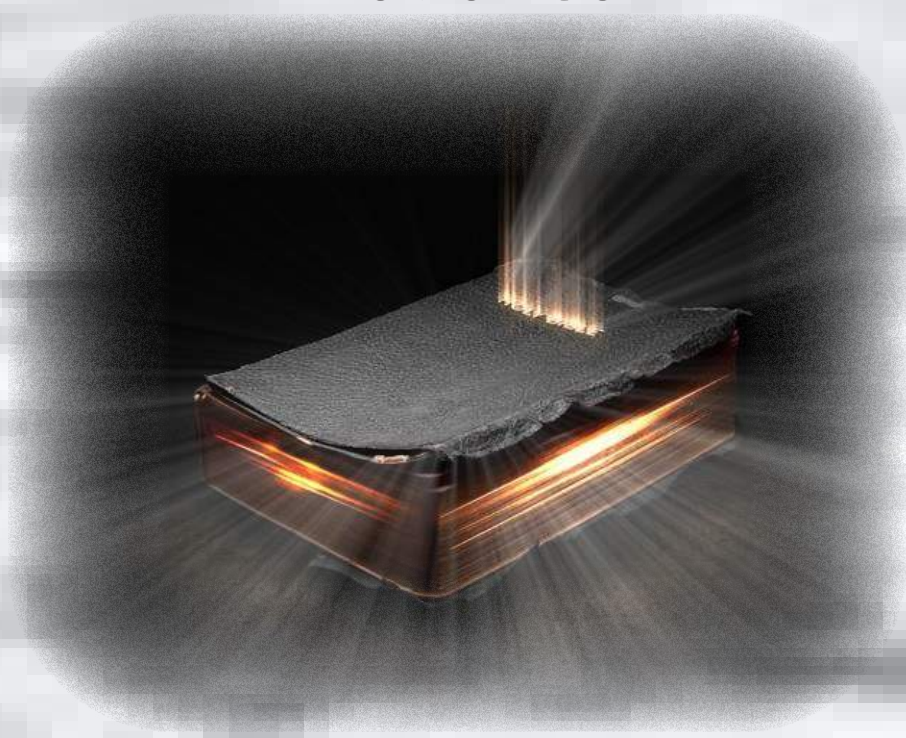


2018 LECTURESHIP

The 29th Annual Oklahoma City Lectureship March 22 – March 25, 2018

SALVATION AND ALL ITS BLESSINGS,
THE FAVOR OF GOD



“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

(1 Timothy 4:8)





The 29th Annual
Oklahoma City Lectureship
March 22 – March 25, 2018

SALVATION AND ALL ITS BLESSINGS,
THE FAVOR OF GOD

*“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness
is profitable unto all things, having promise
of the life that now is, and of that which is to
come.”*

(1 Timothy 4:8)

DEDICATION



It is our honor to dedicate the 29th Annual Oklahoma City Lectures book to Jerry and Judy Gore. First, they have been married for over fifty years! For most of their lives, they have been members of the Barnes church of Christ. There is nothing in their character to just be members, as in just having their names on physical roll book; no, to this twosome, being a member means to serve!

Jerry and Judy were both members of the Barnes congregation before they married, having obeyed the gospel; Jerry in 1960 and Judy 1966. This means that Jerry has been part of the Barnes congregation for 58 years and Judy for 52 years. They were married April 1967.

Looking at Jerry first, there is nothing he has not done when it comes to inside the building. If it was plumbing, you would find Jerry there; if it was those “little” electric tasks, there was Jerry; if it was the baptistry that needed attention, there was Jerry; if it was painting, there was Jerry; and the list goes on. On the other hand, looking outside the building, as in mowing the yard, burning limbs, or moving objects, there was Jerry (and Judy). On the spiritual side; if it were teaching the young folks, teaching the adult class, teaching in the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies,” preaching when needed, or leading the songs; there Jerry is fulfilling his spiritual duties! Then, when the Barnes needed deacons, you would find Jerry serving. Finally, in the spiritual area, when the Barnes congregation needed elders, Jerry took on the role!

As for Judy, she gives a “spirit” to the Barnes congregation with a handshake, a radiating smile, a hug, and if there is a “glove” that needed a hand in it, there was Judy’s hand and it fit so naturally! Not only has she been a student in the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies,” but she has been part of preparing the meal between the first and second hours of classes. Her hand has been in the “glove” of helping with getting the wheelchair, but her hands has pushed the chair. She has taught the young in Bible classes for years! She is always ready with a comforting “hug;” those “hugs” have also gone into the cards which she has faithfully mailed out to the shut-ins.

Therefore, we lovingly dedicate the 29th Annual Oklahoma Lectures book to Jerry and Judy Gore!



PREFACE

The key word in our lectureship is a word that appears in the text that serves as our theme verse. This verse reads: ***“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”*** (1 Tim. 4:8). After reading the text, do you have any idea what the key word is? It is “godliness,” which says: ***“is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”***

The word “godliness” is greatly misunderstood today. The reason is the word itself! Generally speaking, when a word ends with a “ness,” it means, “the state of being,” which is the first part of the word. Therefore, the word “godliness” could mean: “The state of being like God, but we have a word which has the “ly” (li) within it. However, few there be who even look at this part of the word. Many just see “god” and conclude that the word means, being like God! To be sure, this was true of Jesus, of whom it is said: ***“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”*** (John 1:18). One could learn by looking at Jesus, “the only begotten,” the nature and character of God, and not only so but his power over the natural world; as he “hath declared” God. This is only true of Jesus and no other! No matter how hard we may try, we can never “declare God” as Jesus did. However, we must never forget that we are, as Paul wrote: to ***“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus”*** (Phil. 2:5). We are to have the mind, the heart, the disposition of Jesus. This can be summed up in two words, humble obedience! (Phil. 2:8). This on the other hand, would never be true of God, as we are to give humble obedience to him, but he is never to give humble obedience to us! Thus, we can never be in the state of being God!

