant's atoning agony—was forgiven for their sins? The Servant (Israel)! The Servant appears on both ends of God's transaction! Israel suffers to pay for sins—and Israel's sins are forgiven. Confusing? Let's make some observations and think it through.

Notice this—throughout these 15 chapters—the Servant (Israel) is BOTH the one who suffers (because of sinning) AND the Servant is the one who reconnects with God's blessing (because of sin removal). In fact, it is an EARLIER generation of Israel (one that suffered exile) that prompted God to forgive a LATER post-exilic generation. Both generations are Israel! Each generation had with Yahweh a different relationship—one broke covenant and suffered the curse; the other experienced covenant renewal with blessing. The former generation sinned, wore shame, and suffered for it (see 51:17). Because of that (excessive) suffering, the later generation was forgiven, honored, and blessed (now see 51:22). Look for these distinctions in this passage:

"Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; and do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. (Isaiah 54:4-8)

So, if we can wrap our minds around it, the Servant atones for the sins of the Servant! Concepts are often fluid in prophetic texts.

Jesus as Suffering Servant

Jesus fulfills the Suffering Servant—lofting the ancient texts of Isaiah to unprecedented heights of significance. What stands out, in contradistinction, is the different basis by which Israel and Jesus (each wearing the Servant's persona) are enabled to atone for sin. Although Israel suffered excessively (double), it happened because God punished their actual sins. This excess accrued to atone for the iniquity of post-exilic Israel and enabled renewal with God. Jesus, however, was Servant without any sins of His own—so His suffering was entirely for the sins of others! And so, His suffering was not merely excessive—it was wholly underserved and uniquely vicarious:

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls (1 Peter 2:21-25).

The Confidence of Larry Legend

Tom Baxley

Larry Bird is a legendary NBA player who had a dominating career from 1979-1992; he's regarded as one of the greatest players at his position (power forward), his team (Boston Celtics), and an all-around all-time great player. He is also noted for his trash talking and his superb confidence. In 1988 he walked into the locker room before the 3-point shootout and asked the other NBA stars who was going to get second. Larry then proceeded to win the shootout without removing his warm-up jacket and raising his hand before his last shot made it into the bucket. Christians should have this same kind of confidence in Jesus. Far too many Christians go through life wondering if they are good enough and never sure of their salvation, but that is not how it should be. We will never be perfect, always struggling with temptation and sin, but God has already accounted for that. Read 1 John and remember that the letter is written to believers; read the book and have confidence in your Savior!

Only a few people, in the church and in the world, are satisfied with their present condition. Most believe improvement is possible, desirable, and perhaps necessary. Some are aware that a radical change – an extreme makeover – is required. But not everybody knows or believes that such a radical change is possible. What do you believe about it?

If we say a thing must be done and can be done, we must show *how to do it.* Our purpose in this essay is to show what everybody is without Christ, then to show what one *should be, can be,* and *is* with Christ and in Christ. When we say it "could be" or "can be" we are obligated to explain *how* to make it be. First we must understand what happens to us when we sin, what God wants us to be and what He wants us to do in every circumstance. We must set forth clearly the process by which one becomes right with God after he has fallen away and departed from Him. We must issue a clear call to everyone in every condition. We want to leave without excuse all those who are away from God – we want to call every person back to God in Christ.

THE CONDITION A PERSON GETS HIMSELF INTO BY HIS OWN PERSONAL CHOICE AND HIS OWN PERSONAL SIN.

Please note that we are speaking here of what happens to the person because of his *own* sins and his *own* choices, not the results of the sins or choices of others, not a condition one inherits from others, but a condition one causes for himself. The person's soul or spirit is not affected by the attitudes and actions of others but is affected only by his own choices and actions, good or bad, right or wrong – righteous or sinful. What others do may affect one physically, socially, mentally, and emotionally. But those effects cannot affect one's spirit unless he allows himself to be persuaded to make a choice and act, react, or respond in some way. One is accountable for his responses to the acts and attitudes of others. If one makes the right choice he will be called righteous, no matter how sinful others may be. If one makes the wrong choice he will be guilty of sin, *his own* sin. He will not be exempt or exonerated by God's judgment of others.

THERE ARE SIX WORDS THAT DESCRIBE THE SINNER'S CONDITION.

SOLD under sin (Romans 7:14). In some cases it is willful. One sells himself to commit sin (1 Kings 21:21 and 25, 2 Kings 17:17, Romans 6:16) – he actually belongs to, becomes the property of, and is identified with the one to whom he yields/presents/gives himself. In most cases the person is deceived and taken captive by Satan. If he is not taught the truth he will not know how to defend himself or get free (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

ENEMY – opposed to God and His Christ. Again, it may be deliberate and willful (Romans 8:7). The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. But it may also be by default – the result of friendship with the (anti-God) world (James 4:4, 1 John 2:15-17). Jesus makes it clear that neutrality is impossible (Matthew 12:30).

DEAD – spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-2). Death

means "separation." Physical death is the separation of life from the body. It can also be described as separation of the soul and spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death means separation of the soul and spirit from God.

UNDONE – disfigured, degraded, cut off, rejected, cast away**.** Isaiah's lament is to the point: *"I am **UNDONE** for I am unclean (a man of unclean lips) and I live among unclean men."* (Isaiah 6:5). Guilty persons at Pentecost were admonished to save themselves from the *undone (untoward)* people among whom they lived. The same idea: cut off, rejected, going away from God and not toward Him, without God and not with Him (Acts 2:40). Paul was aware that if he stopped obeying God he would be disqualified, cut off, cast away, rejected by God (1 Corinthians 9:27), undone.

PRODIGAL. Hopefully, at this point the sinner sees himself as a **PRODIGAL.** This is a special word, often misunderstood and misapplied by Christian people and churches. It is not a synonym for "sinner" or "one who has gone astray." It should be understood as one who wastes, does not use properly, and perhaps does not recognize or appreciate his possessions or resources.

[Prodigal] is not a synonym for "sinner" or "one who has gone astray."

There were two ***PRODIGAL** sons* in the parable Jesus told (Luke 15:11-33). One took everything he had and wasted it in inappropriate living until it was all gone and he had nothing (15:13). The other did not appreciate what he had, made no use of it, and therefore had no benefit from it. He may as well have had nothing, since what he had did not please him (15:29-31). He also wasted his possessions and resources.

LOST – alienated from God, disconnected from salvation, out of fellowship with the saved people of God, helpless and hopeless, and headed for perdition and destruction (Ephesians 2:12, Romans 5:6, Matthew 7:13, Luke 19:20).

This is not what God wants for us, what He designed us for. Sin is a repudiation and rejection of God's plan and purpose for mankind. Being lost in sin is not God's choice, but man's. But God must accept man's choice. God gives **FREE WILL**, allowing men to choose for Him and stay with Him, or choose against Him and depart from Him. God allows every person freedom of will and choice, and He cannot take it away from one unless He takes it away from all. We understand that with our own children. We cannot make all their choices for them, though some would like to do so. Our children sometimes make us glad by their choices, and sometimes they disappoint us. But we cannot take away their freedom of will and make them somehow not responsible for their actions and attitudes, their personal choice – good or bad, right or wrong, righteous or sinful – any more than God can take away from us the freedom He has given us and the responsibility that goes with it. Just remember, because it is critically important: sin is by human choice, not by God's choice or imposition.

THE RELATIONSHIP GOD WANTS US TO HAVE WITH HIM IS AVAILABLE TO EVERYBODY, IN CHRIST.

What God wants for us, what God designed us to be and to have: He made us able to know and understand His will – and also to *know Him* (John 17:3). He made us fit for fellowship with himself, both in the body and out of it – during life in the world and eternal life in heaven. He wants nobody to perish, but rather for all to come to a knowledge of the truth and penitently submit to Him so that He can save all for life in heaven with Him (1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9).

Here is a note of hope: everything one loses by personal sin can be regained in Christ. Christ can undo all that the devil has done to us or deceived us into doing to ourselves (1 John 3:8). But there is an important disclaimer which must be sounded and explained here. There is nothing automatic about how the benefits of Christ's work are applied. Only one of those benefits, the resurrection, is unconditional and universal. Christ does nothing to us or for us apart from our own will. There is that matter of personal choice again. Salvation is personal and individual, not a group thing, and in no sense universal. Everything that pertains to salvation is conditional – there are requirements, conditions, and commands attached to it.

At this point let us state what a person must do on his own to reverse his position and return to what God has always wanted for him, what God wants him to be now and forever.

FAITH is the first requirement. One must learn

the truth about God and His Holy Spirit, and about the Savior Jesus Christ. He must understand it and believe it. This is called faith. Without personal faith no one can please God or be saved from his own sin (Hebrews 11:6, Mark 16:15-16). Notice that faith can come only from hearing the word of God in Christ (Romans 10:17).

REPENTANCE. Faith will lead one to turn away from all that he has done and is doing which is contrary to the will of God. This is properly called repentance (Luke 13:3, 5 and 24:47). One cannot live the new life to which Christ calls him unless he leaves behind him his old life of sin (Romans 6:1-2). One may (technically) believe in God without repenting and obeying Him (James 2:19), but without genuine repentance one cannot *"obey from the heart that form of doctrine delivered by God"* which can make him free from sin and able to serve righteousness and the God of righteousness (Romans 6:16-18).

CONFESSION. One must declare his faith and repentance. This confession is not merely a statement of one's belief that Jesus is the Son of God (as in Acts 8:36-37), but is acceptance of Jesus as one's Lord, the Master whose expressed will and commands one intends to obey (Romans 10:9-10). It is a pledge of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-3). This confession must precede obedience to any further commands of the Lord.

SUBMISSION is a necessary aspect of repentance. Without it one's claims of repentance will be unbelievable. This aspect is implied in Romans 6:16 *"yield yourself as a servant to obey."* Note: *"you obeyed from the heart..."* (Romans 6:17).

OBEDIENCE is essential, a categorical requirement for salvation**.** The reference last cited (Romans 6:16-17) makes it clear. Compare also Romans 1:5 and 16:26, 1 Peter 1:22). One who will not obey God cannot really claim either **faith** or **repentance**.

BAPTISM is the first command a penitent confessing believer must obey (Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, 10:47, and 22:16). One is not saved prior to baptism, but even if he were or could be, he would be lost if he refused to obey this command (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Baptism puts the penitent believer into Christ (Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:26-27). Because of all this one can say, as Peter does, *"Baptism does now save us"* (1 Peter 3:21) – not baptism by itself, but with all the other matters included.

Baptism marks **COMMITMENT** to Christ and one's **IDENTIFICATION** with Christ. Until baptism one is still *outside* Christ. One does not believe *into*, confess *into*, or repent *into* Christ. Scripture says one is baptized *into* Christ. Baptism makes one's **confession** credible – both his initial confession of faith in Christ and his continuing confession, in word, attitude, and action.

FAITHFULNESS. Obedience is not a one-time event or temporary action. Faithfulness is required – one must be *"faithful unto death"* – in order to have the final crown, the crown of eternal life, eternal salvation (Revelation 2:10). Without faith and faithfulness one cannot please God or be saved by Him (Hebrews 11:6).

When anybody asks you how one becomes a saved person, saved by Christ, tell him it requires **FAITH** (confession), **REPENTANCE** (submission), and **OBEDIENCE** (baptism and continued faithfulness to all commands, requirements, and restrictions set by the Lord).

THE RESULTS OF GIVING ONESELF TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

We have another list of six words describing what happens to one who submits to the will of God and obeys the gospel of Christ – the condition and relationship to God that such a person has. These words show more of the work of God and the cost to Him and to Christ to save sinners and bring them into fellowship with Himself.

REDEEMED. The person who has **sold** himself to sin, and who consequently belongs to the devil, is "bought back" (the meaning of redeemed) by the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14). The whole church is *"purchased by his blood"* (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25b). Every member of the church, every saved person, has been *"bought with a price"* – the same price for one and all, the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:19).

RECONCILED. The one who was God's **enemy,** the one who was opposed to God and in conflict with God is reconciled, made to be friends of God (Ephesians 2:16 , 2 Corinthians 5:19-20). Reconciliation does not mean "a compromise which is acceptable to both sides." It means there is nothing now standing between or separating one from the other. Everything that makes one acceptable to the other has been done; everything that makes one unacceptable to the other has been removed. Perhaps it is worth noting that in the case of sinful humans it is *we* who must be reconciled to God, and not God who must be reconciled

to us. Men are reconciled to each other in the church (Ephesians 2:13-22). Men who are to be reconciled to each other in the church must first be reconciled to God so that He can place them in the church (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

REBORN. The one who was **dead** in sin has a rebirth, is given new life (John 3:3-5, 7). There is a common error about being "born again" taught in many religious groups. Some suggest that one can become a Christian, and later become a "born again Christian," indicating that "born again" is a special degree or higher level of Christianity. That is like saying one can be in the kingdom and later become a citizen or member of that kingdom, or that one can become a Christian, a member of the Lord's kingdom/church, and later on become a *saint.* The fact is, Christian, disciple, member of the church, citizen of the kingdom, and saint all refer to the same person at the same time. They are not different levels of Christianity. There's more: one must be born again to be a Christian. Nobody is saved from sin, added to the church, and becomes part of God's kingdom until he experiences the new birth. He must be *"born again, of water and the Spirit"* before he can enter (become a member part of) the kingdom of God (John. 3:3-5). Christians have been *"born again...by/through the word of God that lives and abides forever"* (1 Peter 1:23).

RECALLED. The **prodigal** is recalled to a realization of what he has done (Luke 15:17), to a serious re-evaluation and true appreciation of what he has lost, to a review of his options, to an investigation of what can be done to rectify his actions and repair his condition. If he is honest and has any honor, his new insight and understanding will lead him to return to his Lord and His church, to go as far back as he is able to go and needs to go for his soul's sake.

REMADE. The **undone** (disfigured, deformed, distorted) person is remade, recreated in the image of Christ (Ephesians 4:24). Please notice that before one can be remade in the image of the Creator Christ he must, on his own, consciously and deliberately put away all that God will not accept and approve in his life. There's a long detailed list of examples in Ephesians 4 and the parallel in Colossians 3. His personality and spirituality are remade, refashioned to reflect accurately the character and nature of Jesus Christ – *"conformed to the image of God's Son"* (Romans 8:29).

RESTORED. The **lost** person – redeemed, reconciled, reborn, recalled, and remade – is then saved and restored to his rightful condition and position of fellowship in the family of God (Galatians 6:1). Restoration here means reinstatement. One regains and enjoys again the condition he had before he sinned and fell away from God. For all practical purposes it is as if he had not gone away. But one's personal history cannot be changed. The prodigal son was reinstated, restored to his father's family and fellowship, but he would always be – we speak of him now as – the son who went away, sinned, repented and returned, and was reinstated, restored to his place in the family by the forgiving Father (Luke 15:11-24). All the rights and privileges that were lost by sin are returned to the restored or reinstated person – he has *"every spiritual blessing ... in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 1:3).

A SPECIAL NOTE TO THE CHRISTIAN, THE PRODIGAL WHO FALLS AWAY FROM THE FAITH AND FROM THE LORD.

If he will repent and return to the lord, the same six words apply, with special emphasis on the last one, **RESTORED.** But we do not spend enough time seeking the lost for salvation. We do not spend enough time seeking the prodigal for restoration.

Why prodigals do not come home? Pride keeps them from acknowledging that they are "away" from God. Repentance is humiliating – it not only admits error and the need for change but must include the desire and willingness to change. Modern prodigals may be waiting for things to change at home – especially in the church – to accommodate them and allow them to maintain freedom from the restrictions, restraints, and requirements that caused them to leave in the first place.

CONCLUSION

We need to add one more word to the two lists we have presented before. To the first list – **sold, enemy, dead, prodigal, undone, lost –** we add **DESTROYED.** This is hell. Separation from God and His Christ and His Spirit and all His saved people. It is a process that will never be completed. It is eternal. Eternal death and everlasting punishment. When it begins it will never end.

To the second list – **redeemed, reconciled, reborn, recalled, remade, restored –** we add **REWARDED.** This is heaven. *"Great is your reward in heaven"* (Matthew 5:12). It too is eternal.

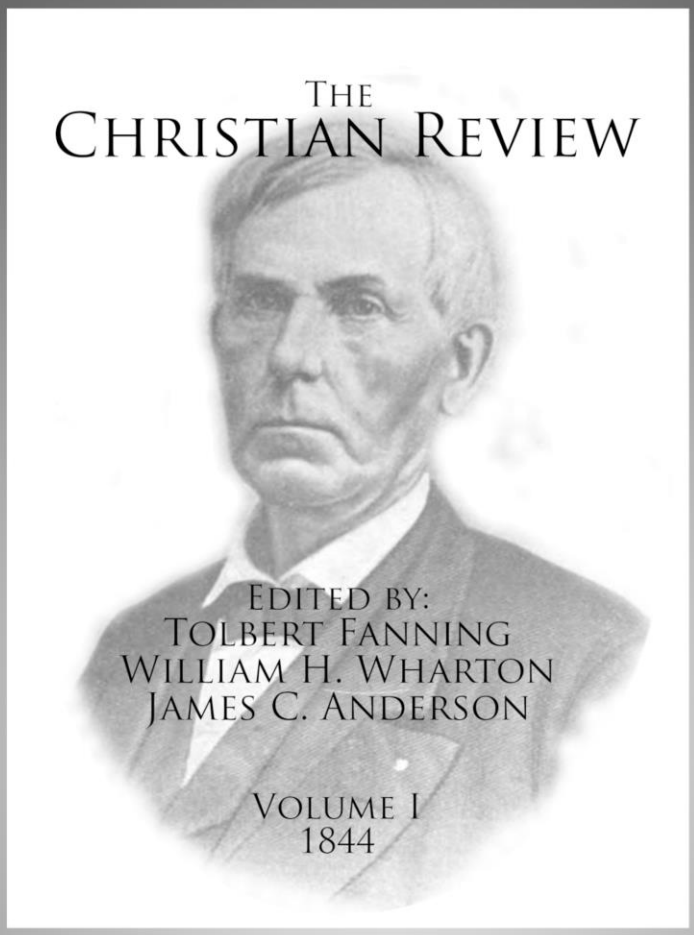
Eternal life. When it begins it will never end. Life everlasting with God and His Christ and His Spirit, and with all the saved of all the ages in all the world.

We have explained the plan of God and emphasized the particular requirements He imposes upon those who want to be saved by Him and added to the fellowship of His people in the church of Jesus Christ. We have emphasized that every accountable person needs to be redeemed, reconciled, reborn, remade, and restored to God. There is no accountable person living or dead who has not sinned against God and become spiritually dead to Him (Romans 6:23 and 3:10, 23). Since all have sinned, it follows that all need salvation from sin. Salvation is received only from God and only on God's conditions (Titus 3:4-5).

We have also emphasized that each person must make his own choice, either for or against the Lord. Nobody can be neutral, taking no position either for or against the Lord (Matthew 12:30). That means, until one says ***yes*** to God, everything else he says to God is considered a ***no***. Does God want us to make the right choice and come to Him? Most emphatically yes, He does. His plan in giving Jesus was because He loved (everybody in) the world, so that *"Whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). Jesus invites everybody to come to him (Matthew 11:28-30). Even now God, by His Spirit and through His Son, is saying, *"Whosoever will – let everyone who wishes to do so – come..."* (Revelation 22:17). The invitation of the Lord will not vary or change but will be the same until he comes again to fulfill forever the purpose he had in his first coming.

To ourselves and all others we say, "Soul, a Savior thou art needing; Soul, a Savior waits for thee. Hear his words of tender pleading; hear his gracious, 'Come to me.'"

FROM THE ORIGINAL FOUNDER OF THE GOSPEL ADVOCATE



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Painful Lessons:

Cain's Reaction

Ryan Manning

In the beginning, the very first brothers who ever existed worshipped God. The oldest, Cain, a farmer, brought some of the produce from his fields, while the youngest, Abel, a shepherd, brought one of the best firstlings of his flock (Genesis 4:3-4). God accepted Abel's offering, but He rejected Cain's.

When teaching on this passage, I often hear, "Why did God reject Cain's offering but accept his brother's?" Sometimes this question ends up the focal point of the instruction. However, if we focus on the reason for Cain's rejection, we might miss an important lesson the text itself presents: Cain's reaction to a painful lesson from God.

Cain did not rise above himself; he fell.

We could speculate as to why God rejected Cain's offering. The text says Abel brought "of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof," which speaks of the quality of Abel's offering. Abel offered a high-quality sacrifice to God, but the text says nothing about the quality of Cain's offering. Or we could take the route of looking at Hebrews 11:4, which tells us Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain "by faith." If Abel offered by faith but Cain did not, and if faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), then we can reasonably conclude that Cain somehow did not follow God's words or instructions.

I believe it does not matter why God rejected Cain's offering. Such focus narrows down our application of the passage to whatever reason we might accept. No, I believe the passage just states the fact of the rejection so we can consider what happens next. God gave Cain a painful lesson. Nobody likes rejection. It hurts; it causes us to question ourselves and our own worth. We like to think we would react better than Cain did, and I hope we all would, but we can all empathize with him, for we have all faced rejection of some sort. I would venture to guess that great people, however, do not measure their worth based on their perfect track record and lack of failure or rejection. Greatness finds people struggling through their own insufficiencies to rise above themselves.

Cain did not rise above himself; he fell. When we look at a passage to understand its meaning for us, we should look at the reactions of the characters in the story. How did Cain act, and how did God want him to act? The passage tells us "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." People react naturally to rejection with anger and sadness. But God countered Cain's unhappiness with a lesson.

> *And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Genesis 4:6-7).*

God took his child aside after that child had made a mistake. He told him, "Of course I will accept you if you do well," but then he told Cain what happens when you do not do well: sin lies at the door.

God wants us to understand, like He wanted Cain to understand, that we have a choice to respond to failure: the right way or the wrong way. Why does sin lie at the door waiting for us when we do not do well? It seems if we have already done poorly, sin has gotten us, right? So why does God say that sin lies in wait for us after we do poorly?

In context, God said this to his already-rejected

child who was pouting because of his failure. I find it interesting that God said if he did well God would accept him, but then said nothing about rejection. Cain knew if he did not do well God would reject him, because Cain experienced that rejection. So God addressed his words about rejection to Cain's current situation, his dour mood. God warned Cain sin was laying in wait for him, and would pounce if he did not do something about it. He showed the struggle we all have with our enemy, sin: it wants to control us ("unto thee shall be its desire"), but we have to overcome ("and thou shalt rule over it").

Cain did not accept God's teaching, but instead let his anger and his hatred grow until he murdered his own brother, his own flesh and blood. God tried to intervene before Cain resorted to violence, but Cain refused to listen to the lesson. Sin took control of him. Sure, he let sin in when he offered an unacceptable sacrifice, but God would have forgiven him, had he responded to rejection the right way. What would God have done if Cain had gotten the right kind of offering and made a second, better, sacrifice? Knowing the character of God, I believe He would have applauded Cain's repentance, and everything would have worked out fine. Had that happened, we probably would not have heard about it, because it would not have made such a good lesson for us. Cain had the chance to rule over his sin by simply doing what God requested. But he could not get over the rejection.

Why might God reject us? We could fail to give Him our best. We could do something that He has instructed us not to do. We could fall for any number of the devil's temptations and find ourselves facing the harsh judgment of the Almighty. And when we face those failures, what will we do? The book of James tells us we should not just *hear* God's word, but *do* the word (James 1:22-25). If we allow God to correct us, He says we will find blessing.

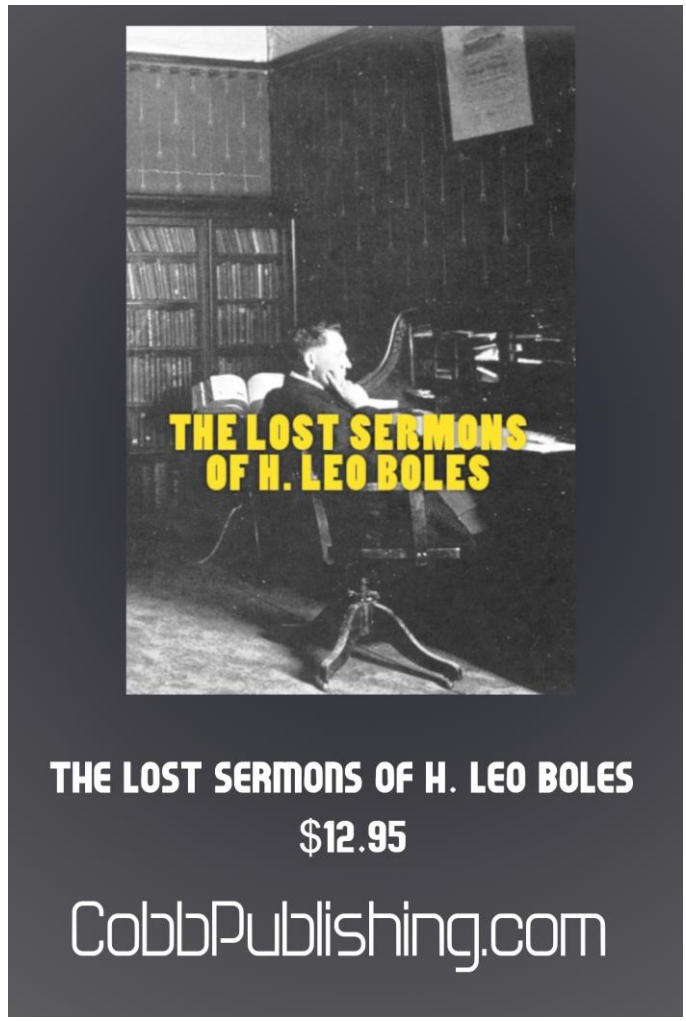
What about when God's lessons hurt, when God forces us to face ourselves and see all of the ways we disappoint Him? Do we run away? Do we get angry and lash out at others? Or do we allow our sorrow, our pain, to lead us toward the light?

Scripture says,

> *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Corinthians 7:10).*

This sorrow, the godly kind, helps us come to repentance which leads us to our salvation. Painful lessons then become necessary for us to rise above our own selves. Or, we could feel the sorrow of the world, that anger and disappointment people feel because they have gotten caught in their failure, the kind of sorrow that Cain felt. What differentiates between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world? Surely it involves the sincerity we feel with the sorrow and the reasons we feel sorrow in the first place. But it also involves that sorrow motivates us to act. Does the pain of the lesson send us down Cain's road where we hurt others or worse, or does it cause us to take the opportunity to rule over our sin?