So, what does the word, ***“godliness”*** mean? It is necessary to look at the Greek word to see the real meaning of the word. The Greek word is, “eusebeia,” which is defines as: “1) reverence, respect 2) piety towards God, godliness.” Without “piety,” a word which the world today knows little to nothing of, there is nothing whereby mankind may truly have that which ***“is profitable;”*** not only in this present life nor the life that is to come! We may say, profitability starts with “piety” or reverence to God! On the other hand, all things that are truly “profitable” in this life and in the life that is to come, starts with “piety!” Therefore, the key word in our lectureship is “piety!”

The apostle would have us to understand, the eternal life, if it is to be expected after this life, is the life “piety!” Therefore, all things related to our salvation starts with “piety;” thus, “piety” must seen in:

1. **Salvation:** the favor of God
2. **Salvation:** Loving God first:
3. **Salvation:** from sins committed and forgiven
4. **Salvation:** through one disposition
5. **Salvation:** from sins committed as a child of God
6. **Salvation:** all spiritual blessings
7. **Salvation:** fellowship in worship
8. **Salvation:** fellowship in work
9. **Salvation:** in knowledge, and
10. **Salvation:** in hope

Yes, it is true that we have twelve subjects and only ten here listed! However, the first lesson is to

cover the whole text: *“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”* and the last lesson is sum up the whole text while giving the greater part of it to *“the life that is and that which is to come!”*

The whole subject of “godliness” and its relationship to salvation, “having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.,” thus, the eternal quality of “piety” and the shortness of “bodily exercise” which “profiteth little” is here in contrast. Please notice the “eth” on the end of the word “profit;” as it means, “bodily exercise” profiting “little.” The Greek word translated “little” is, “oligos” and means: 1) puny, 2) somewhat, and 3) briefly. It does not last long but is so short; as it is limited to this life!

Frank R. Williams,
director of the lectureship



Introduction to the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies

First, a little history of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. It was a dream of Marion R. Fox, as there was no such school in the metro-area of Oklahoma City; but neither was there such a school in the state of Oklahoma. Marion saw a spiritual need that was not being filled. Marion was serving as the local preacher at the Barnes church of Christ and upon discussing the subject with the men of the congregation, it was agreed to start the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.” The school “opened the doors” in 1991 and the first classes were conducted in the Barnes church building.

The Barnes church building is in an excellent part of Oklahoma City. It is on 59th Street, between I-40 and I-240, just one block from the intersection of Anderson Road and 59th Street. The vision was larger than just the Barnes area; so, it was not long until classes were conducted in various locations in Oklahoma City, but not only here, classes were started in other parts of state of Oklahoma. Classes were conducted in Binger, Chandler, Hydro, Maysville, Piedmont, and Tuttle. At the same time, other congregation have contacted us concerning classes in their church buildings.

Second, at first the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” was designed to prepare men to be leaders in the Lord’s church; but it was also designed to help men who were serving as elders, deacons, teachers, and women to serve in teaching children and other women. Then, even this was enlarged to helping all, men and women, who desired to increase their Bible knowledge, which would help them grow in Christ; and to become better at teaching in home Bible studies! In this action, the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” has been able to render a great service to Christians in general!

Third, the curriculum is Bible-centered and designed to prepare the student to become an independent student of the word of God! It has been the intention of the school from its beginning, that each student should not be taught “what to believe,” but “how to learn” from the Scriptures the will of God. It has been the joy of faculty members to learn from our students! The faculty has never believed that they know it all!

Fourth, the full-time curriculum consists of four years of classes, but not limited to four years; one night per week presently. Now, this one night is Tuesday night, with classes starting at 6:30 P.M. On the other hand, students seeking advanced options may choose to attend extra courses in Greek and other subjects. Students are free, to be part-time students taking one class or more; they may be full-time students; and they are free to audit classes if they choose. The “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” offers a greater maturation in the learning process than a two-year program. In fact, some students have come for five, six, or more years!

Fifth, one of the advantages of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” is that the student may continue to work a full-time secular job, without needing to raise support from family, friends, and churches. By offering a schedule that fits people’s busy lives, we allow our students to immediately increase their usefulness in their local congregations!

Those who are now serving the school: Marion R. Fox, is Director and teacher, and has degrees in: Associate of Science, Bachelor of science, Master of Science, and a Doctorate of Education, has preached for nearly fifty years, and is one of the elders of the Barnes church of Christ; Jerry Gore, teacher and he serves as one of the elders and teaches Bible classes for the Barnes church of Christ;

Chris Hill, teaches and is the local preacher of the church in Luther, OK and has served for nearly seventeen years. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, class of 1997, with bachelor's degree in Bible and Ministry; and this year Howard D. Williams has been added to the faculty. Howard has graduated from the Northside School of Preaching in Harrison, AR and the Oklahoma School of Biblical Studies. He serves as one of the elders for the Nicoma Park church of Christ. An interesting point is that Howard was baptized by Frank Williams about forty-nine years ago in Jasper, AR. Finally, Frank R. Williams serves as Dean of Students.

Here is a point of interest! Four of those who serve the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies, is that four of the have been married for over fifty years: Marion and Cynthia Fox, Jerry and Judy Gore, Howard and Lenora Williams, and Frank and Martha Williams. Also four of these also serve as elders. Which other school can this be written?

Frank R. Williams
director of the Oklahoma City Lectures



A Word from the Dean of Students

The “29th Annual Oklahoma City lectures” is part of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies;” therefore, a word from the Dean of Students is at home in this lectureship book. It is the responsibility of the “Dean of Students” to keep in touch with each student and to inform them of the starting dates of each semester. It is also the duty of the of the Dean of Students to communicate with the students about any problems that may come up; either before the starting dates of classes and during the school year.

The Annual Oklahoma City Lectures helps us teach the truth on a variety of subjects in this way the lectures are an extension of the “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” in-class studies! We use at least one student or former student to deliver one of the lessons. In doing this, we get to help the student in his preparation, and assist his delivering of the lesson. Therefore, the annual lectures are part of the school’s efforts to teach the truth!