We decide.



Painful Lessons: Don't Touch

Zac Hall

On average in one year a student will spend 6.5 hours a day for 180 days in a classroom—1,170 hours a year in a school. Over that time he will learn various lessons in various ways. Some are quickly forgotten while others seem to last. Sometimes lessons are learned the hard way, painfully. However, these types of lessons are often never forgotten. For example, a mother may tell her child, "Don't touch that hot stove," and the young child will keep trying to touch it. Then one day the child succeeds in touching it—and the lesson is learned. The child now understands the danger of a hot stove and will take measures to never touch the stove again.

I grew up on a farm, and remember my grandpa telling me, Careful around the electric fence, don't touch it. I didn't pay attention to his warning, and one day... needless to say, it was a shocking experience. This was painful, but I learned the lesson.

When you examine scripture, you find individuals that learned hard and painful lessons. Consider 2 Samuel 6:1-13. Uzzah touched the ark of the covenant and died. Just like a mother warning her young child, or my grandpa warning me, God warned the Israelites. In Numbers 15:1-6, 15, God gave specific instructions on carrying the ark. He also gave the penalty if the ark was touched – death.

One might ask why they carried the ark incorrectly in 2 Samuel 6. At the end of the day it is all supposition. However, consider the following. Perhaps it was laziness (who wants to carry things when you don't have to?). Or perhaps they had seen the Philistines move the ark this way (1 Samuel 6:10-12). The important part is they were disobedient to the will of God. God gave the instructions, and David, Uzzah, and the others failed to obey.

We today must make sure we don't follow the mistake of David and Uzzah. God has given us commands for all things we are to do (Colossians 3:17, 2 Peter 1:3). This would include the way in which our home is set up: one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:4-6). This also applies to the way one worships God. Too often man worships how he wants, and disregards what God has to say on the subject. This is not a new problem. Jesus himself addressed churches of Asia, including compromising and corrupt churches (Revelation 2:12-23).

Just because something seems right to man, does not make it right in the eyes of God. Uzzah saw the ark beginning to fall and reached up to touch it. On the surface this seems like a harmless action, in fact some would consider this a noble action. I am sure Uzzah did not have any ill-will as he reached to steady the ark. Uzzah was not guiltless in this action. Good as his intentions were, he was in the wrong. He knew he was not to touch the ark. He was also involved with the ark being on a cart. Therefore, he condoned this action. Uzzah did what he thought was right in his own heart rather than doing the will of God. As a result of his action Uzzah was killed.

How many people worship God in different ways because they think it is right? Some use instruments in worship. Others have women leading in worship. All of this is against God's instruction and is sin. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." It is important to do what God says in all we do.

Uzzah failed to do what God commanded and he lost his life. He served as an object lesson for those with him. When David saw what God did to Uzzah his first reaction was anger. Then David went on to fear the Lord, repenting of what he did. One can see the fruits of David's repentance because now they *carried* the ark. It is important to take the example of Uzzah, David, and others and learn from them. They learned a hard and painful lesson, so we don't have to. However, if we don't learn from their mistakes and do things according to our own ways, we too will pay the price.

We go through life day after day, not knowing what will happen or who we will meet. The problem I struggled with most was putting my life into perspective and living—I mean *really* living.

Seven years ago, I was not the man I am today—not even close. I needed to break a cycle in my life, or I would lose everything I had, including my wife and kids. I did not really know if God existed or whether He cared if I lived or not.

Because I was a Private Investigator, I could pretty much make my own schedule, depending on the case and what time of year it was. The cycle of my life was spiraling downward out of control and God was beginning to show me that I needed to make a change, but in subtle ways. Have you ever felt like you were in control, but you really weren't? An addiction was controlling my life and I didn't even see it.

The day my Xbox broke changed my life for good. You see I was addicted to it, living in a fantasy of being in the military and controlling my own army, and forgot what the most important things in my life were. I know this may sound strange to you, but a video game and the thrill behind it was what I was addicted to—it was my drug of choice. That day, in a matter of a few seconds, the screen went green. And I couldn't get it to come back. The habit I needed to change (but didn't realize it) was changed for me. God changed my life in so many ways after that day and I am so thankful that He did.

Bad habits of the past were broken in a matter of months. All that it took to start the journey was walking back into the Alliance church of Christ with my family on a Sunday morning. Everything in my life seemed to start having meaning again.

God can make full-life transformations. He isn't interested in just changing a single bad habit, He wants to change your whole life for the better! God is the reason I am still married. God is the reason I am where I am today. God is my reason for what I do. He changed me and molded me rather quickly into who I am today.

I will admit, Xbox wasn't my only issue that God took care of. I was hooked on alcohol, on pills, and yes, video games. I didn't realize how much these habits were causing the unsuccessfulness of my life. Some have said that this change was a miracle—I say it was providence of God. I learned to put Him first; and once He was first, the rest truly fell into place.

A person with my addictions would normally go through all the anonymous programs (Alcoholics Anonymous, etc.). But you see, I developed an addiction to Him and His word and His teachings and who He had planned for me to be. Within the first few days of going back to church, I had developed a true desire to know Him and His word. The beginning of my transformation from worldly human to faithful Christian began rather swiftly. I wanted to be with like-minded people, and it is true that your crowd truly does affect your way of life. I could not get

enough of being around Godly people and studying and desiring to know Him and His people—and most importantly His Son.

I learned that to truly follow Him I needed to leave the past behind and focus toward where He planned for me to go. I think that is why I wrote a sermon called "Hey Kid Go Clean Your Room." My problem before my Xbox broke was I knew *about* Jesus, but I did not know who He truly was. I knew about God, but I did not desire to truly follow Him. My issue was I did not realize how bad I needed God until I almost lost everything and everyone who mattered in my life.

The day my Xbox broke changed my life...

Developing better habits is a process, especially if you genuinely want to follow Jesus. John tells us in 1 John 3:1 that those who walked with Jesus did not really know Him for who He truly was. As Christians, when we start out it needs to be about genuinely wanting to know Christ and who He is. How do you get to know someone? Obviously by finding out as much about them as you can. So, you need a desire for Him in the first place!

I had old habits that needed to be broken before I could truly follow Him, and that goes for everyone who desires to please Him. I honestly never thought I would have been successful. But God had other plans for me. I used to rely on excuses, and I used to use my Bipolar Disorder to excuse my lack of preparedness, and to avoid tasks. I personally had to let God do what He needed to do through me and get out of His way. I was always looking to people for positive affirmation when God was there the whole time waiting for me to turn to Him.

In the book, "The Lies We Believe," Chris Thurman expresses the fact "we need to correct the errors in our thinking," and he says "it is a lifelong journey." He gives many tools and provides great examples of how to change how you feel about yourself and how others view you. He says if we do not try to change this, our need for the positive affirmation of others will increase, and our self-esteem will decrease, leaving a missing piece that will be noticeable to others but more importantly to us.

In closing, we are always going to have our shortcomings in life. Realizing this, we will not expect ourselves to be perfect and will learn better to how to receive constructive criticism from the biblical standpoint. We only can be confident in the fact that God created us, He is constantly molding us, and if we allow Him, He will direct us in the ways of His will. We just need to get out of His way and let Him be God of our lives. We can't let our personal insecurities cloud His work and will for us. God's wisdom is infinitely superior to mine—I will continue to learn for the rest of my life.

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Painful Lessons:

Becoming the Lame Man

Richard Mansel

Introduction

Ideas exist in our brains at various levels. We know them intellectually, but only as an idea that is possible. Yet, when we can match an idea with personal experience, the idea attains its highest level. It is not only possible, it becomes real and concrete.

We generally know what is possible in the realm of humanity when we hear of the experiences of others. They seem distant to us as something that only happened to someone else. It didn't happen to us. It wouldn't.

We're different.

We become blissfully ignorant and carefree in our thoughts and actions because we feel immune to danger and problems. After all, all is good in our world. However, we have forgotten the threats that lurk in the darkness, waiting to pounce.

As humans, we can speak intellectually of problems, heartaches, injuries and a host of other maladies. Yet, if we have not experienced them, they're still thoughts and concepts. We can use our imagination and speak of the experiences of others. However, they still remain conceptual, rather than actual.

Hard times are an unavoidable aspect of humanity. We know that. But it still remains somewhat distant if we have not experienced it.

We may remember the bitter words of Job, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1, NKJV). But the untouched life is separate from it. It hasn't taken shape.

Hard times chase us and they will eventually latch onto us and count us among their victims. Ideas then take on flesh. Pain becomes visceral. Trouble takes up residence in our life and never wants to leave. It becomes more than theory. Experience hardens it into fact.

Problems and trauma certainly happen to people. Yet they don't hit us all the time. Some experience them in waves and others in trickles.

Personally, I would find out soon what could happen when trouble got me in its sights.

Event

It was May 10, 2010 and my off day. I was in my church office working on an article. Nothing was out of the ordinary. I ate lunch at my desk and needed to go to the bathroom. I stood up and couldn't walk. That quickly it came on. One second to the next, something I had always taken for granted was gone.

I managed to make it to my car and drove home. Pain wracked my body from head to toe. I spent the next day in bed. On Wednesday night, I had a Bible class to teach. I used my daughter's crutches and sat in a chair at the front of the auditorium.

I spent the next nine months on crutches. My hands, arms, and legs hurt all the time. They had lost strength, as well. My right hand kept wanting to close on me.

Doctors thought it was my back or something else. I endured a battery of tests and a host of doctors. No one had any answers. I went to the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida and saw a renowned doctor who gave me a diagnosis that I didn't believe.

Soon after, I spent five weeks at a pain clinic in Jacksonville where I learned ways to manage the pain without opiate pain killers. While there, my physical therapist taught me to walk again. Walking out of the pain clinic was one of the most extraordinary moments of my life.

Months later, I visited a neurologist who told me that I had Fibromyalgia and it finally made sense. It can be treated but there's no cure. It involves widespread pain, severe fatigue, memory issues, and a host of other problems that vary from person to person.

The congregation where I preached was patient. But the time came when my full-time work career was at an end and I needed to resign.

Nineteen years of preaching full-time had ended.

Losing the ability to walk was very traumatic and

the repercussions still reverberate several years later. The pain, fatigue, and some memory problems still exist. But they are more manageable with experience.

Through the years, I was able to work part-time and my family has been very supportive.

But the memories of the trauma still exist. With them come lessons and maturity.

Lessons

First, life is fragile. We think we're the master of our existence and that everything is in our hands. Yet, God says we're made of dust and we know how easily dust can get away from us (Genesis 2:7). Life can seem blissful and simple, and in a moment in time, it can strike like a viper.

> "Human life is fragile: we live in the space between one breath and the next. We often try to maintain an illusion of permanence, through what we do, say, wear, buy, and how we enjoy ourselves and who and how we love. Yet it is an illusion that is constantly being undermined by change and death" (Victoria Finley).

Trouble humbles the human existence like nothing else. Yet, sometimes we need to be humbled and brought to a quick stop. We need to awaken from our trance and realize that we aren't in charge.

We need to turn our eyes and hearts to God who gives us the abundant life (John 10:10). It's only in Him that we find the firm, solid existence we crave (John 14:6).

Steven Pinker was right when he said that "every moment of consciousness is a precious and fragile gift."

Let us value the time we have and remember how brittle it all is.

Second, we can take what we have for granted. Few of us comprehend what we truly have. All we focus on is what we don't have. Most of us never take the time to appreciate our blessings, until we're forced to do so. We forget that they come from God and that gifts can be taken away (James 1:17).

Since life is fragile, we can forget how close we always are to the end.

> "Sometimes I have thought that it would be an excellent rule to live each day as if we should die tomorrow. Such an attitude would emphasize sharply the values of life. We should live each day with a gentleness, a vigor and a keenness of appreciation which are often lost when time stretches before us in the constant panorama of more days and months and years to come. There are those of course, who would adopt the motto of 'eat, drink and be merry,' but most people would be chastened by the certainty of impending death… Most of us, however, take life for granted. We know that one day we must die, but usually we picture that day as far in the future. When we are in buoyant health, death is all but unimaginable. We seldom think of it. The days stretch out into an endless vista. So we go about our petty tasks, hardly aware of our listless attitude towards life…" (Helen Keller).

Third, good health isn't guaranteed. Like so many, I took good health for granted until it was taken away. One minute we can be fine and in the next, all can be calamitous. It is very cruel. But God sustains us through the pain and problems and gives us hope and a better existence in heaven.

Fourth, faith will sustain us. We must depend on something bigger than ourselves. Human frailty is too undependable and weak. It cannot elevate us above the pain and misery of life.

Even for God's people, pain and death will still exist. Nevertheless, God remains with us during our misery and allows us to develop a healthy perspective on suffering in a fleshly and spiritual sense.

The book of Job tells us that God will be with us during hard times (cf. Hebrews 13:5). God's Word empowers us spiritually to long for heaven, where we will have no more pain (Revelation 21:4). Our soul and heart can be elevated above the misery of this existence.

Faith sees the realm above and keeps us focused on eternal things (Hebrews 11:1). Without it, we're stuck with the mud and mire of this life. However, with faith we can see the sunsets of a brighter realm. It motivates and invigorates us.

Conclusion

Losing the ability to walk in such a shocking manner was very disconcerting. Yet, I overcame the hardship, despite the lingering struggles.

I am thankful for the prayers and encouragement I have received through the years.

God has blessed me immensely.

Painful Lessons:

PRIDE

Wayne Parker

Reporting to congregations is an integral part of my work as a missionary. This can often be a challenge, because although we want our supporters to know about all the work being done, we need to be careful not to pridefully take credit for accomplishments in the field. We are the Lord's vessels – his hands and feet on this earth. In 2 Corinthians 4:7, Paul presents evangelists as "jars of clay," fragile vessels carrying the gospel to the world. He says this was done to show "*that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us."* If the work grows and flourishes, it is only by His hand. When things are going well, sometimes we can be tempted to step back and say, *Look what I have done*. This can also be true in many fields and walks of life.

Pride can easily destroy friendships, families, as well as many other relationships. We are told in Proverbs 16:18: *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.* In the Bible we read about two leaders who both had a serious problem with pride. There is, however, one big difference. In the first case, Nebuchadnezzar had the opportunity to learn from his mistakes; in the other, that of Herod, the judgment was swift and final.

We read of King Nebuchadnezzar II in the first chapters of Daniel. Babylon had achieved much, and their conquests were known throughout the land. The king's hanging gardens were considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. By interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel warns the king that an awful fate awaits him if he does not change his ways. The Lord even gave him a year to repent; however, he failed to renounce his arrogance and pride. In Daniel 4:30, we see the King walking on the roof, surveying his land, and proclaiming, *Is this not the great Babylon, which I have built by* ***my mighty power*** *as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?* While he was still speaking, a voice came from heaven and the prideful Nebuchadnezzar immediately became as a wild animal.

Thus, King Nebuchadnezzar II, a man who thought himself a god, was made to wander as a beast in the field for seven years. His pride led to ultimate humiliation; however, his story does not stop here. God lets us hear the king's repentance from his own mouth and in his own words. We read in verse 34:

> *At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever.*

The king had learned a valuable lesson and had profited from it. In the years to come, his majesty and splendor were restored because he praised, exalted, and honored the King of heaven instead of glorying in his own successes.

The second leader was not as fortunate. He too thought himself a god and wanted to be seen as such. In Acts 12, we see the story of Herod Agrippa I. In the early part of the chapter, we read that he had arrested many Christians and ordered the apostle James put to death by the sword. When he saw that this pleased the people, he captured Peter and planned to do the same thing to him as soon as Passover was finished. When he realized Peter had escaped, he was furious. After organizing a futile search for Peter, Herod cross-examined the guards and subsequently had them killed.

Herod was corrupted by power and pride. His hubris was off the charts. We read of his final fate in Acts 12:21-23:

> *On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them. The people kept crying out, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" And immediately an angel of the*

Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died.

Unlike King Nebuchadnezzar II, Herod never repented. He died in his sin. One of the greatest gifts God can give is the opportunity and ability to learn from mistakes. He may not drive us insane or strike us down, but pride can still have devastating consequences. For many, pride stands in the way of repentance. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:5-6:

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

We should give the glory to God in all situations and realize it is God who gives us strength, knowledge, wisdom, and all the other traits that we need to succeed and overcome this world and its obstacles, trials, and temptations. Our reward in Heaven is immeasurably better than any praise and honor we could ever receive on earth.

BILL HOWARD

Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day (Deuteronomy 8:11).

Moses cautioned the Israelites not to be forgetful about God's help and his concern for Israel, as he reminded them that God had brought them out of Egyptian slavery and guided them through the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, so they could obtain the promise God made to them of a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:17). They would live in houses they did not build and eat the fruit of trees they did not plant, etc. (Deuteronomy 6:16). Moses reminded them of the times they aggravated God in the wilderness and even in Horeb when Moses was in the mountain, where they demanded Aaron make them a molten image for a god to worship. The people said: "These be thy Gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4). God told Moses the people had corrupted themselves.

God's first inclination was to destroy them, but He relented. Moses reminded them of other times in the wilderness when they "provoked the Lord to wrath" and he said: "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deuteronomy 9:22 & 24).

About three hundred years later, during the time of the Kings, the Israelites, in spite of being blessed so many times and in so many ways, continued to turn away from God.

And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers; and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them. (Earlier generations). And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal (2 Kings 17:15-16).

The Prophet Jeremiah reminded them of their transgressions.

What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked

after vanity, and are become vain? (Jeremiah 2:5).

Finally God had enough; he gave up on them and allowed the Assyrians to make war on them. In the third year of the conflict they were carried away into Assyria and enslaved. Their sins had caught up with them and God chose to chastise them. (Deuteronomy 8:5). They had sinned grievously and provoked God to anger. (Deuteronomy 32:21). They left the commandments of the Lord. They had made molten images and called them gods to be worshipped. God has warned that there should be no other Gods. (Deuteronomy 5:7) They made an image of Astarte, Phoenician goddess of love. They worshipped astral figures, the host of heaven; the stars, sun, and moon. They made a grove, initially created by Ahab, an idolatrous image that dishonored God. They built high places, memorial pillars to their god Baal, and they sacrificed their children in worshipping Baal. (Jeremiah 7:31 & 19:5).

Many Scholars believe Samuel and Kings were originally one book, and the author was Jeremiah.[1] It is not possible to determine if Jeremiah was indeed the author, but it does not diminish anything from the truths of the writing; it is all God breathed.

This is the situation about which we have been studying. The Jews, a favored nation, were given every blessing from God which should have drawn them closer to Him in thankfulness and total obedience—but this was not the case. They continued in their errant ways. When we consider these truths, we can only think, *How could this possibly happen with a people so blessed? How could they dismiss God and act in this manner?* God had protected them, brought them out of Egypt where they were enslaved: He parted the Red Sea when Pharaoh decided he wanted them back to Egypt, and the attempt was thwarted. He led them in the wilderness with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night so they would know the way. He provided water and food for their sustenance and led them to the Jordan River and made it possible for them to cross over into Canaan. We see a people richly blessed, but so selfish and thankless they still turned away from God.

We draw ourselves up in disbelief; *How could this be?*

Because they were thankless, they were belligerent; they were stiff-necked and without concern for what God wished from them. However, like all who transgress, they would be held accountable.

> *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. Your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness (Isaiah 59:1-3)*

These were the reasons for the calamities that befell them.

It is unreasonable to believe that a people or nation can defy God and not pay the price. Those were some pretty heavy charges. The writer of the Hebrew letter stated: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses" (Hebrews 10:28). It is good to reflect on these things more than just occasionally. The Israelites did not have a means of having sins forgiven at that time. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin" (Hebrews 10:4). Forgiveness for them would only come after Christ had suffered the death on the cross, and those who were in a covenant relationship with God would have sins remitted.

> *And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).*

The same writer states: "For if the first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second" (Hebrews 8:7).

Let us fast forward some three thousand years to present-day circumstances. Throughout all eternity, God has richly blessed mankind, and yet we fail to fathom the extent of God's love, grace, and mercy. God has continued to be concerned about His creation, and yet how much different are we than the Israelites who ignored His wishes? Consider more from the writer of Hebrews:

> *Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the*

[1] See the Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 5.

blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:28-29).

The intent of the writing is this: If those under the old law were disobedient and suffered severe punishment, then we, who now have the blood of Christ which cleansed our sins, should we become disobedient, will receive punishment more severe.

Hopefully, this is thought provoking, a challenge to think about our own standing. It is a good thing to be challenged from time to time about the direction we are going. For the Christian, we know we have explicit instructions on our daily living, on how we are to respect our God and to honor Him for all the blessings and privileges we enjoy as His children. Really, how thankful are we? How often do we set aside time to talk with God? How are we doing when it comes to attending Bible study and worship services? Are we diligent about remembering the sacrifice of our Savior when we are privileged to participate in the communion service each Lord's Day? The church cannot survive if we are not doing our part and participating in all its activities.

With this thought in mind, are we truly doing what we should when it comes to our financial contribution to the church? There are expenses involved in keeping the doors open for evangelism at home and missionary work in other areas. We are told we should contribute of our means in the same way we have been prospered (blessed). Stop and ponder that for a moment. Now that you have thought about it for a minute, how do you think you are doing? Remember, we do not fool God; what we sow we shall also reap. Keep in mind the account of two Christians who were dishonest and did less than they should and tried to get by with it (Acts 5:1-10). That makes one think a bit, doesn't it?

To be repetitious, let me say again: this is not intended to be a negative statement, just a challenge for some honest thinking.

The situations, needs, and requirements which apply to the individual Christian apply equally to the church as a whole. Simply stated, congregations are answerable to God for their conduct, and sometimes are easily led astray because of lack of oversight. The Elders or leaders are charged with the responsibility of feeding the flock, overseeing the spiritual, as well as some of the physical needs of the congregation, and if diligence is not in play always and the leaders not on guard faithfully, things can and will go astray. It happened in the early church and is still happening today. The Apostle Paul said to the Galatians: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Galatians 1:6). "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1).

Consider the church at Sardis (Revelation 3:1-4), and the church at Laodicea (3:14-18). These are churches in trouble and falling away. Jesus warned: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). To the Colossians Paul warned: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The church must be constantly aware of what is happening within the congregation. Heeding the word of God is the way we inherit that heavenly home prepared for the saints.

One final thought: Christians need to be aware of what is happening in our nation. We do not intend to get involved with politics, but there are those in high places in our government who wish to do away with the privilege of worshipping our God. Battle lines are being drawn and attempts are constant to remove God from every aspect of life. In various areas of our nation, preachers have been denied the right to preach and teach from God's word. Attempts are being made to close churches, to eliminate the right to sing, to pray, and to gather for these purposes. We need to be aware of what is taking place and pledge ourselves to stand for what is right. We are to honor our leaders, and we will as long as it is right with God. We also know "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:17). We need to pray for our leaders and ask God to direct them and protect our right to worship. There is another thing we know for certain: If any nation opposes God, be it Russia, China, the United States, or any other, God will allow punishment to follow just as He did when the Israelites were disobedient.

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord (Lamentations 3:40).

The book of Revelation is a polarizing section of Scripture. It seems half the people who have a Bible ***only*** want to talk about Revelation, and the other half want to avoid it completely! Some are certain that they know *exactly* what it means, and others are certain that *no one* can know what it means. If you were to take a survey of the religious world—even of just the church itself, you wouldn't even get agreement on the main idea of the book! If we can't even understand the main idea of the book, how can anyone expect to understand the details?[1]

But here's the deal: we ***can*** know what the main idea of Revelation is. We ***can*** know which interpretations are wrong. We ***can*** know how the original readers would have understood it. After all, if ***anyone*** understood the book of Revelation, it was the original recipients (and we'll see that in a later lesson).

The main reason that the book of Revelation is neglected is the crazy language and imagery—so different from what we're used to reading in the rest of the New Testament. *Beasts rising up from the sea, a dragon that waits to murder a newborn baby boy, locusts rising up out of a bottomless pit, a man on a white horse with a blood-splattered garment who is using his sword against his enemies*. This is just a sampling of the figures used in Revelation. That's very different from what we read in other New Testament books and their focus on love, faith, obedience, and forgiveness.

Another reason Revelation gets neglected is the false and ridiculous interpretations promoted by the denominational world. Ask almost any denominational friend you have, and you are likely going to hear something about how current events are foretold in the book of Revelation (for instance: some are currently saying the Coronavirus vaccine is the "Mark of the Beast"). But people have been saying the same thing for years!!

I can't tell you how many world leaders in the past hundred years have been identified by religious people as "the antichrist" or "the beast"—but then those world leaders die and these modern-day guessers have to find someone else to be their "antichrist."

With each passing generation, people are absolutely sure that they—and they alone—understand the meaning of the book because of the events in their time. And with every passing generation, they are proven wrong.

With all this confusion, some view it as presumptuous for anyone to claim "I know what the book of Revelation is talking about." Let me state from the outset, that we can know—***without any doubt***—certain things about Revelation. But in order to do this,

[1] This article is taken from Bradley S. Cobb's upcoming book on Revelation, tentatively titled, *Things Which Came to Pass: A Study of Revelation*. It is available for pre-order on CobbPublishing.com.

and in order to weed through all the junk and misinformation out there, we need to understand certain fundamental facts.

In this lesson, we will look at the main ways that people interpret Revelation. We will also examine specific passages in this book that show the proper way to interpret it. And hopefully, by the end of this lesson, we will all be a little less leery of delving into this strange and wonderful section of the word of God!

The Futurist Method

As the name suggests, the Futurist Method of interpreting the book of Revelation claims that most (if not all) of the book foretells something that has still not yet happened—still unfulfilled almost two thousand years after the book was written. Some of them believe ***none*** of the book of Revelation has been fulfilled. Others believe that the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 were written to actual first-century churches, but that the rest of it is all future. And still others believe that the seven letters refer to seven time periods (though there's disagreement on how that plays out), and that the rest is still future to us.