The “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” is a work of the Barnes church of Christ, sister congregations, and individuals. The school is open to all who desire to improve their Biblical knowledge. We also have classes on subjects that are Bible related; such as Greek classes, starting with beginner’s classes all the way to advanced Greek. Students are free to pursue Greek studies as far as they desire to go! We have classes on the history of the churches of Christ in a study of “The Search for the Ancient Order of Things.” Every book of the Bible is studied! This study is not just a scanning of the books, but by the direction of the Director of the school, an in-depth study of each book is made! We have studies of the Old Testament kingdoms: 1) the United Kingdom, 2) the Divided Kingdom, and 3) the Kingdom in Captivity. It is such a joy to each teacher, as he sees the faces of the students as they learn new things to them. Our teachers encourage questions and do their very best to Biblically answer all such questions.

Our students are made up of elders, deacons, preachers, those who desire to be Bible class teachers, and those who want to improve their own Bible knowledge. We also have young people now taking classes. Our former students are now serving as elders, full-time preachers, Bible class teachers; preachers who are speaking in gospel meeting and on lectureships in several states!

The “Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies” is open to the young and to the “young at heart” who love the truth and desire to feed upon the inspired word of God!

Frank R. Williams,
dean of students

Our Faculty

Marion Fox, director

Marion is a graduate of the Elk City School of Preaching and has preached forty-seven years! He is now serving as one of the elders of the Barnes church of Christ. His college/university degrees include; an A.S. (1963) from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, a Baccalaureate (1965) and a doctorate (1991) from Oklahoma State University, and a Masters (1969) and a Masters (1969) from the University of Illinois. He has completed upper division Greek course at Oklahoma Christian College (now University). He has been a college professor (Engineering-Science division) and a National Science Foundation fellow in Engineering, Physics, and Semiconductor Manufacturing. Marion has authored several books and has engaged in several debates on various subjects.



Marion has served as teacher for the Elk City School of Preaching: Elk City, Oklahoma – 1973 – 1976; Westside School of preaching Duncan, Oklahoma – 1976 (Fall); Oklahoma School of Bible/Preaching, McLoud, Oklahoma – 1977 – 1981; Great Plains School of Bible/Preaching: Elmore City, Oklahoma – 1989 – 1991; Rocky Mountain audio and video Bible Institute Selmer, Tennessee - 1999 – 2005; and Online Academy of Biblical Studies: Dyersburg, Tennessee – 2000 – 2005. Marion has served as Director of the Oklahoma City school of Biblical Studies: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – 1991 to the present.

Marion has held gospel meetings and preached by appointment in fourteen other states. He preached and lectured at two state universities in Russia on scientific evidences for the existence of God and the work of the Holy Spirit and the biblical flood in England,. He has also preached in Jamaica and Ghana.

Marion has authored seven books.



Our Faculty

Jerry Gore, instructor

Jerry was born in Amarillo, Texas, but has made his home in Midwest City, Oklahoma for many years. He served in the United States Army from June 1967 – June 1970. He received a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Oklahoma.

Jerry worked at Tinker Air Force Base for thirty-one years! Jerry and Judy have two children. Jerry has taught Bible classes at the Barnes church of Christ for many years and now serves as one of the elders! Jerry is a very good addition to the faculty of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. With his “engineering” mind, he is very detailed in his teaching.



Chris Hill, instructor

Christopher Hill graduated from Norman High School, Norman, OK and from Moore-Norman Technology Center in 1990. He passed his ASE (Automotive Service Excellence) certifications and worked as an Automotive Technician while attending college. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, class of 1997, with a Bachelor's degree in Bible and Ministry.

He is married to Joanna, who is also a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University. They have two children: Rachel and Luke, who are homeschooled and are students in the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Chris worked with the church of Christ in Honesdale, PA from 1997-2001. He traveled to the Philippines two times where he helped with the preaching and conducted auto repair seminars.

Chris has served as the local preacher with the church of Christ in Luther, OK for nearly 16 years where he also serves on the board of directors for the Luther Community Service Center which provides food and other necessities for low-income families in Luther.

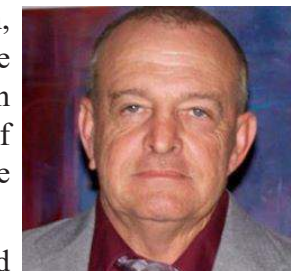
Chris has been a student at the Oklahoma School of Biblical Studies and is now one of the instructors and he is good addition to the faculty! Chris has spoken on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures.



Howard D. Williams, instructor

Howard William is a graduate of the Northside School of Preaching, Harrison, AR where he received a Master's Degree in Sacred Literature and is a graduate of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies where he received a Degree in Bible. This is his second year of teaching in the school. Howard serves as one of the elders for the Nicoma Park church of Christ. He has served as one of those who helps distributes food to the needy for many years.

Howard and Lenora Williams have been married for over fifty years and have they two children: Lori Herring and James, both living in the Oklahoma City area.





Dear Reader:

The One Heart Journal was originally conceived of as a much needed avenue to spread the news about the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. In the first issue, an eight page, black & white journal went out and was well received. Less than one hundred addresses were sent copies of the first issue.

Almost eleven years later, the Winter 2016 issue of One Heart was mailed out to about 507 addresses, plus bundles were given to congregations by our students for local members. The original eight pages have been extended to twelve; however, due to our printer we have gone to black and white printing. While this is still small compared to many brotherhood papers, we believe things continue moving in the right direction.

The Spring 2012 issue saw a change in the physical size of the Journal. This change was made to reduce the work in preparing the paper for mailing. This will also allow an increase in the number of pages; thus, the number of articles in future issues. As the number of pages and articles are increased, we will not reduce the quality of the articles. Sound biblical writers will be asked to write articles! It is our deepest hope that we can finally get four issues of the Journal mailed out each year. Subjects will be assigned to writers months in advance so each will have time to study and write quality articles!

It has never been our desire to add just one more paper to hundreds already produced by the churches of Christ. It has been said: "the churches of Christ have more papers per member than any other religious group!" This Journal was intended for a specific purpose: to demonstrate the level of teaching and soundness of doctrine taught at the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. Inside each issue you will read articles by our faculty representing the kind of material they present in class on a regular basis. However, we are now reaching out to seek other sound brethren to write. A number of these are speakers on our lectureship, as the "Annual Lectureship" is a work of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

The Journal also allows us an opportunity to keep students, supporters, and area congregations informed about upcoming events and the class schedule for the school. We intend for the school to be a benefit to the church in the central Oklahoma area, and to do that we need more people to be aware of what we offer.

Just like the school, the One Heart Journal is made available at no cost to subscribers. Loving members of the Lord's church contribute to the work and make it possible to publish and mail the Journal every quarter so that no subscription fee is ever necessary.

If you would be interested in receiving One Heart individually or for your congregation, please let us know so that an appropriate arrangement can be made. More people receiving One Heart mean more people are learning about the school and potentially participating in its work and growth.

In His Cause,
Frank R. Williams,
Editor, One Heart Journal

Contents

| THURSDAY – MARCH 22 2018 | | | page |
|---|--|--|------|
| 1. Johnny Hinton 16 th & Yale Congregation (Tulsa, OK) | General Study of the text | | 1 |
| 2. Allan Lay Owasso, OK | Salvation: the favor of God | | 5 |
| FRIDAY – MARCH 23, 2018 | | | |
| 3. Bill Jones Stratford, OK | Salvation: Loving God first | | 11 |
| 4. Dan Fredman Wagoner, OK | Salvation: from sins committed and forgiven | | 19 |
| SATURDAY – 24, 2018 | | | |
| 5. Marion R. Fox Barnes Congregation (Oklahoma City, OK) | Salvation: through one disposition | | 27 |
| 6. Bryan Hodge Youngsport Congregation (Killeen TX) | Salvation: from sins committed as a child of God | | 33 |
| 7. Chris Hill Luther, OK | Salvation: all spiritual blessings | | 39 |
| 8. James Rennaker Sterling Congregation (Rush Springs, OK) | Salvation: fellowship in worship | | 47 |
| 9. Jeff Hendrix Edmond, OK | Salvation: fellowship in work | | 55 |
| SUNDAY – 25, 2018 | | | |
| 10. Mike VonTungeln Ardmore, OK) | Salvation: in knowledge | | 63 |
| 11. Lucian Farrar Sperry Congregation (Tulsa, OK) | Salvation: in hope | | 71 |
| 12. Brian Berry Standing Stone Congregation (Cookeville, TN)s | Salvation: the Life That Now Is And That Which Is To Come | | 75 |

A General Study of the text

Johnny Hinton



JOHNNY D. HINTON was born in Kansas City, MO on December 7, 1961. On May 12, 1984, he and Cynthia (Cindy) Dianne (Hogue) became Mr. and Mrs. Hinton! To this marriage five children were born: 1) Jared (28), Courtney (24), Victoria (20), Emma (18), and Olivia (18).

Johnny started out to preach at the age of twelve as he preached his first sermon, but his first full-time work was in 1984. It was in Salem, AR where Johnny worked as a Summer Interim. As he prepared himself for a life of preaching the gospel of Christ, attended the following schools: Crowley's Ridge College, Oklahoma Christian University, Harding University School of Theology, the Memphis School of Preaching, Mission 1000, Sunset Bible Institute and the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies. He graduated from Crowley's Ridge College receiving his AA, in 1982 and Oklahoma Christian University receiving a BA in 1984.

Johnny has also taught in the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies and has preached in the Oklahoma City Lectures several times.

Godliness is Profitable

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11 These things command and teach. (1 Timothy 4:6-11, KJV)

Our focus from the passage above concerns primarily verses 7 and 8. The term godliness is paramount in our study.

Notice that there are two points of contrast. First, we have godliness set against profane and old wives' fables. Second, we have godliness contrasted with bodily exercise.

The Holy Spirit via Paul writes that it is not merely profitable (oophelimos = helpful; advantageous) but it is so for all things. He asserts that it has promise for both our current and future state. This term, in this form, is used exclusively by Paul and he employs it three times -- all in these three "pastoral" epistles (1 Timothy 4:8; 2 Timothy 3:16; Titus 3:8).

The fact that he says it is profitable for "all things" indicates that it has a very broad application. This is further seen when he tells us that it affects "the life that now is" and "that which is to come." I don't see how one can get broader in application than this.

The idea of promise seems to indicate that it carries an intended outcome of good or of blessing. In other words, godliness is not merely a good idea but it is in our best interest.

The Holy Spirit employs language related to godliness several times in this epistles by Paul. Notice the following:

- 1:4 -- godly edifying
- 1:9 -- the ungodly
- 2:2 -- quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty

- 2:10 -- women professing godliness with good works
- 3:16 -- the mystery of godliness
- 4:7 -- exercise thyself unto godliness
- 4:8 -- godliness is profitable
- 5:4 -- learn first to shew piety at home
- 6:3 -- doctrine which is according to godliness
- 6:5 -- supposing that gain is godliness
- 6:6 -- godliness with contentment is great gain
- 6:11 -- follow after... godliness

There seems to be a theme running through this epistle concerning godliness. The term is tied to honesty, good works, and doctrine. It is a quality that requires being pursued (follow after) as well as practiced (exercise).

I find that many people use the term “godly” (or other forms) in ways that do not seem to fit what is intended. I hear and read people use this term as if it is synonymous with righteousness or holiness. And they also use the negative for (ungodly) as if it is synonymous with sinfulness or wickedness. I do not believe such is accurate, even if there is some association.

We might ask ourselves if “godliness” is, in part by inaccurate definition, a lost virtue. It is not a particularly religious term. As Paul stated it has application to the current human condition.