To see just how much this method has pervaded our modern thinking, consider these:

The Battle of Armageddon. Armageddon, as the phrase is generally used, denotes the absolute end of something. Usually, it's viewed as a battle at the end of time.

The Millennium, or the thousand-year reign. Have you noticed that people tend to identify themselves religiously by their interpretation of one verse in Revelation? Pre-millennialists, post-millennialists, and a-millennialists? This idea is so ingrained that if you say something like, "There isn't going to be a thousand-year reign," their heads look ready to explode from trying to comprehend the words you just said.

Problems with the Futurist Method

First and foremost, in order to take this interpretation, you have to ignore the first and last chapters of the book.

> ***Revelation 1:1*** – *The Revelation of Jesus Christ…to show His servants* ***things which must shortly come to pass****.*
>
> ***Revelation 1:3*** – *Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein,* ***for the time is at hand****.*
>
> ***Revelation 22:6*** – *…These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show to His servants the things* ***which must shortly be done****.*
>
> ***Revelation 22:10*** – *…Do not seal the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for* ***the time is at hand****.*

All of these statements are divinely-given evidence that the things written in Revelation would take place shortly after they were written. How shortly? We'll get into that in another lesson, but keep in mind that when Jesus said "repent, for the kingdom of heaven ***is at hand***" (Matthew 4:17), the kingdom was a mere 3 ½ years away (Acts 2, Colossians 1:13, Revelation 1:9). The same word translated "shortly" (*tachos* in Greek) is translated "quickly" in Acts 22:18:

> *[I] saw him saying unto me, "Make haste, and get* ***quickly*** *out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive your testimony concerning me."*

After reading that verse, what would you think is meant by that word? *Hundreds* of years? *Thousands* of years? Or something imminent?

Also, taking the "everything in the book is still yet future" view makes the book completely worthless to the first readers—and gives a command that is impossible to follow. What do I mean? Notice at the very beginning of the book, a blessing is pronounced on the ones who "***keep*** [obey] those things which are written therein" (1 :3). If none of it has happened yet, then it is impossible for any readers of this book to be blessed by reading it, since no one can ***keep*** the things written in the book yet.

The futurist view basically has John saying, "Things are about to happen…well, around 2,000 years or so from now, maybe…and if you read this book and keep the things written in it, you will be blessed… except you can't keep these things because you'll be dead and forgotten long before any of these things take place."

Taking this view makes our all-knowing God out to be a god of confusion. With each passing generation, the details in Revelation are given new applications to different countries and leaders, and with each generation, the applications are proven false over and over again.

Taking this view ignores that it was written to

give instructions to real churches in the real first century. Jesus, in Revelation 2-3, spoke to real congregations about their real trials and troubles that they were enduring *back then!* Those who believe the entire book is set in the far future (from John's perspective) have to ignore that these were real problems that real churches were dealing with AT THE TIME IT WAS WRITTEN.

Commendable Points to the Futurist Method

Are there commendable points to the futurist position? Yes, but they still don't change that this method is opposed to John's own words.

- This view does attempt to make the book of Revelation relevant to each generation, but in doing so it renders it as irrelevant to all preceding generations.
- This view does encourage people to look for God's workings in the affairs of mankind today.

It doesn't matter how many good points it may have, though; it contradicts Scripture, thus it cannot be correct.

This is the view taken by the majority of denominationalists including Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Catholics, etc… They do not all interpret it the same way, but the majority of each of these groups place the bulk of the book in the far future from when it was written. Baptists and Pentecostals read Revelation with the idea of a thousand-year reign of Christ, a rapture, tribulation for seven years, etc… But Catholics, who also view it as far future, don't hold to any of those things. Suffice it to say that there are many different "flavors" to the futurist method, all of which contradict the clear statement that the things were "shortly come to pass."

The Historical Method

This method of interpreting the book of Revelation became very popular during the Reformation movement and the time thereafter.

Simply put, this view states the book of Revelation gives a prophetic overview of the entire future of the church from the first century through the final judgment. This view says Revelation foretells the apostasy of the Catholic Church, the rise of Islam, the split of the Greek and Roman churches, the attacks of the Huns, the Reformation Movement (some believing Martin Luther is under consideration in part), and some in the church even believe that the Restoration movement is foretold.

> *[T]he probable time for the beginning of the 1,260 years was A.D. 533. … Gradually the church was corrupted until at the beginning of the 1,260 years the organization became the fully developed "man of sin" and the true church began its wilderness experience—lost to view as a visible organization.*[2]

The quote above implies that the true church of Christ became visible again in 1793. While the author didn't expressly state it, that date happens to coincide with the beginning of the Restoration Movement in the United States.[3]

Problems with the Historical Method

First off, it assumes that God would craft an entire book which focuses mostly on a group of people who aren't really the church (but instead, apostates), and the troubles this *imposter* church would go through. Do you believe God would pen a book, describing in advance a 1500+ year history of a false church?

Secondly, the overwhelming majority of the book is assigned to a time far distant to John's original audience. This makes the book have very little meaning to the first-century readers. It also, therefore, has a hard time dealing with the phrase "shortly come to pass."

Thirdly, it brings no comfort to the first-century Christians who were then undergoing persecution. "You're undergoing persecution now, but don't worry, eventually the church is going to go into nearly complete apostasy." Forgive me if I don't think the Christians in the first century would find that comforting at all.

Fourthly, most commentators who take this view have historical events lined up to match with almost the entire book (except for the judgment scene in

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[2] Hinds, John T., *The Gospel Advocate Commentary on Revelation*, notes on Revelation 12:14.

[3] The Restoration Movement is an appellation given to the movement of many different men in many different places to leave denominational names, creeds, and doctrines behind in an effort to simply be "Christians" and follow nothing but the Bible. James O'Kelley (a Methodist) made efforts to this end around 1893. Hinds, who wrote the above quote, identified with this movement, and hinted that it was foretold by God.

chapters 20-21). You may say, *How is that a problem?* If their theories are all correct, and they've lined up Revelation with historical events, then there's nothing left to happen except for the final judgment. Basically, they've got pretty much all of Revelation spoken for, and there's no space left for any future events on earth. So, according to this general interpretation, there is nothing else scheduled to happen in the church, so the final judgment will be here any day now.

What happens if there is another thousand years of life here on this earth? There's nothing in their method to account for any more time of the church here on earth, without backtracking and changing their applications.

Commendable Points to the Historical Method

This view encourages people to live in expectation of the final coming of Jesus, but that's something they should be doing anyway.

The Spiritual Method

This view, taken by a growing number of people, basically states that there are no historical events under consideration in Revelation, but instead that it is a series of symbolic visions designed to show the continual battle between good and evil—and that ultimately Christ wins.

This view basically says there are no future events described, nor are there any past events described; just spiritual principles.

Problems with the Spiritual Method

- The inspired word says that the book of Revelation deals with actual events (1:1). This alone is enough reason to reject this interpretation.
- The inspired word says that it deals with actual people (1 7:10 – "Five kings have fallen, one is [presently reigning]").
- The inspired word says that it (at least in part) deals with a specific city (11:8 – The city wherein our Lord was crucified).

The proponents of this view say, "The battle between good and evil was about to come in full force, and that's why he says 'must shortly come to pass.'" The problem with this is that the battle between good and evil has been going full-force since the beginning, and continued throughout the Old Testament, during the time of Christ on earth, and during the ministry of the apostles.

Commendable Points to the Spiritual Method

It does seek to make the book of Revelation relevant to every generation, because the battle between good and evil continues in each generation. But good intentions do not make up for ignoring clear statements from the book.

A Hybrid View

Many take a hybrid view of Revelation. The Catholic Church, in general, spiritualizes much of the book, but places some of it in the far future at the Second Coming of Christ. Some in the church basically agree with this view, making chapters 4-20 represent spiritual warfare, and chapters 20-21 the end of time.

The Preterist Method.

This method, basically stated, is that the book of Revelation was written to comfort Christians during a time of persecution, to let them know God is in control and the persecutors would be dealt with. More specifically, this method holds that the events (or at least most of them) described in Revelation have been fulfilled, at the very latest, during the days of the Roman Empire.

- Some believe it was fulfilled in the overthrow of the Roman Empire (AD 487).[4]
- Others believe it was fulfilled in the overthrow of Jerusalem and Judaism (AD 70).[5]

Most who interpret the book this way take a hybrid view, assigning the majority of it to the past, and some of it (chapters 20-21) to the future.[6]

Problems with the Preterist Method?

Some claim this view makes the book of no value today. Is that true? What about the books of the Old Testament, as well as the book of Acts—do they have no value today? After all, everything in most of *those* books has already happened, and has already been fulfilled. Just like with those already-been-fulfilled books, we can look at Revelation and see things God did, see His attitudes toward sin and evil, see what He expects of His people, and learn from it, making

[4] This position can be found in commentaries by Homer Hailey, Jim McGuiggan, and others.

[5] This position can be found in commentaries by Foy E. Wallace Jr., Arthur Ogden, and others.

[6] See McGuiggan, Hailey, Arthur Ogden, and others.

application to our own day and situation. Therefore, this objection is not valid.

Some point to chapter 21, say "It's all about heaven after the second coming and the final judgment," then say, "So it can't *all* be in the past." This is something we will look at closer when we get to that point in our study. But just a preview here: the chapter doesn't describe heaven, but something that came "out of" heaven (Revelation 21:2, 10).

Some have leveled the charge: "This means you deny the second coming of Christ and a final judgment, and that you believe we are presently living in heaven." If that accusation seems crazy to you, then we're in the same boat. The only way this objection could *possibly* be true is if a coming of Jesus, a judgment, and a post-judgment reality were mentioned nowhere else in Scripture—and that all we could ever know of it comes *only* from Revelation. But since there are many other places in Scripture where these topics are discussed (Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; Hebrews 9:27; etc.), this accusation is clearly false.

Commendable Points to the Preterist Method

- It agrees with the inspired statements that the book contains things which must shortly come to pass.
- It makes the book have meaning and comfort to the people to whom it was written.
- It lays down principles that we can read and apply to our own lives (Stick with Jesus and you will win, God is in control, etc…), thus it DOES have application to each generation of Christians.

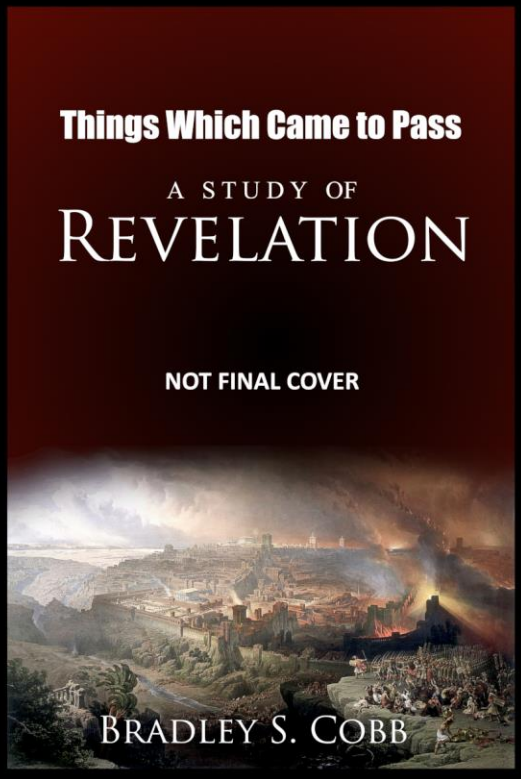
This final view is the one which we will take as we go through our study of Revelation (though the others will occasionally be referenced).

Conclusion

Now you may wonder, "Exactly how does this help me?"

- First, this introduction to the methods of interpreting Revelation is to help you understand where other people are coming from.
- Second, it is to help you get a better understanding of the book so that it isn't so mysterious (many people avoid the book, thinking it cannot be understood).
- It also should help to know which approaches ***can't*** be true (and when you eliminate those which cannot be true, you are better able to discover the true interpretation).

Do people misinterpret the Bible? Absolutely—and not just in Revelation! But the Bible ***can*** be understood if we look at the context, and compare it with what is said elsewhere in the Bible on the same topic.



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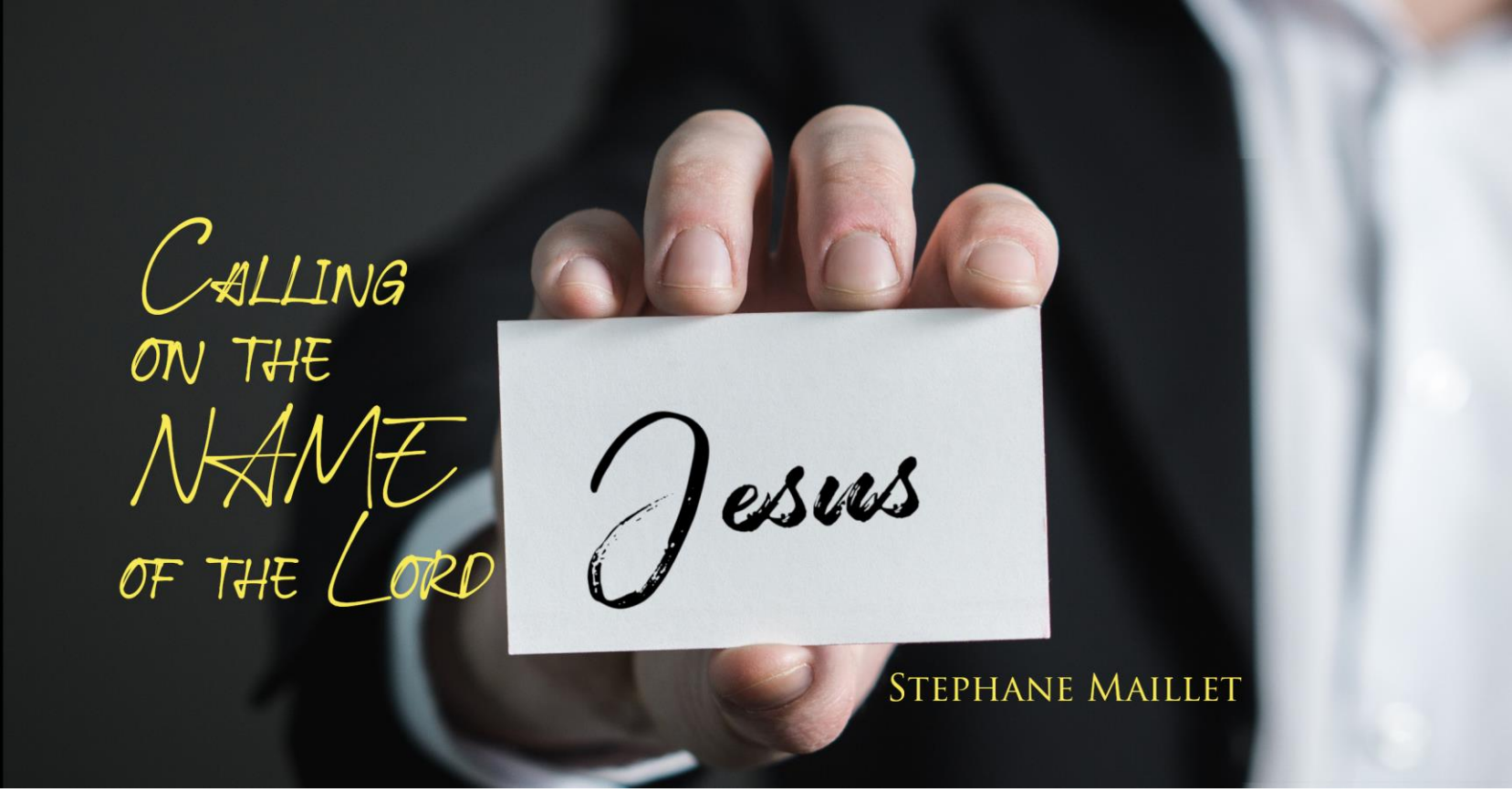

We can understand the importance of a "name," can't we? We recognize earthly illustrations such as one's birth certificate, driver's license, passport, Medicare, name on the check, name on the building, bank, or restaurant. We can also identify one's societal position of leadership or service with a name, such as: General, Senior Advisor, Chief board member, master, teacher, doctor, professor.

There is much significance in a name. It can be a description, a title, an office.

Within a name we can identify one's character, fame, reputation, cause, and authority (i.e. police officer, judge, lawyer, Etc.)

And so it is for our Lord. He too has a NAME, *Jesus Christ*. And His people, we also bear His name, *Christians*. And His church, the body of believers belonging to Christ, His bride, she too bears His name. Paul knew this very well. He identified the churches that belonged to Christ in Romans 16:16. Jesus Christ's name must righteously be attached to everything which belongs to Him.

> *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father,* ***but by me*** *[i.e. His name. His authority]" (John 14:6).*

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> *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the* ***NAME*** *[i.e. with the rule, authority, dominion, and cause] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Mt. 28:18-20).*
>
> *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other* ***NAME*** *[i.e. rule, authority, dominion, and cause] under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12).*
>
> *"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the* ***NAME*** *of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32)*

All of this was done as fulfillment of the words of the Prophets, applied by Peter and Apostles as they were guided by the outpouring power of the Holy Spirit into all truth (see John 14, 16). The instruction was delivered to all in attendance, and also applied to all who were a far off (i.e. the Gentiles). This is how God commanded we call on His name within the Messianic dispensation of time (i.e., the Christian era).

All mankind seeking freedom in Christ are given a command to obey. We must call on His NAME. Believers are told how in Acts 2:38,

> *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the **NAME** of Jesus Christ [WHY?] for [in order to receive] the remission of sins [forgiveness]" (Acts 2:38).*

All who called upon the name of the Lord, according to the strict conditions proclaimed from the Holy Spirit on that day, were added to the church Jesus established. The church of Christ. And every single accountable human being from that day to now, until the world ends, is only added by following that same commandment. They receive forgiveness of sins in the same unique manner ("common salvation" Jude 3, "the power of God" Rom. 1:16).

All who do not call on the name of the Lord according to the Bible, as it is written (1 Cor. 15:1-4), will perish eternally (2 Thess. 1:8-9). All who are not faithful members of the church Christ established will perish eternally. All whose names are not found in the Book of Life shall be thrown into the lake of fire:

> *"And if anyone's **NAME** was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." - Rev. 20:15*

Many believers, members of His church, invoke His name on their deeds. But their deeds are unlawful. They are not according to His commands. They do not fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Jas. 2:12, 1:25). And these souls will face eternal consequence upon His inevitable return (Mt. 7:21-23).

If you understand the importance of His name, and how it is to be honored, respected, obeyed according to His Testament/Will/Law, then, as Paul was told in Acts 22:16:

> *"...why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the **NAME** of the Lord." - Acts 22:16*

If this day you seek forgiveness of your sins, peace, family, comfort, courage, love, and purpose, you must be immersed into the church that belongs to Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). This is done when we "call upon His name."

DESPITE TO THE SPIRIT OF GRACE

Bill Howard

> *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised :) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:23-25).*

For the Jews under the Mosaic law the penalty for sin was severe and inflexible. They had very strict instructions on how to deal with sin and even more so concerning those sins which called for death. When God stationed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden He told them not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He told them that if they did eat of that fruit they would surely die. Their sin of unbelief propelled them to again sin by eating from that tree. Because of their sin they were cast from the garden and sin and death were brought into the world. 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' Romans 5:12. They did not die immediately but they lost their beautiful home and were separated from God, and because of their disobedience sin and death came to all.

Moses was sent by God to bring the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. When he was on the mount to receive the commandments, the people became concerned about Moses; didn't know what had become of him. They told Aaron to make them gods to go before them. Aaron made a golden calf for them and they said: "these be thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:4). God said they had corrupted themselves. Be-

cause they disobeyed God and worshipped the molten calf, God told them all those above twenty years of age who came out of Egypt would not see the Promised Land; they would die in the wilderness. This was a consequence of disobedience and sin.

Throughout Bible history there is not a recorded case of sin that did not receive the just consequence; up to and including death. The writer of the Hebrew letter said those who despised Moses' law died. In Numbers 15:35-36 we see the result of sin; breaking the Sabbath.

> *And the Lord said unto Moses, "The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.*

Harsh? Perhaps. Just? Absolutely: as God decreed. Let's visit the Hebrew letter again. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses" (Hebrews 10:28).

> *Never sacrifice sick or defective cattle, sheep, or goats to the Lord Your God, for he detests such gifts. When you begin living in the towns the Lord your God is giving you, a man or woman among you might do evil in the sight of the Lord your God and violate the covenant. For instance, they might serve other gods or worship the sun, the moon, or any of the stars —the forces of heaven—which I have strictly forbidden. When you hear about it, investigate the matter thoroughly. If it is true that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, then the man or woman who has committed such an evil act must be taken to the gates of the town and stoned to death. But never put a person to death on the testimony of only one witness. There must always be two or three witnesses. The witnesses must throw the first stones, and then all the people may join in. In this way you will purge the evil from among you (Deuteronomy 17:1-7, NLT).*

Just as the Israelites were required to give the best of their flock for sacrifices so must we now give our best, we must be obedient to God's will. Continuing with the Hebrew letter:

> *...of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, where with he was sanctified, an unholy thing and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:29, KJV).*

The writer is taking a stand and making an argument about obeying and disobeying the tenets of righteousness. Under the old law there was no forgiveness of sin.

> *But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Hebrews 10:3-4).*

At the beginning of this portion of the writing (chapter 10) the writer, in reference to the old law, points out it was a shadow of the new law which now directed man in the ways which God made possible the remission of sin. The later and genuine sacrifice has been made now; God's Son gave his life as a sacrifice so man could be cleansed of sin. The writer makes it clear: the penalty of disobedience brought death under the old law, but disobedience under the new law was of even greater consequence. How much sorer then would the punishment be for abandoning Christianity? He refers to this turning away as **trodding underfoot the Son of God**. The Greek work translated trodden, *katapateo,* means trampling down as nothing, rejecting with disdain, the repudiation of Christ. **Counting the blood of Christ an unholy thing**; that blood which takes away the sin of man, would you say it amounts to nothing, is of no value? We declare this is our belief if we turn away from the truth and go back into the life of sin. The writer says in doing these things we have **done despite unto the Spirit of grace**. Despite (*enubrizo*) means to insult, treat with rudeness the Holy Spirit. Can we be comfort-able knowing we have insulted the Holy Spirit of God? It is by this Spirit that God extends grace to mankind. By this Spirit God gives us comfort and makes salvation possible.

What then is the lesson the writer intended when he wrote this letter? Those under the old law had no forgiveness of sin, and the consequence for sin was uncompromising and diligently enforced. He reminds the reader of the enormous responsibility with which the Christian is charged, and the tremendous reward we could forfeit in carelessness. He said:

> *For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth; there remain-*

eth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries (Hebrews 10:26-27).

The original Greek means: "…for if we are willfully (*hekousios),* willingly, deliberately voluntarily sinning (*hamartano),* offending, trespassing, missing the mark." From the usage we understand it is not referring to a sin of error or sin of momentary slipping or stumbling, because we all are guilty of that at times. John tells us: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Paul said: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). As human beings we will falter at times. The beautiful thing is God provides forgiveness for the sin such as we are addressing. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). There is a difference in *a sin* and *living in sin*. The reference is to deliberately and willingly continue living in sin knowing that we are in contempt of God's law, and choosing to remain in that lost condition. The fact is: if we spurn the redeemer, ignore his death for our sake and refuse to come out of a sinful life then there is no other sacrifice. It may sound judgmental, but it is not. We will be lost forever in eternity. That is so because God said it is so, and if we do not believe what God says, it does not change the truth one iota.

It has never been God's wish for any soul to be lost. He gave his Son to make a way of salvation for all mankind. But if anyone chooses to deliberately deny what God intends, they take it upon themselves to be deliberately lost. Satan is in an ongoing battle with God and every human being that has not fallen prey to his wiles. His greatest delight is to keep people from a saving relationship with God. His second greatest delight is to separate from God one who has been saved but strays and refuses to return to the fold. Peter warned the Christian to be on alert:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Peter also told the apostate the result of leaving God.

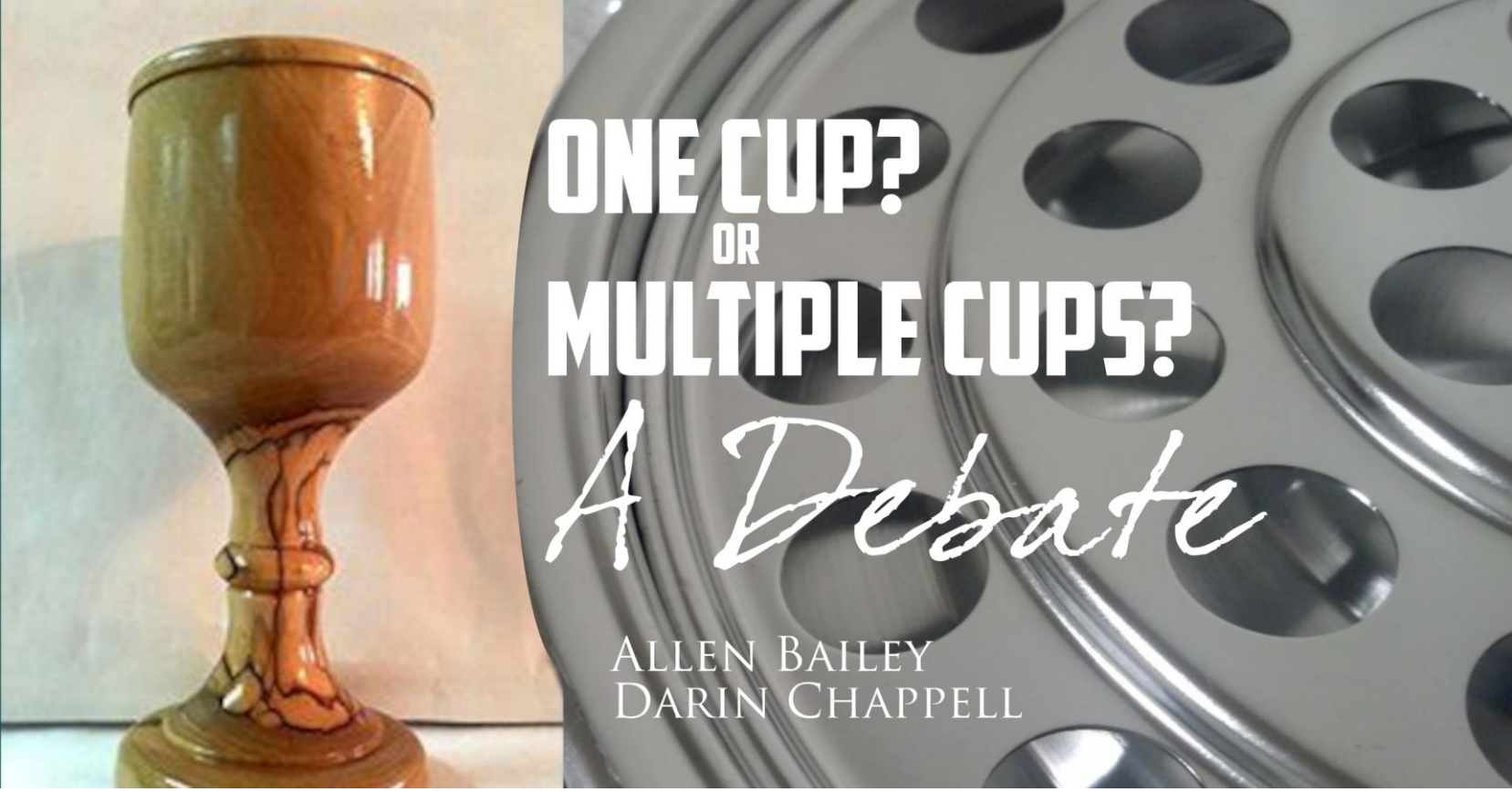
For if they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein [back to living in sin], and overcome [unable to recover], the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them (2 Peter 2:20-21, parentheses mine).

Harsh? No, but absolute, make no mistake, it's God's decision.

For those living today, we have never been in a more critical time than now. There are nefarious forces at work with their vile and abominable agenda of destroying all that most Americans stand for. We are in a world rapidly drawing away from God. Fewer people today admit to believing in God than ever before in the history of our nation. The powers that be, including many of your governmental figures, elected and otherwise, fail to promote faith in God. In fact, many deliberately deny his existence. Our churches are being attacked, denied the privilege of worship, and some church buildings are being destroyed. In spite of all the blessings from God that are available to mankind, we are indeed living in the dark ages in many respects. To the Christian desiring to live righteously and serve our God, we must be on constant alert to the dangers about us. We must don the armor of God's word to strengthen and steel ourselves from apostasy. We dare not "do despite unto the Spirit of Grace."

Beware: It is possible the time could come when you can no longer reach God. We must act when the time is right, and the time is now. Tomorrow is never guaranteed. The prophet of old got it right.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55: 6-7).



If you are familiar with this debate at all, you probably have strong feelings about it, or at least know people who do.

I have read material from *some* of the "one cup" side who call those who use multiple cups "digressives," and consign those "liberals" to hell. On the other side, some people I know have said things like, "they [the one—up brethren] are lost because they are binding where God didn't bind." Before we go any further, you need to know ***neither of these examples represent all from either side***. There are surely those who believe using multiple cups is a damnable offense, but there are certainly those who would not go that far, deciding instead to argue, "We *know* using one cup is acceptable, and while God may have grace for those who use multiple cups, we would rather make sure we are on the *safe* side of the issue." (I know of many who hold this exact stance with regards to instruments in worship.) On the other side, I know some who hold that using a single cup is a sign of Phariseeism, while others say, "They are doing the best they can according to their conscience, and we shouldn't make an issue out of it." And of course, on both sides, there are many variations and nuances of their arguments for or against one cup/multiple cups.

Growing up, I remember hearing the phrase "one-cupper" used in a demeaning way. And since I didn't know any better at the time, I assumed the congregation in question (25 minutes away) was one you only interacted with if you had no other choice. I remember one time my parents realized we weren't going to make it back home in time for services, and I mentioned this congregation as a possibility. It wasn't a Sunday morning, I remember it being said, so we wouldn't have *that* to worry about (*that* being having to interact with the singular cup). So we went. I only have a very vague memory of the visit.

Since then, I have interacted with several brethren who use a single drinking vessel in the Lord's Supper. I have become friends with some of them, and some of them even subscribe to the *Quarterly*.

I know both Darin Chappell and Allen Bailey personally as men who love the Lord, and who want to be right with Him.

Allen Bailey's article is a defense of the use of a single drinking vessel in the Lord's Supper.

Darin Chappell's article is a defense of the use of multiple drinking vessels in the Lord's Supper.

I must note that neither writer saw the other's article prior to publication. As such, there may be issues brought up by one side which were not addressed by the other. If our readers think it worthwhile, we may attempt to have the authors each write a response article for the next issue.

The One Cup Position

Allen Bailey

Introduction

I am excited to share this article explaining "The One Cup Position." This article is limited to discussing the one cup containing the fruit of the vine. Let us begin by examining the commands and examples pertaining to the Lord's Supper that are contained within the Scriptures. The gospel record on its own should be sufficient to instruct Christians to obey the pattern that the Lord Jesus established. I will also answer a number of questions on the grammar of the passages, the symbolic meaning of the Supper, and the method by which the contents of the cup should be distributed. I will close with several quotes from various preachers regarding the origin of the Individual Communion movement in America.

EVERY PASSAGE ON THE COMMUNION

Matthew 26:26-30	Acts 20:7
Mark 14:22-26	1 Corinthians 10:16-17
Luke 22:17-20	1 Corinthians 11:23-34
Acts 2:42	

TO FIND THE TRUTH ON THE COMMUNION, WE MUST LOOK TO THESE VERSES

You will notice that the article is structured around a number of charts and diagrams. These charts have been provided by many preachers throughout the years, and are the product of numerous discussions, debates, and hours of study. They have proven to be invaluable aids in clarifying the biblical teaching on the subject at hand.

I ask that you prayerfully consider the contents of this article. To commune incorrectly is not to commune at all ("This is not to eat the Lord's Supper," 1 Corinthians 11:20)!

CHRIST COMMANDED THE DISCIPLES TO DRINK OF ONE CUP

Matthew 26:27
And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

Mark 14:23
And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

The Commands and Examples

It is always best to allow the Bible to interpret the Bible. The most accurate way for Christians to understand and obey a Bible command is to look for an example of the command being followed by people in the Scriptures, and then to follow their example without deviation.

In the case of the Lord's Supper, we today should obey Jesus' command in the same way that the disciples obeyed it. Regarding the cup, this pattern emerges:

1) He took a single cup containing fruit of the vine;
2) He offered a prayer of thanksgiving;
3) He instructed His disciples "drink ye all of it";
4) He gave the cup to them;
5) "They all drank of it," each consuming some of its contents in turn until all had participated.

NECESSARY INFERENCE APPLIED TO ONE CUP

1 Corinthians 11:26-27 (KJV)
For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink **this cup**, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink **this cup** of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the lord.

THE CONTENTS ARE IMPLIED…
BUT THE CONTAINER IS NECESSARILY INFERRED!

When some at Corinth introduced changes to the Communion, the Apostle Paul's instructions for the congregation were clear and uncomplicated: "keep the ordinances as delivered"! Jesus instituted His Supper in the way He wanted us to keep the practice!

PAUL COMMANDS US TO KEEP THE COMMUNION AS HE DELIVERED IT

1 Corinthians 11:2 (KJV)
Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (KJV)
For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: **24**And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. **25**After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

PAUL COMMANDS AN ASSEMBLY TO "DRINK OF THAT CUP"

He delivers instructions applying "When ye come together to eat." (**1 Corinthians 11:33**)

He commands "But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (**1 Corinthians 11:28**)

Note: An assembly of the church which has "come together to eat" (**v. 33**) should "drink of that cup." (**v. 28**).

Is There a Literal Cup?

This section of the article is very important. When Jesus spoke of the cup, He used the Greek word *poterion*. Every credible Greek dictionary defines *poterion* as a literal drinking vessel.

This is reflected in our English translations. Every accredited Bible translation consistently translates the Lord's Supper passages with singular terms: "cup," "a cup," "the cup," "it." There is no Greek lexicon or scholarly translation that teaches the use of individual cups in the Communion.

Passages where "this cup" is used metonymically[1] to refer to the contents of the cup (e.g., the fruit of the vine) further establish that an actual, literal cup was present and used in the Supper!

The grammatical, scholarly, and lexicographic support for a literal cup is overwhelming. Therefore, we should never assume a literal cup is not present and involved when the word "cup" is used.

GREEK DICTIONARIES DEFINE "CUP"

1. "A drinking vessel" (Young)
2. "A drinking cup" (Berry)
3. "A drinking cup, a wine cup" (Liddell-Scott)
4. "A drinking vessel, a cup" (Robinson)
5. "A cup, a drinking vessel" (Thayer)
6. "A drinking cup" (Bullinger)
7. "A wine cup" (Abbott-Smith)
8. "A cup to drink out of, a drinking cup" (Parkhurst)
9. "A drinking cup, a goblet" (Pickering)

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Matthew 26:27
He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it" (KJV; RV; ASV; RSV: "a cup")

"And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying, drink of it everyone" (Tyndale 1526)

Mark 14:23
"He took a cup and they all drank of it" (American Standard Revised)

1 Corinthians 11:25
"And he took the wine cup and gave thanks and gave it to them and they all drank from it." (Goodspeed)

1 Corinthians 10:17
"For we many all take part of one bread and of one cup." (Wycliffe 1380)

"Though we be many, we are all partakers of one bread (*and of one cup*)." (Cranmer's Translation 1539)

[1] A Metonymy of the Subject names the container to suggest the thing contained. To be used correctly, the container must be present, and only as many containers as are named (see *Figures of Speech*, Bullinger 538-539).

How To Divide The Contents

What is the proper method of dividing the contents of the cup? Can it be blessed and then distributed to the participants in individual containers? To answer this question, we must observe how the disciples interpreted and carried out the Lord's instruction to "divide it among yourselves."

If we allow the Bible to interpret the Bible, we see that the fruit of the vine in the cup is divided by drinking of the cup (Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; Luke 22:17).

Mark 14:23 explains clearly that the disciples "all drank of it." The New King James Version says "they all drank from it." The following charts illustrate this point.

PARALLELS – MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Took cup	Took cup	Took cup
Gave thanks	Gave thanks	Gave thanks
Gave to disciples	Gave to disciples	Gave to disciples
Commanded to drink	**Commanded to drink**	**Commanded to divide**

TO DIVIDE WAS EQUAL TO DRINKING!

LUKE 22:17 – "DIVIDE IT"

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, **Take this**, and **divide it** among yourselves"

1) That which Christ took was ***undivided.***

2) That for which Christ gave thanks was ***undivided***

3) That which he gave to them was ***undivided***

4) That which he told them to drink was ***undivided***

"Drink ye all of it" (***Matthew 26:27***)

5) They divided the contents by drinking of it

"They all drank of it" (***Mark 14:23***)

SUPPOSE MATTHEW 26:27 READ…

"And he took the [cups], and gave thanks, and gave [them] to them, saying, Drink ye all of [them]"

"Cups" would mean "cups" if they were in the Bible!

Matthew 26:27 (KJV)
And he took the **cup**, and gave thanks, and gave **it** to them, saying, Drink ye all of **it**

WHY DOESN'T "CUP" MEAN "CUP" WHEN IT IS IN THE BIBLE?

_EK_ MEANS "OUT OF"

1 Corinthians 11:26-28 (KJV)
For as often as ye eat this bread, and **drink this cup**, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. [27] Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and **drink this cup** of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the lord. [28] But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and **drink of [*ek*] that cup**.

V. 26-27 INSTRUCTS US TO DRINK THE CONTENTS

V. 28 TEACHES US HOW TO DRINK THE CONTENTS

Since man introduced the individual cups in 1894, efforts have been made to find justification for this innovation by using Luke 22:17. But this premise is not established, and is easily disproved simply by reading and comparing Luke's account with Mark 14:23 and 1 Corinthians 11:28.

If the Bible said "cups" in Matthew 26:27, it would justify using a plurality of cups in the Communion. We recognize that putting an "s" on "cup" would mean multiple containers; why can't we recognize that "cup" singular – without the "s" – means a single drinking vessel?

The singular use of "cup" in the Scriptures in reference to the Communion must not be overlooked. The Bible is very clear that a person drinks "this cup" by drinking of "that cup." Jesus taught us to divide the fruit of the vine by drinking from a single cup, and the "One Cup Position" follows His instructions.

What Does the Cup Symbolize?

This is a point on which there has been much miscommunication. Why is it important that Jesus incorporated a single, literal drinking vessel in the Lord's Supper? It is not merely incidental – Jesus assigns the cup symbolic meaning!

Most recognize the spiritual symbolism assigned to the loaf and the fruit of the vine in the Communion; but many have overlooked the symbolism assigned to the one cup. Jesus' statement "This cup is the new testament in my blood," teaches us that the cup containing the fruit of the vine represents the new testament – not the written Scriptures, but the covenant itself.

As the rainbow was a sign of the covenant God made with Noah (Genesis 9:12-13), so the cup is a sign of the covenant God made with us. Taken together, the cup containing fruit of the vine symbolizes the new covenant which was ratified by the blood of Jesus.

Although the cup and the fruit of the vine have distinct symbolism, they are inseparable from each other; every time Jesus mentioned one, He also included the other.

According to 1 Corinthians 10:16, when we partake of this "cup of blessing" (a drinking vessel containing unfermented wine) in the Lord's Supper, it is a picture of the unity we have in the Lord Jesus. Take special notice that this is accomplished by passing the "cup of blessing" around from person to person and allowing each Christian to drink from that cup – not by dividing it so that each Christian may select and drink from his or her own container.

It is vital that the contents of the cup remain undivided as it is distributed to the participants, else the symbolism of the "common union" we share in Christ is destroyed! With this understanding, it becomes easy to embrace the "One Cup Position" as taught by Jesus.

WHEN CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED…

THREE THINGS HAPPENED

1) His **body** was sacrificed

2) His **blood** was shed

3) The new **covenant** was ratified

THREE THINGS SIGNIFIED

1) "This [**bread**] is my **body**" (Matthew 26:26)

2) "This [**fruit of the vine**] is my **blood**" (Matthew 26:28)

3) "This **cup** is the new **testament** in my blood" (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25)

THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT

JESUS CHRIST: "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22:20)

THAYER: "This cup containing wine, an emblem of blood, is rendered by the shedding of my blood, an emblem of the new covenant" (p. 15)

MEYER: "…because through this shedding of His blood the New Covenant is to be established, he explains the cup, by virtue of its contents, as the New Covenant." (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospels of Mark and Luke*, p. 541)

SCHMIDT AND VON HOLZENDORFF: "The cup is made a symbol of the New Covenant by the wine which it contains being made a symbol of the blood which is so soon to be shed by a Messiah who sacrifices himself of his people." (*Short Protestament Commentary*, p. 186)

1 CORINTHIANS 10:16 – "THE CUP OF BLESSING"

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (KJV)
The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 17For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

"Communion of the body of Christ" = Partaking of one loaf

Therefore, "communion of the blood of Christ" = Partaking of one cup

IF NOT – WHY NOT?

WHAT IS "THE CUP OF BLESSING" (1 COR. 10:16)?

1. "**The cup of wine**, called 'the cup of blessing' was passed around." (Smith *Bible Dictionary*, pg. 185)
2. "The cup of blessing 1 Cor. 10:16 – **a cup of wine**" (Eadie *Bible Cyclopedia*)
3. "The master of the feast took **a cup of unfermented wine**… this was called 'the cup of blessing.'" (Robinson *Bible Dictionary*, pg. 361)
4. "The master of the feast took **a cup of wine** in his hand, and solemnly blessed God for it… it was then passed to all the guests, each of whom drank of it in his turn." (*Union Bible Dictionary*, pg. 189)

Blood and Testament

Through the years, there has been much discussion surrounding the terms "blood" and "new testament" as they are used in the Communion passages. Many well-intentioned preachers have taught that "the cup is the blood" – but "of this" (Matthew 26.28) actually refers to the contents of the cup. This misunderstanding can

be traced to a failure to properly distinguish a difference between Christ's statements in Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24 from Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25.

The Matthew and Mark passages emphasize the symbolic identity of the fruit of the vine, while Luke and First Corinthians emphasize the symbolic identity of the cup containing the fruit of the vine. Notice that while "blood" and "testament" always go together in these passages, they both have distinct symbolism. When you break Christ's statements apart and compare them side by side, it's apparent that while their construction is parallel, their meanings are completely different.

When Jesus proclaimed, "This cup is the new testament," He assigned the cup symbolic meaning, distinct from that assigned to the contents.

Quotes

Numerous preachers have recognized the fact that Jesus used a single drinking vessel in the Lord's Supper. These men spoke and wrote this in books that are still available for purchase today.

Dear Mr. Miller:

Your letter of April 17, 1950 has been received and we are pleased to inform you that the writer's grandfather, John G. Thomas, who was both a physician and a minister, invented the first individual communion outfits. The first patents were issued to him in 1894. The Market Street Presbyterian church of Lima, Ohio, is believed to be the first church to use individual communion cups in a communion service. This also occurred in 1894. What is believed to be the original individual communion serviced used by this church is on display in the Allen County Historical Museum in Lima, Ohio.

Under separate cover we are making shipment of an old style pewter common cup. You may have it with our compliments.

Thomas Communion Service
Lima, Ohio
April 22, 1950

J.W. MCGARVEY

"Whatever may be the special pleading in excuse for this innovation, it is perfectly clear that it aims to avoid that which the Lord enjoined in instituting the Supper – that is, the use of the same cup by a number of individuals. He could have directed each of the twelve to drink from his own cup, had he adjudged that to be the better way. But he did not, and we shall be far more likely to please him by doing what he did than by doing what he avoided.

Christian Standard (1904)

FRUIT OF THE VINE = BLOOD OF CHRIST

Matthew 26:28
This is my blood of the new testament

Mark 14:24
This is my blood of the new testament

THE CUP = THE NEW TESTAMENT

Luke 22:20
This cup is the new testament in my blood

1 Corinthians 11:25
This cup is the new testament in my blood

GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHRIST'S STATEMENTS

Subject	Connecting Verb	Predicate Nominative	Prepositional Phrase
This (fruit of the vine)	is	my blood	of the new testament (Mt. 26:28; Mk 14:24)
This cup	is	the new testament	in My blood (Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25)

The subjects, predicate nominatives, and modifying prepositional phrases are all different.

THE CUP IS NOT THE BLOOD.
THE BLOOD IS NOT THE CUP.

GUY N. WOODS

"**There isn't in the new testament any instance of individual cups, as such being used.** I do not hesitate to say, that generically speaking they are authorized, but then according to his demand for a pattern, there is no pattern. So also are the classes. **You can't find a Bible School setup in the New Testament** following the pattern that is characteristic of our activity today in that detailed, **specific fashion that he demands for the Herald of Truth.**"

Cogdill – Woods Debate
(p. 329)

GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMMENTARY

"He took bread, - or 'a loaf' (footnote),
"'a loaf' does not mean two or more loaves, but one. The loaf, which was one, points to the body of Christ. Jesus had one body he offered for the sins of the world and one loaf represents that one body. Two loaves on the Lord's table are out of place and have no divine sanction. One loaf is safe, two are doubtful, to say the least. **It is always safe to be on the safe side."**

"And he took a cup" – **'A cup' is one, not two nor a dozen**.... The cup contained the fruit of the vine."

C.E.W. Dorris (p. 328-330)

G.C. BREWER

"I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of the individual communion cup and the first church in the state of Tennessee that adopted it was the church for which I was preaching, the central church of Christ at Chattanooga, Tennessee, then meeting in the Masonic temple. My next work was with the church at Columbia, Tennessee and after a long struggle, I got the individual communion service into that congregation… I was fought both privately and publicly and several brethren took me to task in the religious papers and called me digressive. Bro. Smith came to my rescue and in the year 1915 Bro. David Lipscomb wrote a short paragraph in the Gospel Advocate saying he had changed his view in reference to the communion cup, that he did not believe it was in any way digressive…

Forty Years on the Firing Line
(p. 12-13)

DAVID LIPSCOMB

"The Savior used **one cup only**, as well as **one loaf only**."

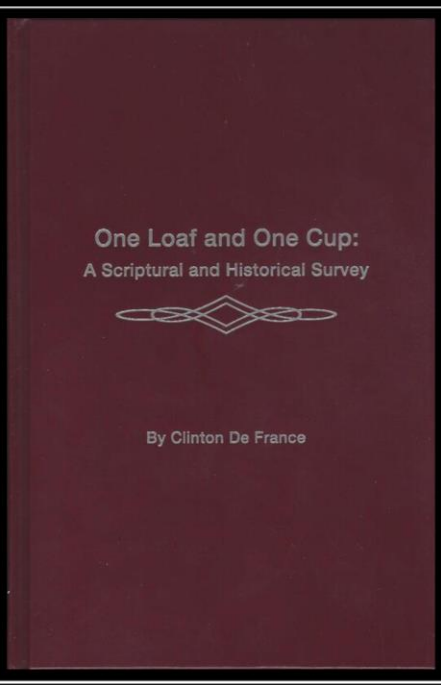
Questions Answered
(p. 409)

INDIVIDUAL COMMUNION ORIGINATED…

In **1894**	**NOT**	**AD 33**
By **a doctor**	**NOT**	a **Savior**
In **Ohio**	**NOT**	**Jerusalem**

Conclusion

Thank you for reading and considering this article. If you have any questions or comments, please call or text me at 214-505-8242. It is our goal to establish "It is written" and "What saith the Scriptures" as we preach the original text.



To dive deeper on the "one-cup" side of this issue, order:

ONE LOAF AND ONE CUP:
A Scriptural and Historical Survey

by Clinton De France

Available from the Biblical Studies Program of Tulsa
BSPofTulsa.com/bookstore.html

*This book was reviewed in *The Quarterly* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan. 2020).

The Container or the Contained

Darin Chappell

Over the last several decades, there has been division in the Lord's church. Of course, there are many issues over which our brethren have separated themselves, but in each case, sin has been the problem. This is true, because separation among brethren cannot occur ***except*** sin be involved. Either a brother is found to be unrepentant of sin, and the congregation is forced to withdraw themselves from him (1 Cor. 5:4-8), or withdrawal occurs where no sin is found, and the withdrawal itself is therefore sinful, because the bond of brotherhood is broken for no just cause (Rom. 16:17-18). Therefore, whenever Christians spiritually separate themselves from one another, whether to follow, or in violation of, the will of God—sin is definitely involved.

This being the case, we must all strive to examine ourselves to make certain that we are not the cause of the divisions among us (2 Cor. 13:5), and to see how we may soothe the tender hurts of those of our brethren from whom we may have been separated unrighteously, regardless of "who started it." It is for this purpose that this article is being written, and it is the hope of the writer that all who read this may pause to think carefully on the issue at hand, but also on how we may be able to work together to rectify the wrongs (on both sides) that have been done in the past, which have driven so many apart, for so long.

The question at hand is: "May Christians use multiple cups in the observance of the Lord's Supper, when partaking of the fruit of the vine?"

As a rule, it is the duty of the one suggesting a thing is sinful to bear the burden of proof of that sin, when the Bible does not expressly describe it so, just as it is the duty of the one suggesting a thing is allowed must prove his position is in agreement with Scripture. However, as I am certain most, if not all, readers have heard the charges of sin made against the use of multiple cups, by those who demand only one cup be used, we will assume the burden above has been accepted, and evidences have been offered to support the assertion. We will, therefore, address the central issue of the question as it arises from the Scriptures.

The Bible says the Lord blessed "the cup" (singular), and the Apostle Paul said, regarding when Christians come together to participate in the memorial of our Lord's sacrifice, **"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup"** (1 Cor. 11:28). Again, the cup is singular in number. From this, many have suggested that the singularity of the cup is an approved example of how to partake of the Lord's Supper, and, given a lack of any other approved examples of using multiple cups, the Bible thereby implies only the use of a singular cup in the act of worship. If "the cup" is to be taken literally, then this would definitely follow. However, if "the cup" is a term to be understood figuratively, the restriction on the number of containers/vessels/cups is not bound upon Christians, as some of our brethren assert, because the singularity of "the cup" may indeed refer to the *contents* of the container, which ***is*** singular in nature, the fruit of the vine, representing the saving blood of Christ.

In proper hermeneutics, all terms are to be taken literally, unless there is a grammatical reason to see a figure being utilized, or if the term taken literally is

impossible to be understood, because it violates the laws of God in some way. It is the assertion of this writer that the term "the cup" is written in a figurative form, using the grammatical mechanics of metonymy. "Metonymy" derives from the ancient Greek word, "*μετωνυμία*," which means "a change in name," and is used when a concept is referenced by a name of another closely associated with it. When the sports announcer declares that St. Louis won the ballgame, he means the Cardinals baseball team, not the city where they are located, and this metonymy is understood by all who hear him. If then, "the cup" is a metonymy for the contents being partaken, the singularity is referring to the fruit of the vine, utilized by brethren all over the world upon the First Day of the week, representing the singular price for the remission of our sins, the blood of Christ, shed upon the cross. However, in order for a figurative view of the term to be accepted, the burden now shifts, to prove that the phrase is figurative, and not literal in its intent. So, how may we tell whether the term "the cup" is to be understood literally, or figuratively? If the term is not intended to be literal, it is, by definition, to be understood figuratively; there are no other options. Are there Scriptural reasons to see a literal understanding as being improper? Yes, there are.

Consider the admonition of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.

> *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

Paul here references the Lord's words and actions, when He established the basis for the Communion, blessing "the cup," and acknowledges that "the cup" was representative of "the new testament in [His] blood." The container bears no representative value to the blood itself, but the contents, the fruit of the vine, do. Was the Lord referring to the container, or to the contents? Further, the Apostle tells us, "For as often as ye…drink this cup." What is be consumed here? Is it the cup, or the contents? Paul says to drink the cup, but no one has ever been able to drink a cup, because it is not a liquid, and trying to do so would likely end with the "drinker" choking on the solid container! If the Christian may not "drink" the cup, then the contained liquid (the fruit of the vine) must be that to which he referred, and not the container itself.