“Godliness” comes from the Greek stem *seb-*, which originally meant “to step back from someone or something, to maintain a distance”. Then “to have awe at something, especially something lofty and sublime.”¹ This stem is combined with *eu-* (“abundance, fullness of”) to form *eusebeia*, which, in classical Greek, means “awe, respect for the divine, for the social order.”

In the New Testament, it is used in the sense of, “awesome respect accorded to God, devoutness, piety, godliness.”² The word group is employed as a verb, an adjective, and an adverb.³ Paul also contrasts for us the opposite of godliness (*asebeia*): “godless, ungodliness, impiety.”⁴

As we begin to see this term and its related forms have very practical application with reference to authority. There is a growing and prevalent lack of respect for authority in our society.

We have seen this intensifying over the past decade. The sheer hatred for law enforcement is an example. The breakdown of the home is another. The struggle that teachers have in their classrooms is one. The efforts on the part of some to bypass our election process is but another.

All authority ultimately rests with God to whom all will give an account. But God has established means by which His authority is exercised (Romans 13:1). He works through the home where parents have the responsibility to train their children who in turn are to honor and obey the parents. The government is another structure ordained of God for similar purpose. Also in the church, elders have

-
- 1 Werner Forester, *sebomai, ktl.*, in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (editors), Geoffrey W. Bromiley (translator and editor), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT; Eerdmans, 1964-1976; translated from *Theologisches Wurterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ten volume edition), 7:168-196, especially p. 169. Walther Gunther, “Godliness, Piety,” in Colin Brown (general editor), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNTT; Zondervan, 1975-1978; translated with additions and revisions from *Theologisches Begrifflexikon zum Neuen Testament*, 1967-1971, three volume edition), 2:90-95.
 - 2 *Eusebeia*, in Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG; Third Edition; University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979, 2000), p. 413.
 - 3 The verb is *eusebeō*, “be reverent, respectful, devout,” in the New Testament “to show uncommon reverence or respect, show profound respect for someone” (BDAG 413). The adjective is *eusebēs*, “pertaining to being profoundly reverent or respectful, devout, godly, pious, reverent” (BDAG 413). The adverb is *eusebōs*, “in a godly manner” (BDAG 413).
 - 4 The noun *asebeia* is used “vertically as a lack of reverence for deity and hallowed institutions as displayed in sacrilegious words and deeds: impiety.” The verb *asebeō* means “to violate the norms of a proper or professed relation to deity, act impiously.” The adjective *asebēs* means, “pertaining to violating norms for a proper relation to deity, irreverent, impious, ungodly” (BDAG 141).

authority on behalf of the congregation.

Those authority structures serve for the purposes of provision and protection for those under it. But they must at times extend punishment to those who try to operate out from under the authority (cf. Romans 13:3).

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that is may go well with thee [provision, JDH], and thou mayest live long on the earth [protection, JDH]. (Ephesians 6:1-3)

Concerning husbands loving their wives, Paul speaks of nourishing [provision, JDH] and cherishing [protection, JDH]. (cf. Ephesians 5:25-29)

Concerning church leadership, *“Obey them that rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls [protection, JDH], as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you [provision, JDH].” (Hebrews 13:17)*

Psalms 19:7-11 is a great passage on the beauty and function of the Law of the Lord. Notice verse 11 in particular. *“Moreover by them is the thy servant warned [protection, JDH] and in keeping them there is great reward [provision, JDH].”*

A society cannot survive with the loss of civility. Civility requires mutual respect among citizens. But even more so, there must be respect for authority structures. Again those in authority have the primary job of providing for and protecting those under them.

In ancient Israel if an older child was living out of control such that the parents could not reign him in, he was taken to the city gates where the leaders would get involved. If the situation was not resolved by a change in behavior, then that threat to their society was to be removed by stoning. (cf. Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

Respect for authority begins in the home. Society cannot afford to have a disrespectful and rebellious individual unleashed as an adult to do as they will.

There is an old joke about a rebellious youth who decided that he was tired of being told what to do or not do by his parents and teachers. So he decided to go join the Marines. Boy was he in for a surprise.

Godliness is that quality of character which consistently shows respect for every position of authority. Respect for those in authority in the home is called piety (cf. 1 Timothy 5:4). It translates the same word. Sadly, too many parents are failing to properly train their children in this respect. We sometimes see it when a child is disciplined at school and the parent screams at the teacher or administrator rather than disciplining their child.

I have seen children get away with screaming at their parents as well as biting or hitting them. Sometimes they will throw and/or break things. This is tolerated when they are even quite young. Other examples of disrespect or ungodliness in our culture might include:

- Littering, whether along the road or in a neighbor's yard
- Speeding, especially willfully using a radar detector
- Cursing at or calling police names or other officials in any capacity
- Failure to comply with law enforcement
- Cheating on taxes
- Shoplifting and other forms of theft

This list could be expanded by quite a bit with just a little effort.

Several years ago I had the distinct pleasure of being involved with a city planning group that involved the mayor, chief of police, city manager, and some other community leaders. The question came up at that time concerning signs pointing to a breakdown of civil respect especially toward authorities.

It was brought up that one initial sign overlooked is when people start walking in the streets rather than using the sidewalks. Jaywalking is another aspect of that. When the little things are allowed to slide they will eventually get bigger.

Back to one of Paul's points of contrast to godliness was bodily exercise. It is interesting to observe that some in our society "make a religion out of physical fitness, through health foods, jogging, sunbathing, saunas, bodybuilding, sports, massage. Care for one's body has an honorable place in Scripture... we are to honor God with our bodies. So we should take normal precautions but avoid neglecting, overindulging or idolizing our bodies."⁵ Obviously bodily exercise has benefits for our physical wellbeing, yet the exercise of godliness has spiritual benefits. The former is only temporary while the latter has benefits for here and the hereafter. The fact that Paul refers to the exercise of godliness, it seems that it must be something to which give attention and do intentionally. We must be contentious about our attitudes and behavior toward those in authority. That being said, Christians cannot afford to be flippant and pretend we were only teasing.