How strange it would be for the Apostle Paul, one of the greatest teachers of the will of God the world has ever seen, to tie his directive to drink the contents of the cup, using metonymy, when the Lord, by the same language, supposedly dictated the singularity of the container to be used, with no further explanation as to why he did so! Are we to understand the one reference literally, and then, in the very next verse, understand it figuratively? By what rule of hermeneutics are we to tie our reasoning to result in such a twisted perspective? Let us remember, brethren, God is not the Author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33)!

Furthermore, if the reference to "the cup" in the hand of our Lord at the institution of the Communion is to be taken literally, surely it must refer to ***that*** cup, and to ***that*** cup only. Again, the Apostle Paul tells us, **"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup"** (1 Cor. 11:28). If this requirement is to be taken literally, then ***that*** cup, the one Jesus actually held, the one which the denominational world refers to as "the Holy Grail," ***that*** cup must be the ***only*** one from which ***all*** Christians around the world must drink, every Lord's Day. Obviously this is impossible, due simply to the time and space constraints of the physical laws into which God has placed us, never mind the fact that we have no idea which cup was ***the*** cup some 2,000 years ago, or even if it still exists. The Lord, our God, did not enjoin upon us, through the inspired writing of His chosen Apostle, a requirement that none of us could possibly fulfill, and yet, if we are to take the wording of the matter on a literal basis, how could it be otherwise?

If the terms "the cup," and "this cup" of 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 are to be understood as literally referring to the container, rather than the contained liquid, thus giving us a mandate for container singularity in our worship, why then would the term "that cup," written in the same chapter, of the same book, to the same recipients, by the same penman…not also be taken literally? Personally, this writer knows of no one who holds to such a position, but it is a glaring inconsistency of those who would bind the number of containers upon the rest of us, without binding to themselves the responsibility to find and use ***that*** cup! The point is proven without looking also to ***that*** bread, but how would it be possible for Christians all over the world to eat from a piece of unleavened

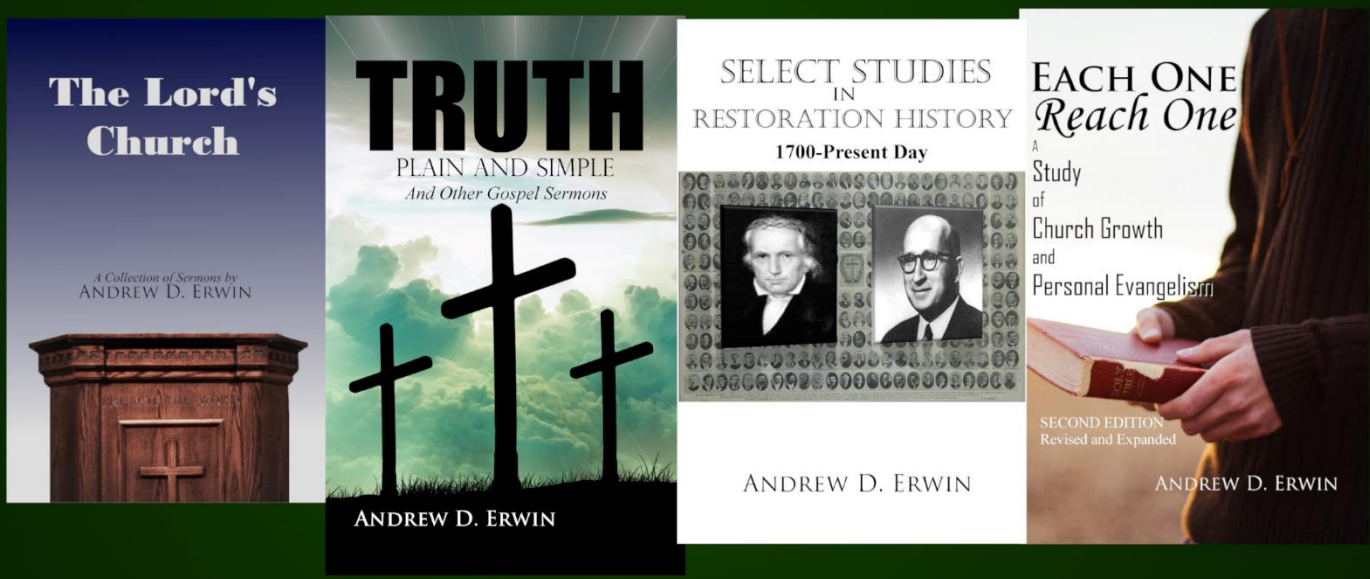
bread, lost to the ages, for the thousands of years we have been gathering together? It is not possible. Then how we are to understand these phrases as being literal in nature?

As has been oft repeated through the years, "O, consistency, thou art a jewel!"

When taken together in complete context, the number of cups used in the Lord's Supper is not dictated to us by Holy Writ. Further, the container itself is not mentioned, except as an example of metonymy, used to refer to the contents thereof, which to us represents the precious blood of our Savior. In that sense, "the cup" is "One," because of that one emblem, shared around the globe, by Christians everywhere, every First Day of the Week, with singular intent, singular purpose, and singular unity! It is to that which is contained, the fruit of the vine, rather than to the container, which our allegiance to God demands we respect.

It matters not at all, whether a congregation uses one cup (or many) in the assembly, so long as that expediency which is chosen is not bound upon others, as law. Again, division in the Lord's church is always caused by sinfulness of some sort. Let us make certain that the sin involved in dividing brethren over the question of singular, or multiple cups, does not come from us.

BOOKS BY ANDREW D. ERWIN



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F.B. SRYGLEY'S WINTERS IN FLORIDA

(1911-1939)
Part One

Earl Kimbrough

During the first half of the twentieth century, F.B. Srygley's name was widely known among Churches of Christ in the land, especially in the South. He was known as a remarkable gospel preacher, debater, conversationalist, and writer. Yet, what endeared him most to so many Christians that heard his sermons and debates in propagation and defense of New Testament Christianity, who read his editorials and articles in the *Gospel Advocate,* and who had the opportunity to converse with him individually was his unique character and uncommon manner of preaching, writing, and talking. H. Leo Boles, who was closely associated with him for many years, wrote at the time of his death in 1940, "It will be a long time before, if ever, there arises among us another such man as F.B. Srygley." Many others who knew Brother Srygley well made similar comments about him at the time of his passing.

One of the most endearing ventures of my life, which remained a continuing interest and pursuit as time permitted over the course of more than fifty years, from the late 1940s to the first decade of the twenty-first century, was my extensive research, systematic gathering of information, and writing a 627 page biography of F.B. Srygley. The book is entitled, *The Warrior from Rock Creek, Life, Times, and Thoughts of F.B. Srygley, 1859-1940.* I read everything he wrote (he was a prolific writer) and much that was written about him by others who knew him intimately and held him in high esteem. I never knew him personally. I was about fourteen when he died and knew nothing about him until a few years later. However, from what I learned of him in his own words and those of close associates of his, and from having direct contact with people and places that brought me into close proximity with his life, I feel, in a limited way, that I was well acquainted with this great man of God. He was one of the most outstanding gospel preachers of a past generation.

The primary purpose of this brief memoir of F.B.

Srygley is to give an account of his ministry in Florida's Central West Coast region in the winters of 1911 to 1939. This was a time when a few small and scattered Churches of Christ were struggling to gain a foothold for the gospel in the state. When Brother Srygley held his first gospel meeting in Tampa in 1911, there was only one Church of Christ in that city and it was the first congregation organized there. I had an interview with Sister Esther O'Berry who told me she heard Brother Srygley in that meeting. She was a daughter of Brother George B. Hoover, the preacher who started the first church in Tampa, which began with his family meeting in their home. They later formed the Nebraska Avenue church that met in a small frame building, where Brother Srygley held his first meeting in Tampa.

Fletcher Douglas (F.D.) Srygley, F.B.'s older brother

In order to place Brother Srygley's Florida ministry in perspective, and to better understand the nature of his work in the state, it will help to notice a few things about the man, the state, and the Churches of Christ during the years he preached there. We will give some attention, especially, to his early life, to his ministry in general, and to his unique character and distinctive manner of preaching. In regard to the state itself during the last three decades of his life, we will give a brief description of the region at that time. He loved Florida from his first sojourn there, which at the time may be referred to as "old Florida." It was vastly different from Florida as it is today. He loved the Christians with whom he was associated in the state. Among these there were longtime residents, migrates from northern states that had recently become residents, and others that were spending the winter on vacations from colder climates.

A Brief Sketch of F.B. Srygley's Life

Filo Bunyan Srygley was born September 10, 1859 at Rock Creek, Alabama, among the rugged hills in the northwest section of the state. He was a son of James H. and Sarah Jane (Coats) Srygley who settled in Franklin (now Colbert) County soon after their marriage. They bought a small farm in the pioneer community of Rock Creek, which was named for a small stream that flowed through their land. A few years before the Civil War, James Srygley felled trees and hewed logs on his land to build a double pen log cabin with attic rooms. It was there that he and Sarah Jane, who was only thirteen when they married, had nine children, five sons and four daughters. They lived in that log house at Rock Creek until all their children were grown and educated. In 1886 all of the large family, except F.D. and F.B. who were both preachers, moved to Coal Hill, Arkansas, in Johnson County overlooking the Arkansas River.

F.B. Srygley was educated in the country schools in the vicinity of Rock Creek that were conducted a few weeks each year after the crops were "laid by." In 1880, he entered Mars Hill College, conducted by T.B. Larimore near Florence, Alabama. This was about twenty miles from the Srygley farm. The school was started by Brother Larimore as an extension of his ministry, primarily to teach the Bible and to train preachers that helped spread the ancient gospel in the Mid-South and beyond. It was while attending Mars Hill College that F.B. Srygley began preaching in the counties of Northwest Alabama. Many years later, he wrote, "Next to my father and mother, I owe more to T.B. Larimore than to any other person that my life ever touched."

Another pioneer preacher that greatly influenced him was Brother John Taylor of Franklin County, who lived and preached in the same region of F.B. Srygley's early life. Unlike the well-educated Larimore, Brother Taylor was a self-educated man with no formal schooling. He learned to read, with the help of his wife, after he was grown and married, and with the Bible as his "reader." He started a Church of Christ in Fayette County, Alabama, in 1828. This was before he knew that there was another such church anywhere on earth. He also started the church at Rock Creek with six members in 1868. F.B. Srygley's parents, who only recently had been baptized, were among the six persons with which the Rock Creek church began. John Taylor often preached to the Rock Creek church that met in a log building about five miles from the Srygley's cabin home.

In writing about John Taylor, F.B. Srygley spoke of him affectionately.

> John Taylor was the first man I heard preach the gospel as Peter did on Pentecost. I looked upon him as an old man from my earliest recollection. He was a fixture in my mind just like the hills around us or the creek [Rock Creek] that ran through our field. He was welcome at our

humble home any time of the day or night that he might come.

When Srygley finished Mars Hill in 1882, he went with John Taylor, "at his earnest solicitation," on a preaching trip to the counties south of Rock Creek where the old pioneer preacher had done much of his preaching.

They were gone on that missionary journey for about six weeks. F.B. Srygley was twenty-three at the time. He said he did all the preaching on their journey under Brother Taylor's "fatherly council." He kept a record of their travels and noted that he preached sixty-five times and baptized sixty-five persons. John Taylor became sick while they were gone and was unable to attend some of the services near the end of their journey. But the old preacher was able to make it back home on horseback, where his young companion told him goodbye for the last time. John Taylor died about three years later in 1885. Soon after that notable pioneer journey, Brother Srygley moved to Lebanon, Tennessee, to do evangelistic work in Wilson County. His home for the rest of his life was in Middle Tennessee. However, his formative years were at old Rock Creek in Northwest Alabama.

T.B. Larimore, teacher of F.B. Srygley at Mars Hill

In 1911, the same year in which F.B. Srygley made his first trip to Florida and preached in Tampa, he also returned for a gospel meeting at Rock Creek. In telling about the meeting, he wrote:

> I am now at Rock Creek, Ala., in an old time, all-day meeting, with "dinner on the ground." It [the meeting] began last Sunday. This is my birthplace. Here I spent the first twenty years of my life. It was here I was baptized in Rock Creek by Joseph H. Halbrook when I was fourteen.

As Florida is the central locale of this essay, it will be well to notice in passing that J.H. Halbrook was a pioneer preacher of Northwest Alabama who spent his final years in Florida. Due to failing health of both himself and his wife, Margret, they moved in 1896 to Levy County. He is known to have preached at what is now Chiefland in about 1903 in different homes where a small church was soon established. He continued preaching in that part of the state as his health permitted until his death in 1906, five years before F.B. Srygley made his first trip to Florida. Halbrook's wife preceded him in death by several years and he was remarried to a sister of R.L. Colson of Gainesville, with whom F.B. Srygley was later associated. Halbrook is buried between his wives in the peaceful Ebenezer cemetery near Chiefland, Florida.

F.B. Srygley married Mary Hubbard of Bellwood, Tennessee, in 1885 and they had nine children, one of which died in infancy. For several years they lived in Donelson, Tennessee, in a house next door to his preacher brother, F.D. Srygley. But after his brother's untimely death in 1900, F.B. Srygley bought a home in Nashville, where he lived the rest of his life. With Brother Srygley away much of the time in meetings, the burden of home training fell to his wife. In her generous devotion to their home she made it possible for her husband to do great good in the cause of Christ and her children were successful in building good and useful lives which made the family name known beyond the gates of her city. Some of their descendants live in Florida now. A son, T.Q. Srygley was the Florida State Superintendent of Education in the 1950s. A daughter, Maggie May, married Dr. Irving Belcher and lived at Tarpon Springs in Pinellas County. It was with them that F.B. Srygley stayed during his winter visits.

The Character of F.B. Srygley

Henry Ward Beecher said: "A man's character is the reality of himself." The character of F.B. Srygley marks him as a man who was extraordinary and unique in the role he carved for himself in life. This was true both in his life as a simple New Testament Christian and as an unpretentious gospel preacher. Harry Pickup, Sr., who knew Brother Srygley well in Nashville, wrote of him:

> F.B. Srygley was a great man. I think one of the things most characteristic of him was the fact that he was always the same, and he was always pleasant, even when he was cutting you down. May I say to you that those who never knew F.B. Srygley missed knowing a great character. *And he was* a great character.

R.L. Whiteside wrote of him:

> Occasionally there arises a man whose life,

> character, and work are so outstanding that we do not see how we can get along without out him. Such a man was F.B. Srygley.

Cled E. Wallace recalled that: "The love and respect he commanded is a huge tribute to his character."

The testimony of fellow workers in the gospel, those that knew him best, and others who knew and loved him most for his works' sake, verifies the nobility of his character. His fellow preachers, especially those who worked closely with him and with whom he sometimes crossed swords, esteemed him for his knowledge, courage, and ability as a preacher. It is from these that we realize the depth of love and respect in which he was held by faithful brethren among whom he went proclaiming and defending the gospel and in whose homes his editorials found a weekly welcome.

It is impossible to know the fullness of a person's true character, his complete reality, without an intimate association with him. But through the words of those who had such an association with him, and others who benefited from his ministry, we discover the essence of the man. Those who paid tribute to Brother Srygley after his death seemingly covered all the major facets of his distinguished and renowned personality. Naturally, each touched on the things that impressed them most about his life, work, and devotion in the cause of Christ, but together they give a comprehensive description of the man we are pleased to call the Warrior from Rock Creek.

Even though Brother Srygley was generally acclaimed as a faithful preacher and many looked to him for advice and counsel, he was a humble man. G.C. Brewer moderated for him in a debate with a Baptist preacher in 1909. Brewer, who was only twenty at the time, recalled the occasion thirty years later. He said he was impressed by him as a young preacher because, "Brother Srygley advised with me and asked me about points as though I were his equal." Brewer further said of Srygley:

> He was once holding a meeting in Rutherford County, Tenn., when some four or five other meetings were in progress at nearby congregations and some of the people of the communities were going from one meeting to another to hear all the preachers. In announcing his services, Brother Srygley invited the people to come if they were interested in the plain gospel preached in a simple way. He said he did not intend to run a race with any other preacher and would not make any special effort because other meetings were in progress. He said he was glad for people to hear all the preachers, but it might be better if the church members would stay with their own meeting.

Brother Srygley was devoted to evangelistic work. When division came among the Restoration churches, one of the controversies centered in the nature of the preaching ministry. The strong opposition of most "conservative" brethren to the "one-man pastor" setup resounded with a strong opposition to "located preachers."

Through the first decades of the twentieth century, the "conservative" Churches of Christ generally did not have "settled" preachers. Even where men lived in a certain town and preached regularly for a nearby congregation, it was usually once or twice a month. They often also preached for three or four other churches on different Sundays. Further, these men were mostly self-supporting and did not fully depend on the church for support. This custom was at least partially due to a fear of preachers becoming "pastors" if they preached regularly for a single church, but this practice also may have been more convenient for the brethren financially. Brother Srygley did not object to this arrangement because he had pronounced questions about "located preachers" becoming "pastors" if they preached for only one church. It also better suited his own idea about the work of an evangelist. He never did what was called "located work" with one congregation, but most of his preaching was in gospel meetings and in establishing new congregations. Even when he was at home in Nashville, the local preaching he did was with various churches by weekly appointments.

One of the distinct aspects of Brother Srygley's character was his highly critical nature. However, his motive as a critic was not animosity toward any man. He would not separate a man from his teaching, but he knew how to criticize the teaching and practice without judging the man whom he criticized. Nor was his criticism of others in his writing prompted by an editorial arrogance or a contentious spirit. He was an unassuming man and did not criticize from a self-righteous attitude, or from an air of superiority. His criticisms were drawn from his unswerving devotion to the truth, which he feared many in "high places" among his brethren did not share.

Some men who are inclined to criticize others are often extremely sensitive to receiving criticism themselves. This was not true of F.B. Srygley. He neither expected freedom from criticism, nor did he take offence or nurse a grudge when criticism came to him, as it often did. Few men received more censure. He expected it because he understood that being active on the firing line meant both to shoot at others and to be shot at by them. He knew that in warfare the bullets fly in both directions.

In his role as a critic, Brother Srygley believed he did what the Lord wanted him to do, but he did not fail to consider himself lest he should also be tempted. He said:

> The Lord does not expect me to correct every brother that is wrong, and I am glad of it, for I could never get them all straight. In fact, I have more than I can do to correct myself on everything; but I want to keep my purpose right, and go to heaven when I leave here.

Brother Srygley's Manner of Preaching

It is natural that Brother Srygley's character influenced his manner of preaching. His native wit and humor were so engrained in the reality of the man and affected so much of his work that it must be viewed as a major factor of his preaching. As R.L. Whiteside described it:

> Brother Srygley loved the sunny side of life; he loved people; but, what is more important, he loved God and everything of which God is the author. His wit and humor were so much a part of his very nature that they bubbled up in serious and solemn moments, breaking forth like a ray of sunshine through a dark cloud. But underneath it all there was a seriousness of thought and a firmness of purpose that knew no wavering.

L.L. Brigance said:

> His wit and humor were as natural as breathing. Like a mountain spring they bubbled forth clear and sparkling without any conscious effort. Since the great "Raccoon" John Smith there has not arisen another preacher among us his equal in this respect.

John T. Lewis wrote in 1940

> About a quarter of a century ago, when premillennialism began to sprout in the church and tried to take root on the front page of the *Advocate*, J.C. McQuiddy and his other associates began to use the grubbing hoe and gained for themselves the sobriquet, "the Sanhedrin." Brother Srygley was the only one that seemed to relish the appellation. When passing through Nashville, I used to go to the *Advocate* office, and if Brother Srygley was in I would ask him when "the Sanhedrin" would meet, and he always seemed to get a kick out of it.

J.M. Powell said, "His witticisms and pointed sayings have been often repeated and caused delight in many a gathering."

Many spoke of Srygley's great wit and humor because it was such a prominent feature of his character, which was reflected in all that he did. But W.E. Brightwell observed:

> It was his logic, not merely his wit, that caused him to be in demand as a public debater during the more active years of his life. His logic flowed through his humor. He thought in terms of good-humored illustrations. He knew the truth and how to use it effectively, without any "airs" of scholarship.

Srygley's quick wit was entertaining, enlightening, and often explicit. His humor was never affected but came spontaneously from the depth of his soul. His natural humor was apparent in his preaching, writing, debating, and conversation. This, too, was both a give and take matter. He could laugh at himself as well as at others. Once his good friend W.M. Oakley, who was as bald as Elijah, exchanged pleasantries with Srygley in the *Advocate* office.

> Brother Srygley said: "Brother Oakley, I have just held a meeting in a place named for you."
>
> Brother Oakley inquired, "Where was that?"
>
> Brother Srygley replied, "Bald Knob [Arkansas]."
>
> Then Brother Oakley said: "I have just preached in a place named for you."
>
> Brother Srygley asked, "Where?"
>
> Brother Oakley answered, "Hollow Rock Junction [Tennessee]."

The exceptional and captivating character of F.B. Srygley very naturally was reflected in his preaching. It actually contributed greatly to what made his manner of preaching so particularly unique. Almost all of the many contemporary preachers who paid tribute to

him after his death made mention of his exemplary life and distinctive style of preaching. This feature of Brother Srygley's preaching ministry during his winters in Florida cannot be ignored in considering the influence it had on people in the state. N.B. Hardeman, a prince of preachers and a trainer of preachers said:

> Brother Srygley was in a class by himself in his manner of presenting the truth and emphasizing the same with some story to more firmly fasten it upon the mind of his hearers.

F.B. Srygley's preaching in Nashville was not with a single congregation, but he preached by appointments for different churches. He never served as a "located preacher." For many years this was the practice of most Churches of Christ in Nashville and in many other places. This was true with even the larger congregations. Four or five preachers in the city were chosen by a church to preach for it on specific Sundays each month. The *Gospel Advocate* in those days carried a notice in its pages of where different Nashville preachers would preach on particular Sundays. This suited Brother Srygley fine, for in addition to maintaining a regular schedule in which he conducted gospel meetings in many places for several months each year, when he was at home he preached for several churches by Sunday appointments.

While Brother Srygley was in Florida during the winter, he followed a modified form of his common practice in Tennessee. He devoted most of his time to gospel meetings in the counties of West Central Florida, and sometimes preached by Sunday appointments between the meetings. Gospel meetings in those days were often for two weeks or longer. However, in Florida his meetings were mostly shorter because of his desire to cover many places among the widely scattered and mostly small churches. He told enough in his "Florida Notes" in the *Gospel Advocate* to indicate that his preaching at different places in the state was often done on the "spur of the moment," more so than by longer prearranged schedules. This left him free to go wherever circumstances and occasions provided opportunity and often just wherever he pleased, which seemed to suit him fine.

Srygley's preaching was not only unique, it made a lasting impression on those who heard him. Few men attempted to describe his preaching without reference to his use of humor in driving home the points of his sermons. T.Q. Martin said:

> He possessed a fund of humorous stories, and sometimes in the course of his sermon he would relate a story that would evoke laughter, but the laugher paved the way for his driving home the point illustrated by his story. He made no effort at being "funny," but always drove home a point by his inimitable humor. He was unique.

J.B. Nelson, in describing his preaching style, concluded, "He was an interesting, entertaining, and convincing preacher."

Srygley also possessed a profound knowledge of God's Word that enabled him to apply its teaching to every facet of salvation, the New Testament church, and the Christian life. And it also enabled him to deal effectively with all kinds of false teaching and practices in the denominations, in the world, and in the Lord's church. He could never have obtained the widespread respect of his brethren, as a preacher, writer, and debater, without a vast store of Biblical knowledge. This knowledge was gained through a lifetime of study reaching back to his Rock Creek home and the old Rock Creek church where he, like Timothy, learned the Scriptures from childhood. Devotion to the study of the Bible had been instilled in him by his parents, by the pioneer preachers of Northwest Alabama, and by his beloved teacher, T.B. Larimore.

Coupled with his depth of Biblical knowledge was Brother Srygley's childlike faith in the Bible as the supreme authority for all that he believed, taught, and practiced. Whether preaching, debating, writing, or in conversation, all who heard him were impressed by his total commitment to scriptural authority. This naturally led to extensive negative preaching. T.Q. Martin said:

> As a preacher, writer, and debater, Brother Srygley was exceeded by few, if any, men known to me. His crowning virtue was his unswerving adherence to a "thus saith the Lord."

A practice that had been well engrained in F.B. Srygley by T.B. Larimore at Mars Hill College, and which stayed with him for life, was in *reading* the Bible while preaching, rather than quoting it. Commenting on this, he said:

> I really think it has a better effect on an audience for one to read distinctly from an open Bible. Some people know so little about the Bible that they do not know when one is quoting it, but all who can see will know when the preacher

is reading the word of the Lord. The preacher should not quote or read the Bible so hastily that the audience cannot get the full force and benefit from it. The lawyer who has a good witness is never anxious to get him off the stand, but is always willing for him to have time to testify. The Bible is the only witness the preacher has that is really worth anything; therefore it should be allowed to give its full testimony. Read it loudly and distinctly and give the people time to hear it and appreciate it.

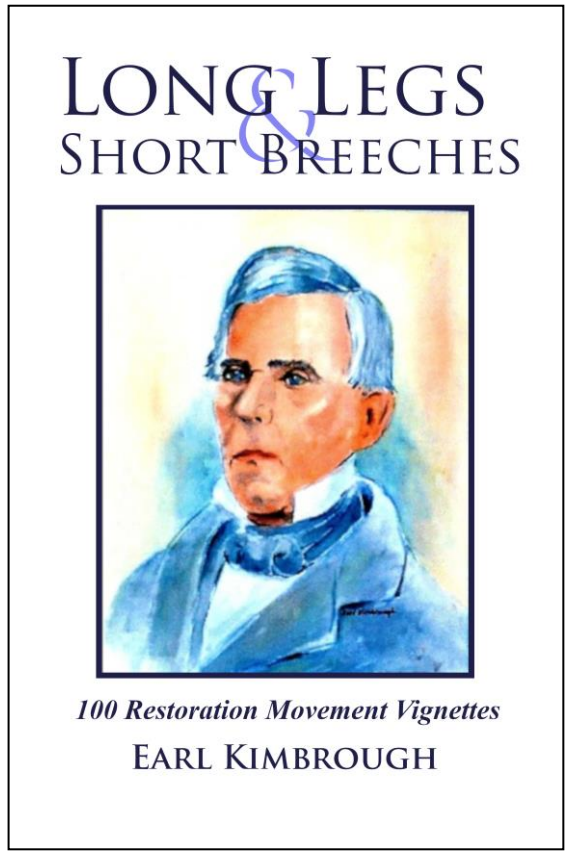
All of Brother Srygley's preaching was not in the pulpit. He consistently included the Bible in his conversations. A discussion he had with a man in Tampa, Florida, in 1912 is perhaps typical of his manner of conversing. He said:

> I met a man here, and he soon told me he took no stock in any of the churches. I asked him why, and he said it was because they all preached a hell. I asked him if he believed the Bible, and he said he did. Then I told him that the Bible teaches that there is a hell, and he said he did not believe it if it did. I told him that was a strange way to believe the Bible—believe it and still not believe what it says. I then asked him if he believed that one had to be baptized in order to be saved, and he said that he did not. But I said: "The Bible says he who believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Well," said he, "I don't believe it." "But still you believe the Bible!" Then he said, "You can out talk me," and I said: "Yes, and I can out believe you, too. It is not a question of our talk, but do we believe the talk that is in the Bible?"