I think way too many gospel preachers have allowed themselves to become very unhealthy by dismissing the stewardship of health care and seek to justify it by jokingly saying that bodily exercise profits little. They seem to forget that when Paul wrote this he did not eat fast food or have our modern tools, appliances, or means of transportation. They walked and walked and walked, perhaps thousands of miles in a lifetime.

Some may consider this particular subject matter as of little importance, it is not. Consider:

First, Paul attached godliness to the life to come -- eternal life (a salvation issue)

Second, Paul described the matter as a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

Third, Paul mentions the labor involved as well as the suffering of reproach because of trust in the living God.

Fourth, Paul further defines the living God as the Saviour of all men.

Fifth, Paul exhorts Timothy that he is to command and teach these things.

Let me conclude by stating that persistent rebellion against authority is ultimately rebellion against God. Godliness is a virtue, ungodliness is not. Christians can forfeit the life to come by living this life in an ungodly manner. Remember godliness has promise for the life that now is and the one to come.

Oh, one more thing. Paul also uses the term profane in a way that appears to be synonymous with ungodly. We must be very careful about our attitude toward what other people hold dear. This is especially true of those things that God holds dear -- His name, His word, He people.

5 David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 645 (c. 1992, Jewish New Testament Publications)

Salvation: the favor of God

Allan Lay



ALLAN LAY is currently serving as the Education and Evangelism Minister at the Owasso church of Christ in Owasso, OK. He has worked with the Owasso congregation for nearly twenty years. He has served as Director of the Owasso School of Biblical Studies starting in 2007. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Christian and Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, CO.

He married Jeanne they have been married for nineteen years. From this marriage four children have been born: 1) Trey, Brinn, Kali, and Katy.

Our theme: “GODLINESS IS PROFITABLE UNTO ALL THINGS, HAVING PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS, AND OF THAT WHICH IS TO COME.”

The aim is: “to help Christians understand and enjoy their salvation and the blessings that come with it; while looking forward to what is to come.”

Subject:

Salvation: the favor of God – “for by grace and through the faith –Text: *“For by grace are ye saved through the faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* - Eph. 2:8 – *“the life that now is”* (The definite article “the,” in “the faith” comes from the Majority Text. This makes a stronger point, that salvation is a *“gift of God,”* in that both: 1) the favor (grace) of God and 2) *“the faith;”* this meaning that grace is by the means of the faith; therefore, being saved is *“not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* However, there is nothing wrong in using the text without the definite article “the,” meaning that “faith” is personal.)

This topic may throw you a curve ball. I have heard Ephesians 2:8 misquoted numerous times. Usually, it is stated, as *“for by grace you have been saved through faith ALONE!”*

Their point is that we don’t earn or work our way to salvation. We don’t. We know this, but outside of Catholicism the majority of Christendom is heavily influenced by Calvinism. So, most of our modern translations will have a Calvinistic slant.

Okay, so “alone” is not in Ephesians 2:8, but I don’t see the definite article “the” before faith in any of my English Bibles. I even looked in the Greek and Ephesians 2:8 reads *“through faith”* (διὰ πίστεως), not *“through the faith”* (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). Why does Ephesians 2:8 say *“through faith”* instead of *“through the faith”*?

The simple answer is that it’s a manuscript variant. Which means some Greek manuscripts have the definite article τῆς (the feminine singular genitive form of the word “the”), while some don’t. The majority of the Greek manuscripts do include τῆς in Ephesians 2:8. The Majority Text for Ephesians 2:8 reads:

“τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ τῆς πίστεως, καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον.”

Of course, just because a word is found in the majority of Greek New Testament manuscripts does not mean it was in the original. However, there is a strong argument that the majority reading of (διὰ τῆς πίστεως) is the original one in this case. Gregory P. Sapaugh, Professor of New Testament at Grace School of Theology commented on this: “Since the presence of τῆς is supported by the majority of

manuscripts as well as one important uncial ¹ in the Alexandrian family ² (and is therefore of great antiquity), it can be concluded from the external evidence that the article is original. ³”.

If your Greek New Testament does not include τῆς in Ephesians 2:8 look for a footnote, most will show that τῆς is an alternate reading from the Majority text.

“For by grace you have been saved through [the] faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁴

Let’s look at this gift of God, salvation.⁵

Romans 10:17 *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”*

Acts 11:14 *“and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.”*

This gift of salvation comes from hearing words.

Mark 16:15–16 *“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 16 “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.”* Not just any words, but the Gospel. What is the Gospel?

Romans 1:16 *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”*

It is the power of God unto/for salvation, but what is it specifically?

1 Corinthians 15:1–4 *“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures”*

The Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

John 3:16–17 *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”*

The gift of salvation comes through the gospel (death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus). We see here in John 3, as well as Mark 16:16, and 1 Corinthians 15:2 that we need to believe the gospel to obtain this gift of salvation. Is there anything else that needs to be done?

2 Thessalonians 1:7–9 *“...and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”*

So in addition to believing, we need to obey the gospel. How does someone obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus?

Romans 5:19 explains *“through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”* Romans 6:16 mentions *there is an obedience which results in righteousness. Continue reading verses*

1 Uncials are Greek texts written entirely in upper case letters, usually dating from the 3rd to 8th century.

2 In textual criticism the Greek New Testament manuscripts are divided into five groups. The Alexandrian group contains earlier dated manuscripts, and are thus considered closer to the original autograph.

3 Gregory P. Sapaugh, “Is Faith a Gift? A Study of Ephesians 2:8”, A Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society, Spring 1994—Volume 7:12

4 All Scripture comes from the New American Standard 1995 Update, unless otherwise noted.

5 Jackson, Wayne. “Is Faith the Gift of Ephesians 2:8?” ChristianCourier.com. Access date: December 27, 2017. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/716-is-faith-the-gift-of-ephesians-2-8>

17 and 18 tell us more about that obedience: “17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

We obey a *τυπον* (form, type, pattern) of the gospel (death, burial, and resurrection) which is done through baptism

Romans 6:1–11 “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? (Here is grace again, and the context shows Paul is discussing the same grace as in Ephesians 2:8) 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, (Here we have the Gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus being obeyed in the form of baptism) 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified (Gospel obedience) with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Notice the last part of Romans 6:11 “*in Christ*”. In Christ we are dead to sin, but alive to God. To be dead to sin we must be “in Christ”. How do we get “in” to Christ? Just backing up a few verses to Romans 6:3 tells us we are baptized into Christ. Galatians 3:27 also mentions being baptized into Christ “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” This verse begins with the conjunction “for” *γὰρ*, so let’s look at the previous verse Galatians 3:26 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” It is interesting to note that the phrase “through faith” is found here just as it is in our main text Ephesians 2:8 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

What is fascinating is when we look to the Greek we find the definite article *τῆς* again, yet it is left out of our English translations. It is not just Ephesians 2:8 and Galatians 3:26, but Colossians 2:12 also reads “*διὰ τῆς πίστεως*” in the Greek.

“... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through the faith (*διὰ τῆς πίστεως*)...” Colossians 2:12

“For you are all sons of God, through the faith (*διὰ τῆς πίστεως*) in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Galatians 3:26-27

“For by grace you have been saved through the faith (*διὰ τῆς πίστεως*); and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;” Ephesians 2:8

Both the Colossians and Galatians passage show the immediate and obvious connections with baptism. It is seen too in Ephesians when we keep Ephesians 2:8 in context. Just back up a few verses to Ephesians 2:5-7 “even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” and notice the striking similarities with Romans 6:11 “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

“Since Colossians 2:12 and Galatians 3:26 contain *τῆς*, the connection between Ephesians 2:8, Colossians 2:12 and Galatians 3:26 also strongly favors that *τῆς* is part of the original reading. It makes

sense that a certain scribe or scribes would have simply omitted τῆς from Ephesians 2:8 when copying the New Testament. Yet, even if one granted that τῆς is not the original reading of Ephesians 2:8 (and the evidence is to the contrary), the connection with Galatians 3 and Colossians 2 is still certain. διὰ πίστεως is almost exactly the same as διὰ τῆς πίστεως. τῆς is not essential to the connection between Ephesians 2:8 and the teaching of Col. 2 and Gal. 3 on Baptism. It simply makes it more clear. ⁶”

All three passages deal with the forgiveness of sins and our salvation point at baptism. They all show that “*through the faith*” (διὰ τῆς πίστεως), and being raised and entering Christ, happens at Baptism. Baptism is the point at which we are saved. Salvation, which is the gift of God.

Calvinistic denominational slants in the translation of Ephesians 2:8 omitting “the” from “*through the faith*” help support the false concept of salvation through faith alone. It is interesting that Galatians 3:26 and Colossians 2:12 are also translated “*through faith*” instead of “*through the faith*” even when their Greek source reads through “the” faith.

How does this affect our understanding of salvation? It doesn’t. Whether “the” is in our translation or not, it does not change the scriptural concept of salvation. In James 2:24 “*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*” James points out that we are not saved by faith alone. Even the most dogmatic believers opposed to the necessity of baptism for the forgiveness of sins will admit that faith, repentance, and confession are necessary for salvation.

Faith is many times used as a synecdoche⁷ or metonymy⁸ in scripture. A good example of a synecdoche/metonymy is found in Acts 2:44 “*And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common*” We know that those who “believed” in this passage were those who cried out in Acts 2:37, told to repent in verse 38, and were baptized in verse 41. We understand that “believed” included more than just believing in Jesus, it included obedience, repentance, and baptism.

Faith or “the” Faith encompasses the deity of Christ, the gospel message of His death, burial, and resurrection, His teaching passed on to the apostles, and recorded for us through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In speaking of false teachers, Jesus said in Matthew 7:21–27 “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 ‘Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 ‘And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ 24 ‘Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 ‘And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 ‘Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 ‘The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.’*”

The people Jesus mentions here obviously had faith in Jesus. That is why they were doing all these actions in His name. Yet, Jesus points out that more is required, obedience (vs. 21 and 24), acting on the words of Jesus. This is what James in James 2:24, and Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9 are both referring to, not salvation by works, but obedience to Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–9 “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*”

6 Dimond, Peter. “Does Ephesians 2:8 say “saved through faith” or “saved through THE FAITH?”” www.mos-tholymonastary.com. Published: July 4, 2004. Access date: December 27, 2017.

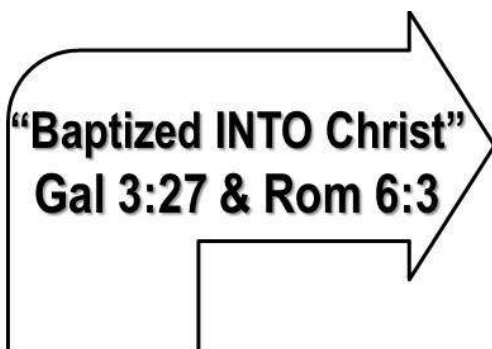
7 a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa, as in “Nice set of wheels” (meaning “You have a nice car”).

8 the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant, for example suit for business executive, or Houston for NASA.

Obeing what you are told to do to receive a free gift does not nullify the fact that it is still a gift. A million dollar check is of no value to the one it is given, until it is endorsed and deposited or cashed. By endorsing and cashing the check one is not earning the money, they are simply doing what must be legally done to receive the gift. A million dollar check is just a piece of paper, even though we know the value; it is worthless to the recipient until properly processed.

The aim of this lectureship is “to help Christians understand and enjoy their salvation and the blessings that come with it; while looking forward to what is to come.” Let me leave you with a few thoughts to help accomplish this goal.