As the conversation with the man in Tampa continued, the man said his trouble was that he did not know much about the Bible. Brother Srygley said he agreed that that might be part of his problem because:

> The Bible says faith comes by hearing; but if it is as unreliable in its statements as you say it is, I don't know whether I would want to know much about it or not. The Bible says: "He that believeth not shall be damned." Do you believe that? And he said; "I don't know whether I do or not." He then began to tell me about Florida, and I soon saw that he believed in Florida if he did not believe in a hell.

From what we know about Brother Srygley's godly life and manner of preaching, both in the pulpit and in conversations with people, we can get some idea about the sort of evangelism that he engaged in almost constantly during his winters in Florida. He loved and enjoyed the state and its people, but his visits were by no means vacations from evangelism. There is no way of knowing the vast amount of good this great preacher did in his many winter sojourns in the state. He was so devoted to teaching the word of God that wherever he went he was looking for opportunities. Eternity alone can reveal the enduring influence he had in advancing the cause of Christ in the Sunshine State.



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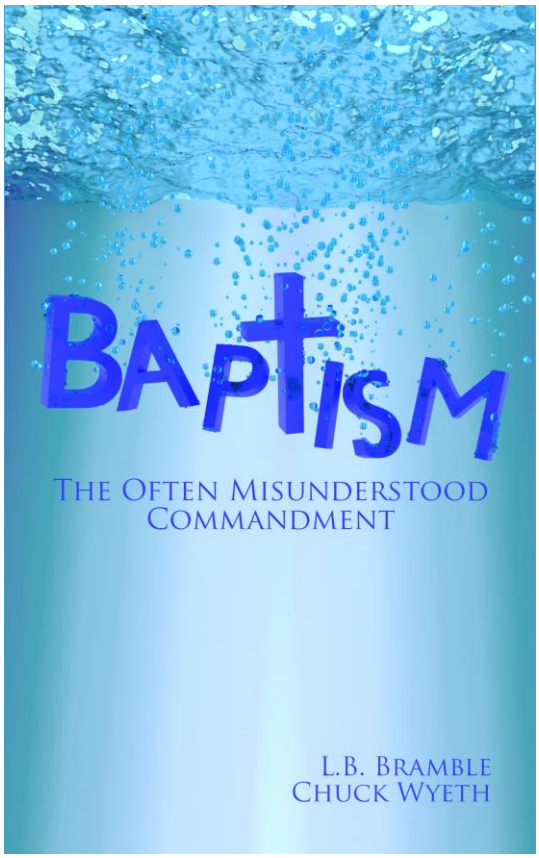

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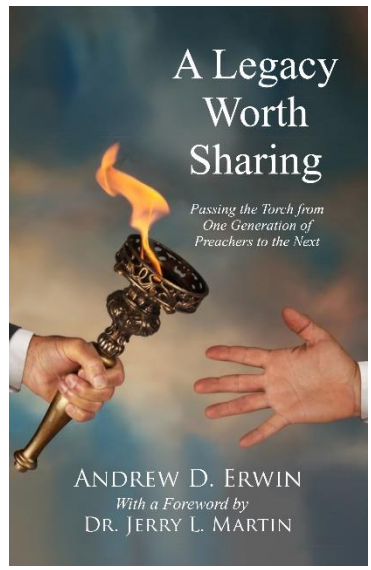

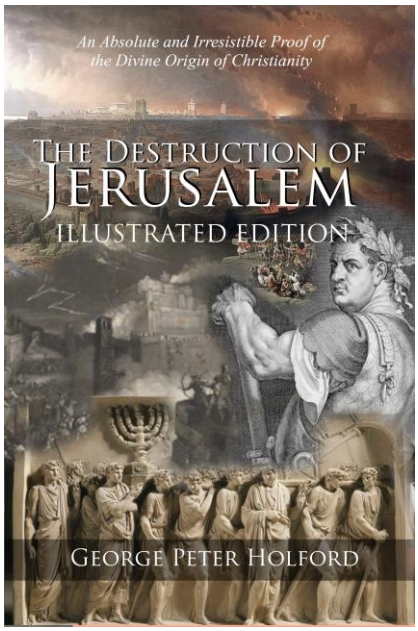

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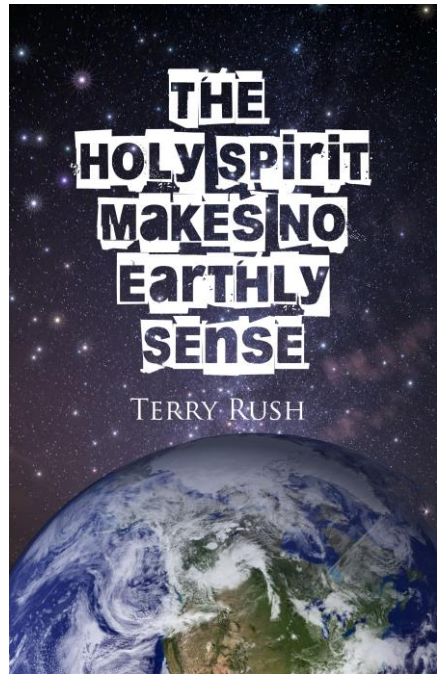

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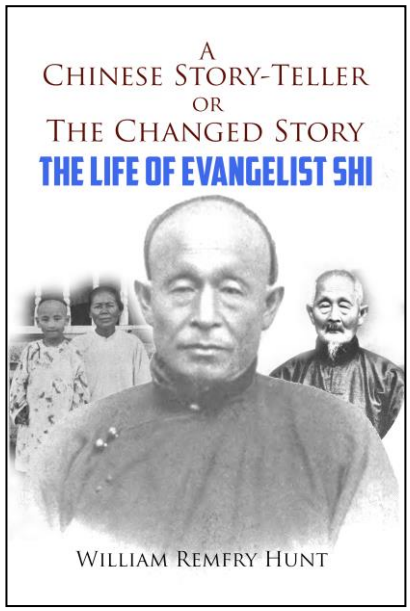

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The Meaning and Usage of Symbolic "White Robes" in Revelation

Jake Schotter

There are four passages in the book of Revelation where the symbolic "white robes" are seen (6:11; 7:9, 13, 14). If we broaden our search outside of Revelation, we also see the term used in Esther 8:15 and Mark 16:5. According to this data, we can confidently say that some robes are to be taken literally. Mordecai would not have worn figurative clothes when in the king's presence or before the city of Susa (Esther 8:15), unless he is under a spell and the people play into the disguise. We can also assume that the angel who was at the tomb was probably wearing a white robe in a descriptive sense of what he was wearing, as was the rest of the context (Mark 16:1-6). However, in John's vision, we should not interpret "white robes" as literal clothing but as a symbol reflective of a deeper, more profound meaning. Unlike the majority of the Bible, Revelation is primarily figurative:

> "Usually the words of any passage of Scripture must be understood in their plan and natural sense, unless there is some reason to take them figuratively. The presumption is always in favor of the literal meaning; if one takes it otherwise, he must show the cause. This is not the case in Revelation. In this book, presented in pictorial form, one must assume that the symbols are to be taken figuratively unless there is good reason for regarding them as literal."[1]

THE PEOPLE DESCRIBED

"White robes" mentioned once in Revelation 6:9-11

The first mention of "white robes" is found in Revelation 6:11. The context is found in verses 9-11 with a discussion of the martyrs, the fifth in a series of seven seals. As the scene shifts from earth to heaven, John saw the fifth seal opened by the Lamb and martyrs are identified and wailing for "the vindication of the right and truth of the cause for which they gave their lives, which is Christ's cause."[2]

These people (1) were "slain because of the word of God," (2) were "slain… because of the testimony which they had maintained," (3) recognized the Lordship and judgeship of the Lord ("How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging…?"), and (4) more generically, reflected the attitude[3] of Christians during the first century, anticipating further persecution before it got better (message of Revelation?). This four-fold description of the people wearing "white robes" is decidedly describing Christians who have gone to heaven.

"White robes" mentioned three times in Revelation 7:9-14

The other passage in which "white robes" appears is Revelation 7:9-14, where it appears three times (7:9, 13, 14). It is important to note the setting is in heaven ("standing before the throne and before the

[1] Summers, Ray. **Worthy is the Lamb**. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951: 48.

[2] Beasley-Murray, G.R. **The Book of Revelation.** *New Century Bible Commentary Series.* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1974: 136.

[3] "Therein is reflected the temper that in part animated the Church in the persecutions of the 1st century. We might compare the attitude of the martyrs toward their judges in Polyc. Mart. 11, or the later Acts of the Martyrs" (Charles, R.H. **A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John – Vol. 1.** *International Critical Commentary Series.* Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963: 176.)

Lamb"). Again, we would do well to see the description of the Christians here: (1) the setting is in heaven, (2) the acknowledgment of God as Lord and Savior ("Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb"), (3) their worship to God, (4) their perseverance despite persecution ("These are the ones that came out of the great tribulation"), and (5) they are cleansed by the Lamb ("washed… made them white in the blood of the Lamb").

It is with this understanding of *who* is wearing the "white robes" that we are able to determine the meaning of why they are wearing "white robes." The Apostle John, in his ignorance, asked for a description of the people because he could not answer the question of one of the elders: "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" Unable to answer, the elder answers his own question. Matthew Henry commented that this was "an account… given to the apostle concerning that noble army of martyrs who stand before God's throne with palms of victory in their hands."[4] Thus, we are able to understand the meaning of the "white robes" in a practical manner.

THE POINT DEFINED BY THE PEOPLE BEING EMPHASIZED

Simon Kistemaker notes an interesting but wrong theory of what the robes meant when he says: "Some scholars take it to mean that saints who translated to glory receive a heavenly body, which here is expressed as a robe. They base this interpretation on Jewish apocalyptic writings that refer to resurrection bodies as 'garments of glory' (1 Enoch 52:16; 2 Enoch 22:8; Ascension of Isaiah 4:16; 9:6-7)".[5] Although there is certainly a Jewish element in understanding John's approach in Revelation, this is too fanciful and ignores the point the Apostle is trying to convey.

The people who wear "white robes" are pure because of their cleansing

Their cleansing is mentioned in 7:14 ("they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"). However, in 6:11 we read that "white robes" were given to them. Kistemaker reconciles this seeming contradiction by eloquently commenting, "They purify their clothes, not through the blood of their own martyrdom but through the blood of the Lamb. Making one's garments white, that is, pure and holy, can be done without exception only through Christ's blood shed on Calvary's cross. It is his blood that removes the impurity of sin."[6] C.f. Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 5:26-27; 1 John 1:7.

The people who wear "white robes" have practiced faithfulness, holiness and righteousness

Jesus promised to those in Sardis, "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments" (3:5). He also defined those who were "worthy" in the prior verse (3:4): "you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." In other words, those who abstain from evil, walk in purity, seek and ask for God's forgiveness will be cleansed (Psalm 51:1-4).

White is the symbol of holiness in Revelation (c.f. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). Therefore, those who desire to wear "white garments" by being pure in this life (c.f. 3:18; 4:4) will be declared pure and righteous. G.K. Beale writes,

> "The robes are not given as a reward for purity of faith but as a heavenly declaration of the saints' purity or righteousness and as an annulment of the guilty verdict rendered against them by the world. Therefore, receiving the robes is an assurance to the petitioning saints that the unbelieving 'earth-dwellers' will be declared guilty and punished for persecuting them… [and those wearing white robes will] enter the New Jerusalem… [and] contrasted with all unbelievers, who are not able to enter… (21:7-8)."[7]

Christians throughout all of history are able to find comfort in the symbolic "white robes" – a symbol of victory because of the Lord Jesus Christ (7:9, 12, 14; c.f. Romans 8:31-39).

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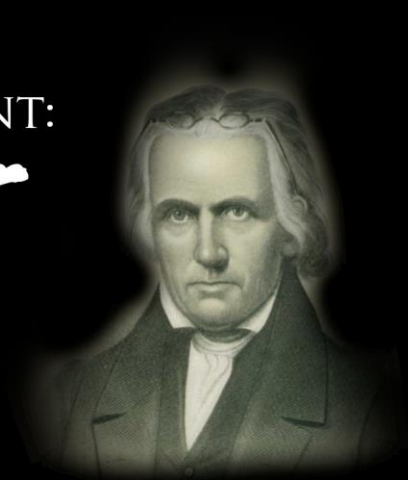
[4] Henry, Matthew. **Revelation.** *The Crossway Classic Commentaries.* Eds. Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999: 84.

[5] Kistemaker, Simon J. **Revelation.** *New Testament Commentary Series.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007: 234.

[6] Ibid, 258.

[7] Beale, G.K. **The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text.** *The New International Greek Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999: 394, 438.

The Restoration Movement: Thomas Campbell



David R. Kenney

Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) is one of the key figures in mankind's efforts to leave the fragmented world of denominationalism and return to the New Testament pattern. Born in County Down, Ireland, he was an esteemed educator and instilled the value of Christian education in his son, Alexander. His father, Archibald Campbell, was once a Roman Catholic, but then joined the Church of England. The times were such that religious partisanship was bitter between the Catholics, Anglicans, and other Protestants. Some theorize that Thomas went with Presbyterianism as an alternative to the religious inclinations of his father who said he preferred to pray "by act of Parliament."

Someone took an interest in Thomas and financed his advanced studies. Thomas graduated from University of Glasgow (1783–1786). The records of his attendance at the University of Glasgow have been lost in a fire. He continued his studies at Whitburn Seceder Seminary (1787–1791). The theological background of the seminary was the Anti-Burgher branch of the Secession Presbyterian Church. Thomas was multi-lingual (English, Latin, Greek, and French).

He married Jane Corneigle in June 1787, who was a descendant of the French Huguenots. They had several children (some of whom died at infancy) including: Alexander (1788–1866), James (1789–1792), Dorethea (1793–1861), Nancy (1798–1841), Jane Corneigle (1800–1871), Thomas, Jr. (1802–1842), Archibald William (1804–1878), and Alicia Anne (1806–1839).

Thomas was both a classical educator and a minister. He taught privately and preached in various locations in Ireland and the United States. The divisive nature of denominationalism is seen by Thomas' religious pedigree. He was an Old-Light Anti-Burgher Seceder Presbyterian. Thomas became troubled by the religious division, so he studied the New Testament to reconcile these variances. He attempted to repair the breach among the Presbyterians over the Burgher issue. Around 1805, he formed the Evangelistic Society of Ulster to address the breach, but it was broken up by the Secession Church, though the division would later be resolved in 1820. At the age of 44, his health deteriorated to the point that his doctor recommended relocation to the New World. Accordingly, he left April 1, 1807, leaving his family and Alexander Campbell to run the Rich Hill Academy. An important restoration history chronological note: the *Last Will & Testament of the Springfield Presbytery* had already been published by Barton Warren Stone and those at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in 1804. Before Thomas ever came to America.

Thomas arrived in the United States in May 1807. We often speak of the importance of historical context in the study of the Scriptures but the same applies when studying restoration history. Some facts about the United States as Thomas Campbell found it:

- Thomas Jefferson was President of the then-17 United States.
- The national population was 6 million (the current population of Ohio alone 11.7 million).
- In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the nation. Ohio also became a state.
- The slave trade with Africa ended in 1807, but the issue of slavery was far from settled.
- There was no public education available.

Thomas Campbell presented his credentials to the North American Synod in Philadelphia, and was assigned to work with the Chartiers Presbytery in Washington County, Pennsylvania. Thomas was on a collision course with the Presbyterian Church, as he continued studying and preaching from the New Testament. Charges were brought against him in October 1807 by the Chartiers. He was suspended in February 1808 and then admonished by the North American Synod in May 1808. He resigned from the Presbyterian Church on September 13, 1808 in a letter that would dispel any notion that Thomas' meekness was

a sign of weakness.

Thomas was not the only one who saw variances between the doctrines of the Presbyterians and the New Testament. His supporters encouraged him to write a declaration for this new group called "The Christian Association." On September 7, 1809 he completed *The Declaration and Address of the Christian Association of Washington,* which was printed and sent out to area denominations in Washington County, Pennsylvania with a plea to join in the effort to following a guiding principle—"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." An honest investigation of the intent of silence leaves no doubt that the Campbells viewed silence as ***restrictive*** rather than permissive. The discussion surrounding the principles enunciated in *The Declaration and Address* led not only to the repudiation of infant baptism, but also the acceptance of immersion for the remission of sins of confessing believers.

When Alexander Campbell and the family arrived in September 1809, the association had already approved the printing of *The Declaration and Address*. The organization would ultimately become the Brush Run Church. Alexander pledged himself to the ministry, and his father was his instructor. Alexander preached his first sermon for the Brush Run Church on September 16, 1810.

Efforts to go back to the pattern of the first century church did not happen overnight. The catalyst for the rejection of infant baptism and acceptance of immersion would not be fully realized on Thomas (though he rejected infant baptism prior) until he was immersed in Buffalo Creek along with his wife, Jane; son, Alexander; daughter-in-law, Margaret; daughter, Dorethea; and others on July 4, 1811. Some debate whether or not the Campbells fully understood the purpose of baptism as this time; however, one should keep in mind that Alexander sought to be immersed *independent* of Baptist doctrine and in accordance to the book of Acts. The service at the immersion included a discourse by Alexander and Thomas that lasted *seven hours*. There is no record of what was stated; however, it is difficult to imagine they did not understand the purpose of baptism. The Brush Run Church was now observing weekly communion and requests for immersions were received.

Thomas decided to relocate to Cambridge, Ohio in October 1813 where he operated a farm and established a school. He was a much sought after educator, but the ministry was not as successful. He decided to move to Pittsburgh where he established the Mercantile Academy as well as a church. Because of the Baptists' acceptance of immersion, the Campbells joined their associations, provided they were free to keep their own doctrinal views.

Thomas sought admission for the church in Pittsburgh to the Redstone Baptist Association in 1816 but was refused because the doctrinal divide between the Reformers (those following the teachings of the Campbells) and the Baptists was becoming more pronounced and publicly disruptive to the Baptist Church. This rejection led Alexander to deliver his famous "Sermon on the Law" to about 1,000 people including 22 preachers. This would lead to a fissure with the Baptist Church and the use of the term "Campbellite" by the Baptists and other critics in denunciation of those who accepted the views of the Campbells. Thomas decided to move to Newport, Kentucky where he served as headmaster of a new academy. He taught a group of slaves and was advised that he was in violation of the law of Kentucky. Repulsed by this, he left immediately and returned to help Alexander in the management of Buffalo Seminary. This would free Alexander's time to prepare for his first debate which was on infant baptism with Secession Presbyterian John Walker.

In August 1823, a plot by the Redstone Baptist Association to humiliate Alexander was discovered. To counter this plot, Alexander elected to form a congregation in Wellsburg, Virginia (now West Virginia) which was outside of the Redstone's jurisdiction. Thomas would remain with the Brush Run Church during this period. In 1826, the Redstone Association expelled the Reformers, but significant damage was apparent after this action.

Thomas assisted Alexander with his debates, writing articles, and operating the printing press for both *The Christian Baptist* and *The Millennial Harbinger*. Thomas was sent to investigate some fascinating evangelism reports by a preacher on the Western Reserve by the name of Walter Scott in 1828. Thomas was excited by Scott's approach to prompting people to obedience to the gospel and wrote glowing reports back to Alexander while he continued to tour with Scott in Ohio.

Thomas travelled to attend meetings of the North District Association and Elkhorn Association in Kentucky to respond to charges in "The Beaver Anath-

ema" in 1830. These meetings led to further separation from the Reformers by the Baptist Church in Kentucky. Entire Baptist Churches and properties were lost (which explains the antagonism Baptists have toward churches of Christ to this day).

In 1830, the Campbells realized a new threat to the restoration plea in the form of Mormonism and its claim to be a restored church with "another testament" produced by Joseph Smith. One of their associates, Sidney Rigdon, defected to the Mormons and was one of their prominent leaders for a period. Thomas was visiting his daughter in Mentor, Ohio when he came to realize the gravity of the Mormon threat. Thomas, who was reluctant to debate, wrote to Rigdon and challenged him to debate on the tenets of Mormonism. Rigdon promptly destroyed the letter, but Alexander would lecture on the subject in 1831 for several days and publish those lectures.

Thomas continued writing and publishing in support of his son's efforts. He also went on extended preaching tours until a horse-riding incident in September of 1832 slowed him down some. Once he recovered, he continued to be active and toured. In 1832, the Bethany church constructed a stone building for worship that would last until Thomas' farewell sermon. He and his wife Jane decided to move into their daughter's house due to the failing health of his wife. Jane Campbell died April 28, 1835 and was buried in the Campbell family cemetery (God's Acre). Thomas would continue working on *The Millennial Harbinger,* but he was now also assisted by Robert Richardson who was once his student and would become his son's biographer.

Always an educator, Thomas served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for a new college, Bethany College, in October 1840. The college was founded on the premise that the Bible was to be the foremost textbook. By 1843, Thomas was advanced in age and decided to live at Bethany Mansion with Alexander and his second wife, Selina. (Alexander's first wife had died of what was called consumption.) Thomas decided to go to Cambridge and preach again, and many various religious groups opened their doors to hear him preach. He was well enough to attend Alexander's final debate with Nathaniel Rice in Lexington, Kentucky in 1843, but it was apparent that his health was diminishing.

By 1847, Thomas' eyesight and hearing was significantly diminished. Though he could no longer see, he was seen quoting scriptures, singing hymns, and teaching children from his vast memory. He consented to give a "farewell sermon" at Bethany Church of Christ on June 1, 1851 though now totally blind. He spoke on "The Two Greatest Commandments" which was transcribed and preserved by Robert Richardson. Shortly after this address, the stone building was torn down and used as foundational stones for a new Bethany Church of Christ building which stands as the last existing building where Alexander had his membership.

The end was near; as Thomas told Alexander "I am going home and will pass over Jordan." He died January 4, 1854 just one month prior to his 91st birthday. Ironically, he lived more in the United States than he had in Ireland. He was buried next to his wife, Jane. His son would continue the work for another twelve years before his body would join his father's on March 4, 1866. Before Alexander's death, West Virginia was recognized as the 35th state of the United States of America. Thomas is largely credited with the restoration slogan "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." He sought religious unity but not at the expense of Christian doctrine.

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Self-Control

David Dean

The comic villain known as Joker used a special toxin to convince Superman that Lois Lane, his wife and the mother of his unborn child, was his archenemy, Doomsday. The other heroes rushed to break Superman free from his confusion, but it was too late. Superman killed the love of his life and then in a more shocking turn of events, the Man of Steel butchered Joker, literally ripping his heart out. This tragic event ushers in the beginning of a comic arc known as *Injustice*—a series that spawned two video games, a series of comics, and a sequel series. It is a worldwide hit because it explores the dark concepts of what happens when good goes bad.

So, what does this have to do with Christianity? In this storyline we see a Superman overcome by his emotions. He lashes out in a whirlwind of anger, grief, and rage. Doing so causes him to break with the foundational traits of his character. His anger creates the perfect storm of events, perhaps transforming one of the greatest superheroes into a super villain.

I am sure we have all seen occasions when individuals have allowed themselves to lose control of their anger, such as when a heated discussion turns violent. Yet, the Bible is clear when it comes to keeping our emotions under control. Paul cautions us to "be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil" (Eph. 4:26-27). In the letter to the Galatians he describes allowing ourselves to lose control as being "against the Spirit" and includes in a list of the works of the flesh: "strife, jealousy, [and] fits of anger" (Gal. 5:16-24). Similarly, the proverbs speak strongly against losing self-control. Consider the following: "Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Prov. 16:32). "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls" (Prov. 25:28). These are only two examples, but they speak to the universal truths underlying proverbs. They provide a backdrop to Paul's words and show the importance of controlling ourselves.

Of course, maintaining self-control is not always easy. At times we will suffer much for the cause of Christ. Yet, this only strengthens the need for our self-control. Our approach to our enemies is to be of love. We are to pray for them according to the words of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount:

> *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:43-48).*

These words from Christ make it clear that while we will face persecution (Matt. 5:10; 2 Cor. 12:10; 2 Tim. 3:12), our response should be love. Allowing our anger to guide us makes us no different than the world. Christ in His prayer for the disciples and, by extension, ourselves reminds us the world will hate us because we are not of this world just as He is not (John 17:6-19)

Naturally, anger is not the only emotion we allow to control us. Love (lust?) can control an individual just as easily. How many times have we seen individuals throw away any and everything for the sake of the person they love? It is this lack of self-control that feeds all forms of sexual sins. In addition, it is the love of parent to child that sometimes results in the willful choice to ignore the sinful actions of a child.

In the *Injustice* story arc Superman allowed anger and sorrow to drive his actions. He created a world that existed in a constant state of fear. One in which

he was the singular dictator and master. He killed without remorse and enslaved whole nations. While being ruled by his emotions caused most of the problems, events took a distinct turn for the worse after Superman reached a tragic breaking point. In a moment of weakness he reacted instead of reflecting. He looked upon the Joker, a sick and horrible individual, and allowed all his rage to boil as he ripped out the Joker's heart.

Returning to the Bible, James speaks concerning our reactions to the events around us. He tells us all to "be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:19-20). The command given here is sound and one that all need to "hide in our hearts," as the Psalmist would say. All too often we see a situation and react without waiting for all the facts.

Imagine, if you will, that you have just received a phone call. It is someone you love, a child or spouse; they tell you they managed to wreck the car. What happens next? Do you get angry and shout, demanding to know what they were thinking? Do you add more pain to an already difficult situation? Or do you do as James instructs? Maybe someone veered in the lane and forced your loved one off the road. Maybe a deer jumped in front of them. Or maybe it was completely their fault, and they are attempting to take responsibility and apologize. If you react, you may never learn the full story.

We expect others to see reason rather than letting their emotions get the best of them. For instance, there was once a young man who was told the truth of the Gospel. He then asked the all-too-difficult question, "What about my loved ones who have already died?" The preacher attempted to do his best to soften what he knew would be a painful realization, but his effort did not change the outcome. The young man, upon hearing the sad reality of his family members' fates, rebelled against the truth. He rejected his friendship with the preacher, rejected the truth, and ultimately rejected God as he turned to atheism. Now, for us it is easy to point to the Bible and ask him, "What about the rich man and Lazarus?" We know the story of how the rich man desperately wanted to come and warn his family, but it was too late (Luke 16:19-31). We could tell the young man how his family would not desire him to follow them. How like the rich man they would beg for a chance to come and warn him! But, as long as he is reacting, it will sadly not help. He had been on the right path, but if he fails to break the cycle of acting thoughtlessly, he will be tragically condemned.

The story arc of *Injustice* is a fascinating read. It shows what happens when one individual is broken and controlled by dark emotions. Yet, in the real world outcomes like this are far more tragic than fascinating. Let us all pray that we will have the strength to reflect and not simply react to the world around us!

The Bible is the Book

Tom Baxley

There are quite a few who regard the Bible as an important book, but not the end-all that it truly is. Islam acknowledges the importance of much of the Bible, but they (falsely) claim that it has been corrupted and the Koran is the superior. Mormons have the Bible, the Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrines and Covenants in their queue. Catholicism, as well as other denominations, believe the churches interpretation of the Bible is more important than the actual Bible. Other groups have priests/prophets who claim to receive direct revelation from God, while still others receive the revelation themselves. So what do we do? Who is correct? With all of these ideas circulating, how can we know what the truth really is? This is why we must continually emphasize that the Bible is not just "an" important book, but it is ***THE*** book; it, and it alone is the standard. This is the only book that will teach us who God is and what His plan is; it is the only road map to heaven.

An Excommunication Document of the Roman Catholic Church

[Note: This appeared in *A History of Episcopacy in Four Parts, From Its Rise to the Present Day*, (c. 1793-1804) by William Guirey (a Restoration Movement preacher who left the Methodist Church in 1791). It originally appeared in a novel by Laurence Sterne, named *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, based on the life of his uncle and father (originally published 1760).]

By the authority of God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of the undefiled Virgin Mary, mother and patroness of our Saviour, and of all the celestial virtues, angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, powers, cherubins and seraphins, and of all the holy patriarchs, prophets, and of all the apostles and evangelists, and of the holy innocents, who in the sight of the Holy Lamb, are found worthy to sing the new song of the holy martyrs and holy confessors, and of the holy virgins, and of all the saints, together with the holy and elect of God. May he be damn'd

We excommunicate, and anathematize him, and from the thresholds of the holy church of God Almighty we sequester him, that he may be tormented, disposed, and delivered over with Dathan and Abiram, and with those who say unto the Lord God, Depart from us, we desire none of thy ways. And as fire is quenched with water, so let the light of him be put out for evermore, unless it shall repent him and make satisfaction. Amen.

May the Father who created man, curse him. May the Son who suffered for us, curse him. May the Holy Ghost, who was given to us in baptism, curse him. May the holy cross which Christ, for our salvation triumphing over his enemies, ascended, curse him.

May the holy and eternal Virgin Mary, mother of God, curse him. May St. Michael, the advocate of holy souls, curse him. May all the angels and archangels, principalities and powers, and all the heavenly armies, curse him.

May St. John, the Præcursor, and St. John the Baptist, and St. Peter and St. Paul, and St. Andrew, and all other Christ's apostles, together curse him. And may the rest of his disciples and four evangelists, who by their preaching converted the universal world, and may the holy and wonderful company of 127martyrs and confessors who by their holy works are found pleasing to God Almighty, curse him.

May the holy choir of the holy virgins, who for the honour of Christ have despised the things of the world, damn him. May all the saints, who from the beginning of the world to everlasting ages are found to be beloved of God, damn him. May the heavens and earth, and all the holy things remaining therein, damn him.

May he be damn'd wherever he be, whether in the house or the stables, the garden or the field, or the highway, or in the path, or in the wood, or in the water, or in the church.

May he be cursed in living, in dying. May he be cursed in eating, and drinking, in being hungry, in being thirsty, in fasting, in sleeping, in slumbering, in walking, in standing, in sitting, in lying, in working, in resting, in [using the toilet], and in blood-letting!

May he be cursed in all the faculties of his body!

May he be cursed inwardly and outwardly! May he be cursed in the hair of his head! May he be cursed in his brains, and in his vertex, in his temples, in his forehead, in his ears, in his eye-brows, in his cheeks, in his jaw-bones, in his nostrils, in his fore-teeth and grinders, in his lips, in his throat, in his shoulders, in his wrists, in his arms, in his hands, in his fingers!

May he be damn'd in his mouth, in his breast, in his heart and purtenance, down to the very stomach!

May he be cursed in his reins, and in his groin, in his thighs, in his genitals, and in his hips, and in his knees, his legs, and feet, and toe-nails!

May he be cursed in all the joints and articulations of his members, from the top of his head to the sole of his foot! May there be no soundness in him!

May the Son of the living God, with all the glory of his Majesty curse him! And may heaven, with all the powers which move therein, rise up against him, curse and damn him unless he repent and make satisfaction! Amen. So be it,—so be it. Amen.

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A Bird's Eye View of John's Dove:

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel

John Krivak

This article hopes to gain clarity by taking a broad perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel. We will keep an eye on where the Spirit appears in the large narrative and what function there comes into view. From this vantage, smaller interpretive units may come into focus more sharply.

The Lay of the Land

The Gospel shows careful and deliberate structure; it is not haphazard. Broadly viewed, we find a Prologue (1:1-18) and an Epilogue (Chapter 21) framing everything between them. Between, it is common to see two major sections that divide right between Chapters 12 and 13. Sometimes the first is distinguished as a "book of signs" and the latter as a "book of glory," yet this is somewhat arbitrary. The features defining one "book" will also be found (perhaps not quite as prominently) in the other, as well. Still, there is broad consensus on the general outline of the Gospel of John.

It is significant that direct mentions of the Holy Spirit are contained only in two major sections: (1:32 to 3:34; and 14:16 to 16:13). The only additional occurrences[1] are two "outliers" after the early grouping (6:63 and 7:39), and one more after the later grouping (20:22). It will be seen that the Spirit references have not fallen randomly into place, nor are they evenly distributed. Each of the two large groupings serves a thematic function within the larger narrative of the Fourth Gospel.

The Early Section: Spirit in Baptism

The "Spirit" is mentioned seven times from 1:32 to 3:34. The clear purpose of this section is to set forth the meaning of baptism and the involvement of the Spirit in baptism.[2] To see this plainly, I recommend a simple exercise. Take a photocopy of John 1:24 to 4:15 that can be marked up. On both ends here, we are expanding the range of text in our focus. This will cover the full interpretive context beyond the actual locations of the word "Spirit". Now, on your copy of text, underline or highlight the following vocabulary items:

- every mention of "baptize" words (baptize, baptism, baptized, etc.)
- every mention of the word "water"[3]
- every mention of the word "spirit" or "Spirit"
- every mention of the word "Pharisee" or "Pharisees"

What shows up are two broad clusters of heavy concentrations of these words: 1:24-34 and 3:22-4:15. And, right between them, is the encounter between Jesus and a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who is challenged to be *"born again"* (or *"be born from above"*) in 3:3, and is similarly challenged to be *"born of water and Spirit"* in v. 5! This was the sort of technique ancient writers used to "clue in" their audience (most were listeners who heard a public reading). Given this writing strategy (that uses word-clusters as book-ends around thematically-linked

[1] A few additional passages (11:33, 4:23-24, 13:21, 19:30) also contain the word "spirit," yet are commonly understood to not refer to the Holy Spirit. They are not included in this analysis.

[2] In my book *Filling The Temple* (self-published, 2013; available through Amazon), I devote two chapters to linking reception of the Spirit to conversionary baptism in NT theology. This discussion is a reworking of the second of these chapters (*Filling*, pp. 43-49).

[3] If vocabulary search criteria were broadened to include "thirst" and "drink," the interpretive context would expand to include the outlying mentions of the Spirit in 6:63 and 7:39.

material), it would be hard *not* to hear the challenges to Nicodemus as clear nudging toward baptism.[4] The Spirit's role is made central to baptism.

It might be worthwhile to dig deeper in the Fourth Gospel. We might nuance this analysis with more complexity. There are actually five discreet clusters, and in some places the concentration of vocabulary is absolutely dense; key words are repeated nearly to the point of absurdity. The author is obviously employing a communications strategy for the benefit of his readers, drawing them to find meanings intentionally lodged, not in explicit declarations lying on the surface of the text, but in the deeper and subtle structures of symbols, allusions, and metaphors. Here are the clusters:

1:24-34—has the heaviest concentration because it introduces the theme of "baptism and Spirit." It begins with the Pharisees interrogating John about the meaning of his baptism, and John answers by introducing Jesus (the "greater one"). Jesus is the sin-remover and—identified to John by His baptismal reception of Spirit—Jesus is also declared to be the one who will himself baptize in Spirit. John (the writer) thus applies the theme of "baptism and Spirit" both to what John administered to Jesus and, suggestively, to what Jesus will later administer himself. His baptism becomes the model for conversionary baptism after Pentecost: the Spirit is received and remains upon the person immersed.[5]

3:5-8—features the mysterious phrases *"be born from above (or born again)"* and then *"be born of water and Spirit."* Like John the Baptist previously, Jesus is engaged with a Pharisee (hint, hint). To carry forward the earlier theme ("baptism and Spirit") makes a perfect fit. The passage concludes with the enigmatic description of one *"born of the Spirit"* (v. 8) as showing the visible manifestation of an invisible animating power. The notion emerges as a major NT theme in the Spirit's work among Christians.

3:22-26—the actual practice of baptism in Jesus' own ministry. It is natural to read Jesus here taking a hands-on involvement. Later, He will entrust baptizing to disciples (4:2); but here He himself apparently baptizes—presumably this is when Jesus baptizes the Twelve.[6]

4:1-2—For the third time (hint, hint), Pharisees are probing the significance of baptism. Jesus' ministry has now surpassed that of John.

4:10-15—Jesus honors the Samaritan woman with a disclosure that was withheld from Nicodemus: Jesus declares himself to be the Christ (4:25-26)! It should therefore be fitting that we find a deeper unfolding of the "baptism and Spirit" theme. This final vocabulary cluster contains just one of the vocabulary words we used to mark-up John's text: water. It falls into place eight times in these few verses. The mysterious allusion to *"living water*," the water that brings thirsting to an end, leads to this: *"...the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life"* (John 4:14, ASV). D.A. Carson[7] declares the meaning to be, "clearly a reference to the Spirit who alone gives life (6:63)".

The two "outliers" point forward to Pentecost, when the outpoured Spirit would be accessible through baptism. They also look ahead in the narrative to the next major group of Spirit references. In 6:63, the disciples are ready to quit Jesus after His hard sayings (which surely sounded cannibalistic). He pushes them to consider His coming ascension away from them (v. 62)—when the Spirit would come! Then, 7:39 drops all ambiguity.[8] It provides John's most clear, explicit, and direct statement about "baptism and Spirit":

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[4] Of course, this link of baptism and Spirit, so central to Christianity after Pentecost, would be anachronistic here before this great outpouring. Perhaps Jesus is setting up Nicodemus for a future "light bulb moment" when he would recall this challenge after the Cross and Resurrection, and then after Pentecost had taken place (see 2:22; 12:16; 13:7; 16:4).

[5] The correspondence of Jesus' reception of Spirit in baptism with ours, also in baptism, is described using the shared term "anointing," see *Filling The Temple,* pp. 33-37.

[6] It is not stated which among the Twelve had received John's baptism. These were probably not re-baptized by Jesus since His and John's baptisms accomplished identical results in response to the same Kingdom message (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). Before Pentecost, the baptisms of John and of Jesus did not convey the Spirit. There is also no mention of the Apostles being re-baptized after the Spirit was outpoured on Pentecost. Acts 19:1-7 seems to indicate that John's "Spirit-less" baptism was regarded as invalid subsequent to Pentecost.

[7] Carson, p. 220.

[8] Although John 7:37-39 and 1 Cor. 12:13 employ different Greek words for "drink," they together sound mysteriously similar in linking baptism with reception of Spirit*: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit"* (NASB).

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39, NASB)

According to this early grouping of references to the Spirit, the prevailing theme is the significance of baptism as the place where the Spirit is received. This is where Jesus received the Spirit, the place pointed out for Nicodemus, the place to find "living water" that brings an end to thirsting, and the place—in times after Jesus' glorification—where believers would receive the Spirit.

The Latter Section: the disciples' Paraclete

This grouping includes 14:16 to 16:13—with four references to "Spirit" and four more to "Paraclete". The latter term is variously translated as Helper, Advocate, or Comforter—each indicating a direct role with Christian disciples.

The Spirit makes "oneness" with Jesus real. The Fourth Gospel devotes several chapters to the last night Jesus spends with His disciples, preparing them for His absence after He takes the Cross. In this Farewell Discourse, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit as a "Comforter" who will "fill-in" for Jesus (since His absence is ultimately temporary). The true moment of the discourse is the prayer in John 17—whose answer from God is sure—for "oneness" between Jesus and His disciples. The same "oneness" is enjoyed within the Trinity.

This "oneness" that Jesus prays for is the tender answer to the sad anticipatory grieving of Chapter Sixteen. Jesus speaks as a man soon to die—the sadness of broken connections, the concern for those left behind, the honest facing of the shadow of grim death. But something very different breaks conventional expectations for a man whose moments are short. Since the Spirit is coming—even if we factor-in death on the Cross—Jesus sees the future holding a plus for Him and His disciples:

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you (John 16:7).

Jesus will die, but His disciples—for whom He prayed—can expect:

- That they will rejoin Jesus wherever He is going (14:1-7).
- That Jesus will have secured their connection to the Father before He has gone (14:8-14).
- That the Spirit will fill the empty void He leaves behind (14:18-31)
- That their connection to Jesus will be uninterrupted while He is away (15:1-11).
- That Jesus has cemented the bonds between disciples, so the connections will not break while He is absent from the group (15:12-17).
- That hard times will hit (15:18-25), but the Spirit will be with them (and, *"greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world,"* 1 John 4:4).

Quite obviously, the sense of loss of Jesus is not merely an issue for a first-century disciple! We—who *"have not seen, and yet have believed"* (John 20:29)—also hurt from the separation that endures to centuries and millennia. We also need a Comforter! Those who receive the Spirit have Jesus again!

There remains the final outlier at 20:22—

"And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

This is too easily misread as the offer of a pre-Pentecostal infilling of the Spirit. We may disregard this interpretation for several reasons.

First, the words "on them" were supplied and are not in the Greek text.

Second, John is writing decades after the Spirit (on Pentecost) had first been outpoured. His readers know of this.

Third, the focus of Fourth Gospel on the Holy Spirit is in agreement with pervasive NT theology which sees baptism (after Pentecost) as the place where Christians receive the Spirit. The force of Jesus' exhortation, then, is of a piece with the larger portrayal of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel: readers desiring to connect with the resurrected Jesus—since He has ascended to Heaven—should be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit.

The Ancient Landmarks

(Proverbs 22:28)

A Sermon Outline by Scott Harp

Introduction

1. Daniel Boone's grave in Frankfort Cemetery is something to see. He died in 1820. It is a landmark! It is old, but is it ancient?
2. "Do not move the **ancient** **landmark** that your fathers have set." (Proverbs 22:28)
3. "Landmark" – something visible – like a stone – maybe a wedding ring
    a. I love to read historical markers/cemetery monuments/go to Daniel Boone's grave in Frankfort, Kentucky or Henry Clay's monument in Lexington, Kentucky.
    b. Israel had landmarks.
        i. 12 stones of Joshua – "And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day." (Joshua 4:9 ESV)
        ii. "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, "Till now the LORD has helped us."" (1 Samuel 7:12) (Ebenezer means "stone of remembering")
4. "Ancient" – Heb, *Olam* – everlasting, forever, eternity, from of old, lasting,
    a. "forever" – "Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live **forever**—" (Genesis 3:22)
    b. Consider The Rainbow – "When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the **everlasting** covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." (Genesis 9:16) "everlasting" is the same word as "forever" in Gen. 3:22.

You'd Have As Good A Chance To Remove The Rainbow As . . .

The Ancient Landmark of God's Word

a. God's Word is forever – "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." (1 Peter 1:25)
b. Jesus applied this principle in the Sermon on the Mount – "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24)
c. "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." (Psalm 119:89)
d. "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed." (Malachi 3:6)

The Ancient Landmark of Marriage

a. "He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold

fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'" (Matthew 19:4–6)

b. Marriage has not changed in God's mind since creation. One man for one woman for life.
c. Separation is allowed in only two circumstances
    i. Death – Romans 7:1, 2 – natural cause of separation
    ii. Adultery – Matthew 19:9 – Sexual relations with someone outside the marriage.
d. Society may change/redefine marriage 10,000 times, but God's Word will not change on this subject.

The Ancient Landmark of Proper Worship

a. John 4:23-24 – "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23–24)
b. What did New Testament Christians do?
    i. They sang together – Ephesians 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:15
    ii. They prayed together – 1 Cor. 14:15; Acts 4:31
    iii. They heard the word spoken – Acts 20:7
    iv. They partook of the Supper on Sundays – Acts 20:7
    v. They gave of their means on Sundays – 1 Corinthians 16:1,2
c. Nothing has changed – we should glory in the opportunity to do the same

The Ancient Landmark of Salvation

a. Ways to come to Jesus are about as many as there are churches. Renditions of the "Sinner's Prayers" are varied. But if you looked in the Bible, you'd never find any rendition of it. Why? There's no such thing as a sinner's prayer! Sinners certainly pray! But no sinner's prayer ever saved a person.
b. God's plan is simple.
    i. Listen to the word of God spoken – Romans 10:17
    ii. Believe in Christ as Lord – John 3:16
    iii. Repentance – Change of heart, thought & direction – Luke 13:3
    iv. Confession – Matthew 10:32
    v. Baptism – Acts 2:38
    vi. Faithful Christian Life – Rev. 2:10
c. Simply do what they did and you will have what they had!

Conclusion

The Ancient Landmarks are fixed. His word will never change. His plan for marriage, worship and salvation are UNCHANGEABLE!!

Some Songs that go with this subject

- O Worship The King
- O Thou Fount Of Every Blessing – esp. v.2
- Thy Word
- Give Me The Bible

Church History:

The Second Great Awakening

Kyle D. Frank

The Second Great Awakening was a religious movement/revival that took place close to the end of the Revolutionary War. During this time, Protestant churches (a general name for all non-Catholic Churches) and societies began to hold revivals and meetings throughout the country. Reform movements were begun in various denominations, and new and exciting religious movements began to form as people took their Bibles and compared the various groups with the scriptures. People would pack supplies to last days or even weeks to attend these meetings.

The Methodists used circuit riders to reach a wide area with their message. Other groups such as the Baptists and Presbyterians held camp meetings where several fired-up messengers would preach to different parts of the encampment.

Several well-known colleges were started at this time and a movement towards education was begun. It started at the local neighborhood log schoolhouse and eventually progressed to the university level.

The Second Great Awakening happened in many episodes throughout the various denominations, but the revivals were very similar in structure and form. The most effective types covered Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, and Ohio in their greatest extent. Each denomination had assets and supplies which allowed it to work in the rudest frontier areas. The Methodist circuit riders, drawn from the common folk, had the closest rapport with their friends and neighbors.

Theology of the period is difficult to understand at best, because it was not a united movement, but was spread among denominations. Some expected the coming of Christ to happen within a few years, others believed they were ushering in a 1,000 years of peace, after which Christ would return (*post*-millennialism).

The western end of New York State came to be known as "the burned over district" because of the great number of meetings held here. History records that our "little block of paradise" was very heavily evangelized and even an original phase of Mormonism occurred here too.

On the frontier, evangelical denominations, especially Methodists and Baptists, sent missionary preachers and exhorters to meet the people where they were—in the backcountry.

Most of the Scotch-Irish immigrants, before the American Revolutionary War, settled in the backcountry of Pennsylvania and down the spine of the Appalachian Mountains in present-day Maryland and Virginia, where Presbyterian emigrants and Baptists held large outdoor gatherings prior to the war. The Presbyterians and Methodists sponsored similar gatherings regularly after the Revolution.

The denominations that encouraged revivals saw men as equal before God. The Baptists were successful in the Tidewater south where regular folk were converted.

In the west, camp meetings from far and wide were held and large numbers of common folks would be attracted, not only for the religion but also for the fellowship that would come from these massive get-togethers. The revivals provided for the spiritual needs of each congregant and large numbers were "converted" or "got through" to have a relationship with the Lord.

It is an interesting bit of information (and I don't know how they got it from), but it is said that of every three people "saved" two were female. Women were nearly twice in number at the "mourner's bench" or Baptist salvation membership. Men were just not as apt to go forward when the call for penitents came.

From this religious background in America we see the emergence of men who sought for a return to the Bible as the only rule for faith and practice. It is from this background that Barton W. Stone, James O'Kelly, Elias Smith, Abner Jones, Walter Scott, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and others emerged.

In our next issue we will address some of the "flavors" of the earliest Restoration movements and how and where they popped up. It is a very interesting study, indeed.

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST GREET YOU

For All Have Sinned and Fall Short

Mitch Robison

The most difficult task facing preachers or anyone trying to win souls for Christ is to convict people of sin. It is readily agreed by all that sin blights the human race, but there is still not often enough the personal consciousness and remorse demanded for conversion. It is neither pleasing nor flattering to awaken to the seriousness of personal iniquity. Therefore, most of us just refuse to face the reality of sin in our own lives. It is significant that only nine times in the entire Bible do we find people who freely admitted, "I have sinned." That is the hardest confession on earth to make. The reason for that is simple: A full realization of one's sinfulness requires obedience in order to be made free.

It is not necessary for one to be a gifted seer, or prophet, to discern certain signs on the horizon that bode ill for civilization. The raging fires of uncontrolled passion and lust burn brightly on the front pages of our newspapers and are emblazoned across our television screens with lurid tales of adultery, fornication, murder, drunkenness, drug use, hatred, strife, greed, revelings and war. It is a mad, mad world, gone even more mad because of the throwing off of the one great restraint given to mankind—the consciousness of the reality and the fatality of sin.

> *"Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:1-2).*

When folk's consciences are dulled, there is no effective restraint from sin.

The Consequence of Sin

The wise man wrote many centuries ago, "*Fools mock at sin*" (Prov. 14:9). And we see that constantly throughout our society today. Yet, only a fool would mock such serious realities as "*The soul who sins shall die," "The wages of sin is death" "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear*" (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23; Isa. 59:1-2). All of the words of anguish, horror, pain, hurt, disappointment and despair could never portray the ravages of sin. It would take the moan of all the dying, the wail of all the bereaved, the cry of all the orphans, the lament of all the widowed, the terrorized screams of all the lost, and all the shrieks that emanate from the pits of hell to depict the ravages of sin. And that would still only be a partial picture!

It was sin that drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and closed that garden forever to mankind. Sin banished Cain from his family and into a foreign land. Sin necessitated the flood that destroyed the world in the time of Noah. Sin brought the children of Israel into Egyptian bondage. And it was sin that caused them to wander forty years in the wilderness, after God had delivered them. It was sin that kept Moses from entering into the land of Canaan. Sin brought the defeat of Israel at Ai, sin that led them time and again into captivity and bondage. Sin persecuted the prophets, killed the holy men of God, and finally sin had a field day when the Son of God was crucified! Thus the whole panoramic view of man's behavior is marred and scarred by the inroads of sin. But we need to keep in memory that the stain of sin was placed on the canvas of the historical picture by man. God is not at fault for it.

Facing Up to Personal Guilt

Surely we should realize the reality of sin, and that means facing up to the sin in our own lives. We must also recognize the terrible consequences of sin. Why, then, is there this hesitation we have in recognizing our own guilt? Are we so much more righteous than others that we have entirely escaped the pollution of sin in our lives? Think of how insidiously the devil has wormed his way into our minds to destroy the personal recognition, and the acknowledgment, of sin. But the guilt remains, whether or not we acknowledge it! King David aptly said:

> *The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there*

is none who does good, no, not one (Psa. 14:2-3).

The fact that all others have sinned against God does not minimize our own guilt, for we are not excluded. Solomon placed upon all a personal, as well as a blanket, indictment, when he declared: "*There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin*" (Ecc. 7:20). It was because of man's departure from God that a Savior was sent to redeem us:

> *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).*

The need for a Savior is stated so simply, "*For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23).

God's Punishment for Sin

> *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels... These will go away into everlasting punishment," "This is the second death, even the lake of fire" (Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:14).*

The horrible anguish and torment of those that are lost becomes revolting to some who would impeach the justice of God. But can we say that God is unjust? The terrible price to be paid for sin only accentuates the awfulness of sin! If sin were not so terrible, the consequences would not be so great.

When I think of the punishment that God has reserved for the wicked, I am not about to criticize Him, because He has not *forced* us to sin with impunity. Rather, I am to learn that sin is such defilement that God cannot admit it into His presence. If we try to minimize the guilt of sin, or the punishment prescribed for it, we only belittle God and His word. It is also another step in belittling the work done by Jesus Christ in saving us from sin. We will have a proper appreciation for Christ and His sacrifice only when we realize the effect of sin—the effect on us and on God.

The Savior for Sin

The preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ falls on deaf ears only because folks do not keenly feel the need for a Savior. There is not the awakened sense of guilt, and need for relief, that will lead one to seek salvation from sin. Every sermon that depicts the sinfulness of the world is made to apply in a general sense, but only a few are willing to apply it personally. Good moral men are epitomized as examples; and the world asks, "Am I not as good as he?" But one passage still condemns that kind of thinking:

> *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8, 10).*

Should we not, then, be anxious to confess our sin before the Father, and happily accept the redemption that is found in Christ Jesus because of the cleansing power of His blood?

We need strong and forceful proclamation of the saving gospel of Christ that will produce a consciousness of sin on the part of them that hear. Jesus declared, "*I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:3). And when the gospel was first preached publicly after the death of Jesus Christ, people were told, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). We must learn to distinguish between right and wrong—as God defines it! We must distinguish between truth and error, and between the church that Jesus built and the counterfeits built by men. Sin must be so condemned that souls will recognize the final result of sinfulness is eternal separation from God.

Obeying the "Form of Doctrine"

God said, in the Scripture written by the apostle Paul:

> *Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Rom 6:16-18).*

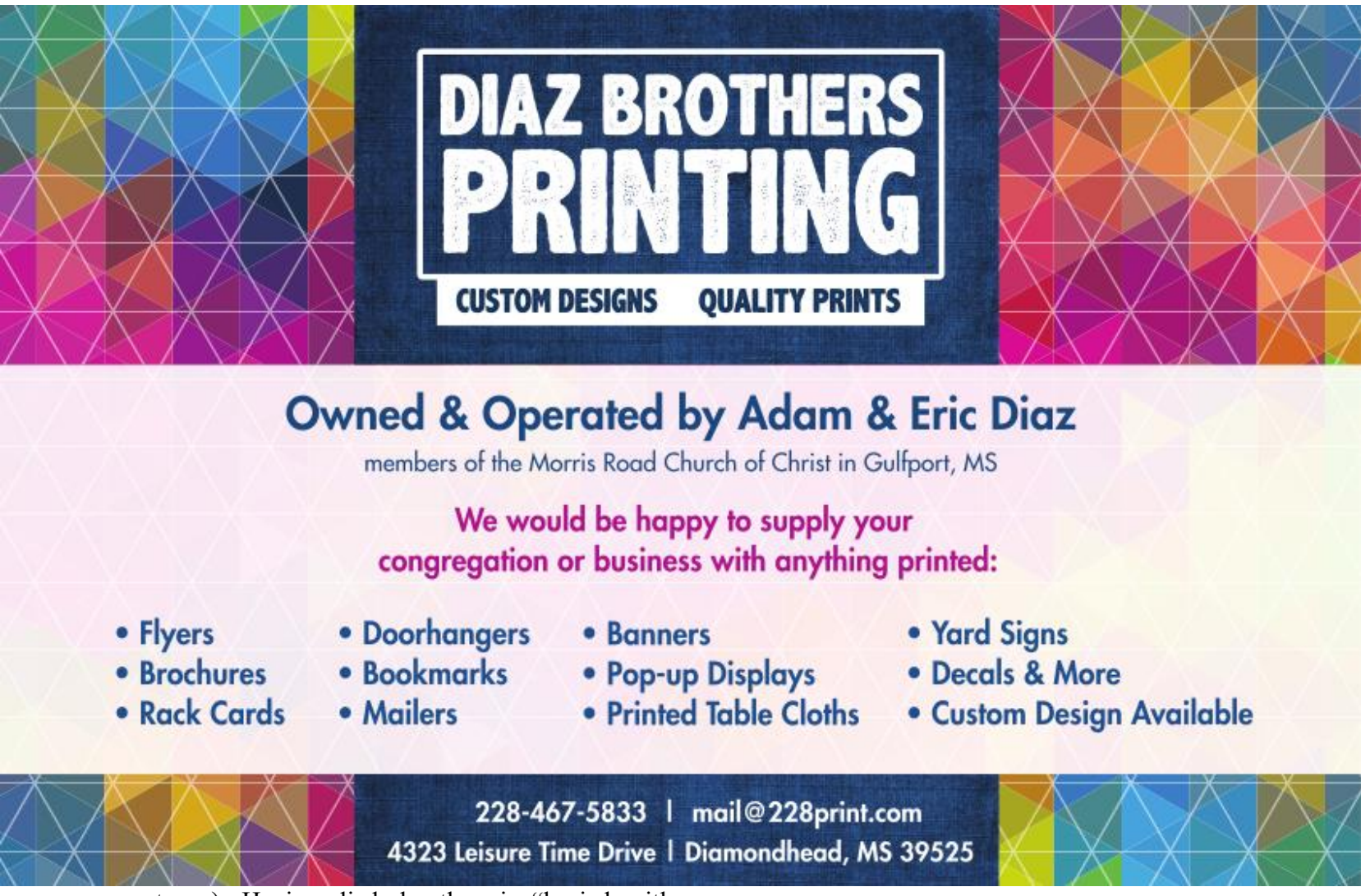
Notice that it is our obedience to "*that form of doctrine*" that makes us free from sin. The doctrine is declared by Paul to be, "*That Christ died for our sins... that he was buried... that he was raised*" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). But how do we obey the "form" of that doctrine?

The Scriptures answer:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin (Rom. 6:1-7).

One must believe that he is a sinner and that only Christ can save him, thus he is led to die to sin (repentance). Having died, he then is "buried with Christ in baptism" and then is "raised" to new life in Christ. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of our salvation. Our death, burial, and resurrection—in the obedience of baptism—is the response that becomes the means of our salvation. That is the "obedience to the form of doctrine" that makes us free from sin (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18).

If you have never been baptized into Christ, your choice is simple. You can continue to grovel in sin, reveling in iniquity, and drinking deep from worldly pleasures—even trying to deny or excuse it. Or you can accept the salvation which God offers you in His Son, Jesus Christ. The choice is yours, but you cannot escape the consequences of that choice! Because of the love of God and Christ, you can rise above the sinfulness that binds you by "obeying from the heart the form of doctrine" that sets you free.



Quotes to Contemplate

On Adding to the Word

One thing I know, that wherever non-essentials are made terms of communion, it will never fail to have a tendency to disunite and scatter the church of Christ. It is certainly making the door of the church narrower than the gate of Heaven, and casting away those whom Jesus has received.

-Rice Haggard
An Address…on the sacred import of the Name Christian (1804)

On Faith in Prayer

"And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). Probably, the greatest labor in the kingdom is this invisible work. To speak words to one we cannot see, asking him to do things we cannot see, in order to bring about the results we desire, yet cannot see.

-Terry Rush
The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense

On Counterfeit Churches

Most religion wears the brand name of Jesus but has all the markings of counterfeit merchandise at bargain prices.

-Terry Rush
The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense

On Dr. W.M. Harris—Depraved Christian?

Having received lengthy communications from brothers E.H. East and S.B. Giles, of Washington county, Texas, in reference to "Dr. W.M. Harris,—a Dentist," it becomes my duty to notice him on the cover of the Review…

Mr. Harris is well known in this country. He was a Presbyterian a few years since, joined the disciples in Maury county—soon became a preacher,—and was very capable of telling the truth, and had the appearance of great humility and sincerity. [He] visited Russelville, Alabama, and in a short time married an estimable disciple, sister L.D. [He] took her to Missouri, treated her so ill that the brethren called him to account for his behavior.

He took offence, removed his wife to her parents, who were then near Memphis, Tennessee, tore her baby away from her and abandoned her—the child died soon after. For his conduct he was [exposed] in the Bible Advocate by brothers John H. Dunn, and N.R. Ladd.

He…went to Ohio as a preacher under the name of Bennett. The brethren of Ohio applied to me for information in reference to him. He left for Pittsburg, where he delighted the brethren as a preacher. He was detected in that City by brother E.A. Smith, and left on Lord's day morning, just before the hour he was to preach. He had in his possession, no doubt, forged letters.

Poor Harris is a strange compound! His health is bad, and he expects to die soon. He has the appearance of a most devout man, understands the Christian institution, and preaches with much success, and yet he is guilty of many of the vilest deeds. Did I not believe the day of Demons had past, I should suppose at times, he was possessed of at least a legion. I am heartily sorry for him. If he is not crazy, he is deeply depraved.

Tolbert Fanning
Christian Record (1846)

On Human Government

All the wars and strifes between tribes, races, nations, from the beginning until now, have been the result of man's effort to govern himself and the world, rather than to submit to the government of God. I am not intimating in this, that human government is not necessary, I believe that it is necessary, and that God ordained it as a punishment to man for refusing to submit to the government of God and it must exist so long as the human family or any considerable portion of it refuses to submit to the government of God. Human government originated in the rebellion of man against his Maker, and was the organized effort of man to govern himself and to promote his own good and to conduct the affairs of the world independently of the government of God. It was the organized rebellion of man against God and his government."

—David Lipscomb
Civil Government
(available from Gospel Armory Publishing)

Reader's Remarks:

Remarks on "Love Your (Political) Enemies"

It seemed to us that "Love Your (Political) Enemies" addressed several different issues. The first was to love your enemies (no matter what) and pray for the king (no matter what). With these points we would strongly agree. Every Christian should recognize these are strong Biblical points that are very relevant and important today. You did a good job of reminding readers how difficult this would have been in the first century and why we are to do this, "So that you may be children of your father in heaven."

The second issue communicated by the article was that we as Christians should not confront fellow Christians about who they vote for or what party they affiliate with. About this we would respectfully disagree. "How can you call yourself a Christian and vote for that guy?" "Free from Democrats? We can only hope." Yes, there is a right way and a wrong way to confront a brother, but I think that we would agree that confronting a brother is not wrong in and of itself.

—R. & P. in Oklahoma

Editor's Reply

I appreciate the letter you mailed. Yes, our family is well, and we are glad yours is as well.

It was not my intention at all to leave you (or anyone) with the impression we should not address political issues, including the morals, actions, and stances of the political candidates and the parties they represent. It was the *how* of addressing these issues that was the focus of my comments. The quotes (from my editorial) that you gave above are things I have personally heard. The first said by a Democrat, and the second one by a Republican. In both instances, the speaker didn't want a conversation, didn't want to understand, didn't want to persuade or convince with evidence—they had already written off the others.

In my "I really enjoy putting people in their place" days, I pulled up and threw away some political signs. I drew unkind word balloons on the front of newspapers I delivered when certain politicians made the front page. I taught a small child to say a certain presidential candidate stinks, then encouraged him to go tell this new phrase to his mother (who was a very big fan of said candidate). I could mention several other instances, but the point is that I did not act in love at all in doing that. And do you think that child's mother was convinced to change her vote? Of course not.

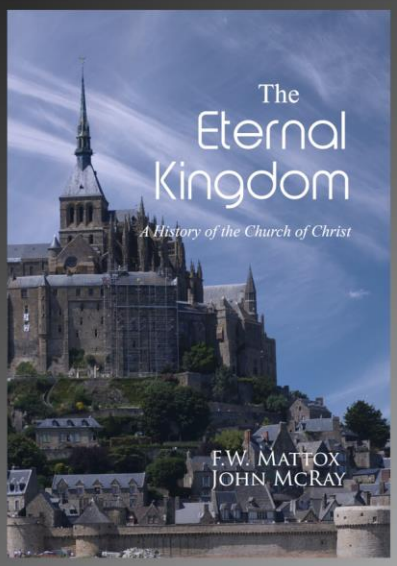
Years later, we sat down at a restaurant with some friends, who we had built up a relationship with, and asked them openly and honestly, why they belonged to their political party. They told us they don't support certain sinful stances being pushed by some in the party, but they believe strongly in helping the poor (James 1:25), and they believe their party cares more about helping the poor. It allowed us to have further conversations about some of the issues that divide the parties.

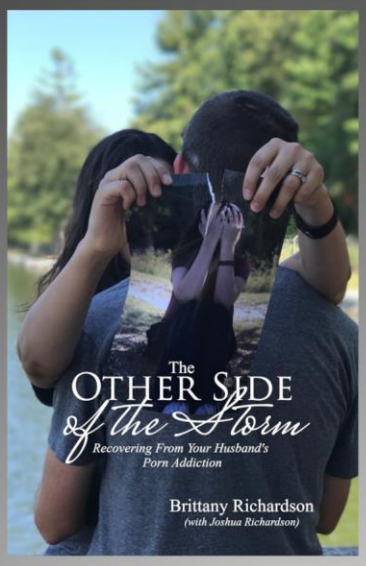
We must consider *why* we want to "confront" brethren on who they vote for. Is it because we have a strong allegiance to a certain party and have hatred for any on the other side? Is it because we have the notion that anyone who votes Republican hates the poor, and anyone who votes Democrat wants to kill babies? Or is it because we truly care about their souls, and we, in love, want to make sure they know what they are (perhaps unintentionally) endorsing with their vote?

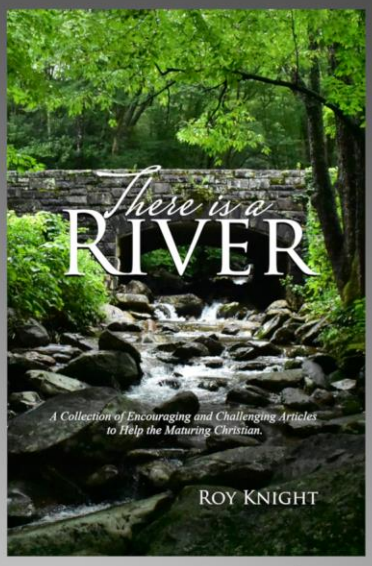
We are in complete agreement—we cannot act as though political issues and differences don't exist. We must stand strong against sin wherever it may be. But we must take care *how* we do it. We must do it from a stance of love and care for that person's soul, and not (like I used to do… somewhat regularly) from a desire to figuratively beat the person into changing their position.

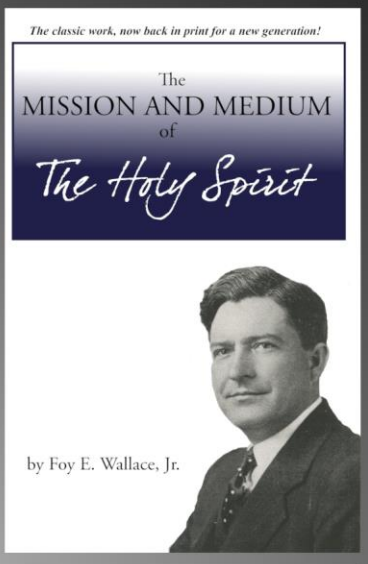
If we vote, we must decide what issues are most important to us, and choose candidates who best fit those views. But without a doubt, whatever stance we take on an issue, that stance must be one informed and in line with the Word of God. And unfortunately, one cannot always trust a politician or a party to fit that.

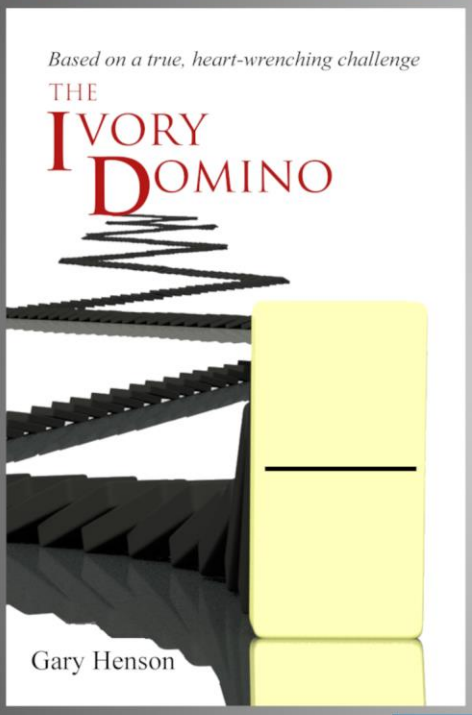
Try some of our best-sellers

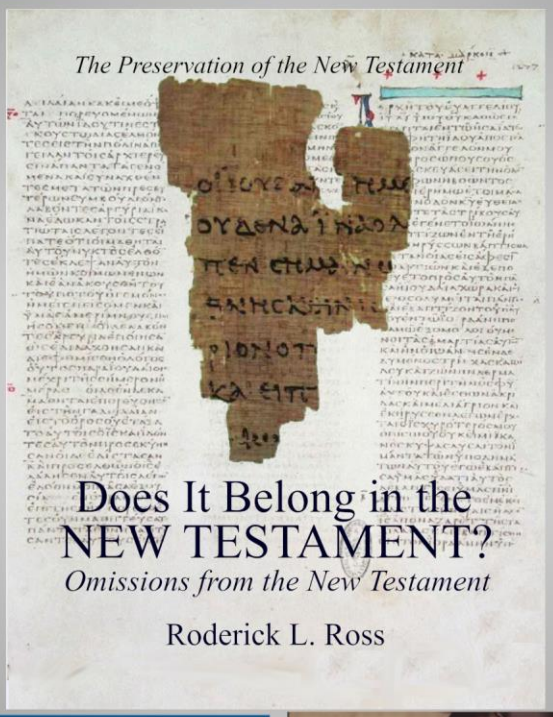


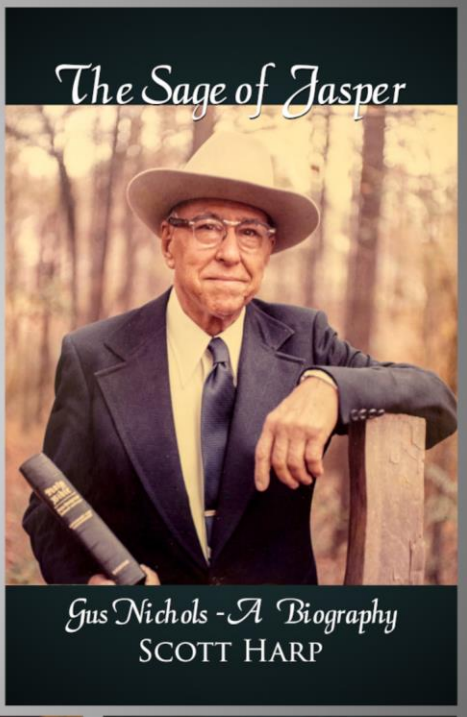


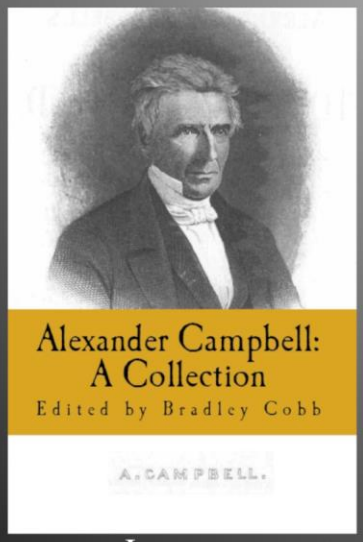


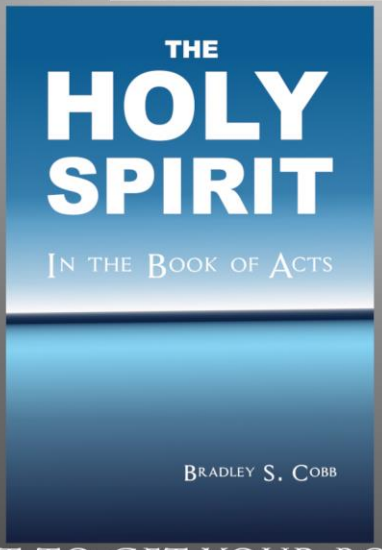


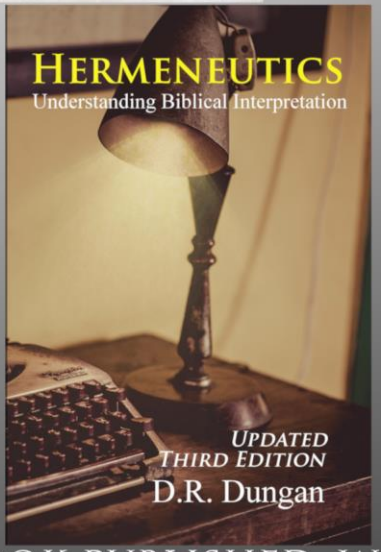


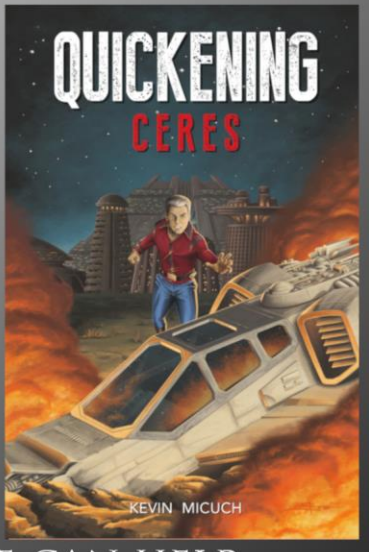












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About the AUTHORS

Allen Bailey preaches at congregations across the country, and enjoys spending time with his grandchildren.

Tom Baxley is presently the minister for the Highway 9 church of Christ, but has high hopes of one day venturing to Middle-earth, hoping to rebuild and minister to the great city of Osgiliath, and finally teach them the greatness of ultimate frisbee and disc golf. Until that time he will remain in Alabama with his wife and three children.

Jimmie Beller loved to smile, even though he suffered for over a decade through cancer brought on by his service as a medic in Vietnam. He loved reading, studying, and listening to sermons. He told the editor he looked just like Jeremie Beller (Jeremie and the editor both disagree with that assessment).

Gantt Carter, in addition to preaching and writing, also has the ability to teach you how to safely hit something with a small propelled piece of metal. His wife does too.

Darin Chappell has been a university professor, a city manager, a debater, a teacher, a preacher, and an occasional fill-in morning radio host. He and his wife live in Missouri, where he still studies from his Dickson New Analytical King James Bible.

Gerald Cowan. After more than six decades of preaching, teaching, and random writing while still learning what it means to offer oneself in service to God in Christ, allowing the Lord himself to direct and provide and trying to avoid judging or envying the service and achievements of others – hoping there's a bit more time to do something worthy of the name of Christ and his gospel cause.

Adam Cozort works with the Lakeside church of Christ in Springfield, IL. Over the last 15 years, he has preached full-time with congregations in Illinois, Mississippi, and Georgia. He is a licensed high school sports official in football, basketball, and baseball. He and his wife Shea have five sons who they have been homeschooling since before COVID-19 made homeschooling a requirement.

David Dean serves the church of Christ in Fouke Arkansas. He divides his time between studying God's Word, preparing for sermons and Bible classes, and spending as much time as he can with his wife and two children. In whatever time is left David can be found with a book in his hand and a cup of coffee!

Kyle Frank is a disabled workaholic whose idea of fun is spending twelve hours a day reading the Amer-

ican Standard Version (of 1901), Restoration Movement biographies, sermons, and seeing how many writing projects he can keep going at once.

Zac Hall was born and raised in Mid-Missouri. He was baptized into Christ in 1998. He and his wife Sarah have three kids: Vaneza, Kylie and Lehya. Zac is a 2018 graduate of the Bible Institute of Missouri. He hosts of BibleWayMedia's "What Does the Bible Say" Podcast. He also teaches with the Online Academy of Biblical Studies. Zac labors with the Park Street church of Christ in Olathe, Ks.

Scott Harp is the author of *The Sage of Jasper: Gus Nichols – A Biography*, as well as the curator of TheRestorationMovement.com.

Bill Howard is a former elder, preacher, and restaurateur who spends his "retired" time writing detective novels and study books for new Christians, as well as encouraging others.

Hiram Kemp is a graduate of the Florida School of Preaching (2016) and preaches for the South Florida Avenue church of Christ. He received formal education from Bethune Cookman University (BA in Criminal Justice, 2011) and Nova Southeastern University (MS in Reading Education, 2014). He has received a Master's Degree in Old Testament from Freed-Hardeman University. Hiram and his wife, Brittani, have two beautiful children.

David Kenney is a Restoration Movement enthusiast, blogger, and avid reader. He blogs occasionally at drkenney.blogspot.com.

Earl Kimbrough has preached for over 60 years, and has written several books on Restoration Movement personalities (including F.B. Srygley). He wrote for and helped edit *The Alabama Restoration Journal* for its 15-year existence.

John Krivak is a constant student of the Bible and church history, especially the Restoration Movement and Alexander Campbell. He studied Bible and Biblical Languages at Harding University. He can be contacted via email by using jkrivak @zoominternet.net.

Stephane Maillet lives in New Brunswick, Canada, with his wife and children. He is a graduate of the Southeast School of Biblical Studies, and runs the website *AddedSouls.com*. He can be found on most social media platforms, as well as YouTube, Rumble, and in podcast form under "Added Souls."

Ryan Manning is a piano-playing, homeschooling parent who also preaches and enjoys reading his Greek New Testament. He and his wife and children really like going to Roundhouse.

Richard Mansel preaches any time he has the opportunity, and enjoys reading and writing. He also wrote a novel (and if the editor wasn't running behind, he would have got the information to include in this bio…).

Wayne Parker is a missionary who lives in Oklahoma while waiting to live in Palau once the travel restrictions are lifted. He and his family enjoy board games, visiting people in Arkansas, and eating pizza across from the church building.

Mitch Robison preaches the gospel and does what he can to be helpful to those who are in need. He is the author of two books of sermons (*Every Man Needs Jesus Christ*, which came out last month, and *A God Who Rejoices*, from 2019) as well as a teaching study called *Genesis: Origin of God's Chosen Nation.*

Jake Schotter loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching (since 2009), and writing about the Truth. He has been very fortunate to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them cheaply. He is a Bible major at Freed-Hardeman University.

Chuck Wyeth just moved to New Mexico with his wife and children. He is (almost) a graduate of Sunset School of Biblical Studies (two weeks to go). He is the co-author of the brand-new book, *Baptism: The Often Misunderstood Commandment*. Do you have your copy yet?

Bradley S. Cobb has been actively involved in two barn razings over the last month (no, that isn't a misspelling). In his spare time, he tries to produce *The Quarterly* and finish his book on Revelation. He was also told by a funeral home employee, "Wow, I want you to do *my* funeral. That was quick." If there was one thing he could do right now, it would be to get the Wellerman song out of his head, where it has taken up residence for half a week. (Don't look it up. I am warning you now. You'll listen to it over and over and over and over…)