1. You can trust your Bible.⁹ I know the thought of textual variants alarm some people and create doubts, but the bible you have in your hand is trustworthy and reliable. Do not think it is missing a key component to salvation.
2. Salvation, freedom from sin, eternal life in Heaven is a gift from God the Father to all who will obey (Matthew 7:21).
3. If you have obeyed the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8), and put on Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27), then you are a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and have access to every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).
4. Knowing this, live out THE faith you have in Christ Jesus. “Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10b).



Outside of Christ

1. No Spiritual Blessings
2. No Redemption
3. No Forgiveness of Sin
4. Condemnation
5. Old Sinful Creature
6. No Salvation
7. No Eternal Life in Heaven

In Christ

1. Eph 1:3 Every Spiritual Blessing
2. Eph 1:7 Redemption
3. Eph 1:7 Forgiveness of Sin
4. Ro 8:1 No Condemnation
5. 2 Co 5:17 New Creation
6. 2 Tim 2:10 Salvation
7. 1 Jn 5:11 Eternal Life

⁹ Jackson, Wayne. “The New Testament Compared to Classical Literature.” ChristianCourier.com. Access date: February 27, 2018. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1441-new-testament-compared-to-classical-literature-the>

Salvation: Loving God first

Bill Jones



BILL JONES and his wife Linda have been married for 44 years. They have two sons and four grandchildren.

Bill has been preaching full time for more than 40 years. The last 38 of these years have been with the congregation in Stratford, Oklahoma.

He has also written a weekly newspaper article since 1987.

Bill has proclaimed the Gospel in Lectureships and Gospel Meetings in five states.

(The first step in coming to salvation)

THEME: 1 Timothy 4:8--*For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*

SUBJECT: SALVATION: LOVING GOD FIRST (that which leads me to obedience to Christ).

A The very first step in coming to salvation is to love God.

B. After becoming a Christian, our love for Him must be so intense that the only place I will place God for the rest of my life is in first place.

Matthew 6:33--*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

C. But looking back at how this process begins, how do I come to the place that I will genuinely love God?

TEXT: Matthew 22:37--*Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

1. In other words, I must love God with my whole being.
2. Not a lighthearted thing.
3. Remember--LOVE is a VERB.

D. BUT--what would cause me to love God this much?

E. WHAT WOULD BRING ME TO HAVE SUCH LOVE AND DEVOTION FOR GOD?

F. AND WHY IS THAT SO IMPORTANT?

1. GOD HAS DEMONSTRATED HIS LOVE FOR ME FIRST.

A. ACCUSATION: All have sinned – (Romans 3:23).

B. Man has sinned from the very beginning of time.

1. ADAM AND EVE – (Genesis 3). Therefore, a sacrifice to atone for sin became necessary.

2. ABEL – offered a pleasing sacrifice to God as he brought to the altar an animal sacrifice – (Genesis 4).

C. GOD PROVIDED THE NEEDED FORGIVENESS.

1. ABRAHAM – was asked to offer Isaac as a burnt offering to God – (Genesis 22).
 - a. God intervened, knowing that He would one day do what He had asked of Abraham.
 - b. Proved Abraham's faith and desire to obey God, no matter what God asked of him.

2. LAW OF MOSES –

Leviticus 4:27-31--If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing something against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and is guilty, 28 or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, then he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. 29 And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. 30 Then the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger; put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour all the remaining blood at the base of the altar. 31 He shall remove all its fat, as fat is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the Lord. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

3. GOD FORETOLD HIS PLAN –

Isaiah 53:4-6--Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 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.

Verse 11--He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.

4. JESUS –

John 19:31-34--Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

2 Corinthians 5:21--For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 9:28a--So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

D. All of this helps me to understand that God has rescued me from my sins through His only begotten Son--and in this way has demonstrated His wonderful love.

Hebrews 5:8-9--Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who

obey Him,

E. THEREFORE, I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD GOD – to love God with my whole being.

1. In view of all He has done for me first, this should never be a difficult thing to do.
2. Remember – 1 John 4:19--We love Him BECAUSE He first loved us.

ILL: *We learned about love and its expression from our parents. They were easy to learn to love because they took care of us and provided every need that we had. God demonstrated His love for us first. He is the One who has provided our every need – physical and spiritual.*

1. 1 John 4:19 is right. (“We love Him BECAUSE He first loved us”).

John 3:16--For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

2. I MUST DEMONSTRATE MY LOVE FOR GOD BY LOVING HIM WITH MY WHOLE BEING.

A. TEXT – (Matthew 22:37) *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

1. Now a parallel account – A scribe has just asked Jesus, “which is the first commandment of all” (Mark 12:28).

Mark 12:29-30--Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.”

B. I must love God BECAUSE God loved me first (again – 1 John 4:19).

C. Notice once more (from Mark’s account and the Matthew 22:37 TEXT) – the completeness of the love Jesus described.

HEART—all of your affection.

SOUL—all of your spiritual nature.

MIND—your intellect being in subjection to God.

(Mark 12:29-30 adds . . .)

STRENGTH—all of your physical, moral and spiritual strength demonstrates your love for God as we serve Him.

D. THE RESULT OF THIS COMPLETE LOVE— loving God leads us to obedience.

Romans 5:6-8--*For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

1. While still a sinner.
2. While I still haven't learned how to get life right – Christ gave His precious life for me.
3. Of course I want to obey Him and devote my life in service to the Lord.
4. Who else could cause me to love Him to such a strong degree that I would gladly render my obedience and faithful service to?

3. MY LOVE FOR THE LORD CAUSES ME TO WANT TO BE WITH HIM, NOW AND FOREVER.

1 Peter 1:3-9--*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.*

1. *Our love for the Lord enables us to look forward to being with Him in eternity.*
2. *It is because of the sacrifice of Christ and His resurrection from the dead that we now have a living hope of eternal life in His presence.*
3. *It is the eternal inheritance guaranteed by the Lord while we live faithfully for Him.*
4. *It will not fade away (disappear).*
5. *There is a reservation that has been made for us by the Lord in Heaven.*
6. *No wonder we have reason to rejoice.*
7. *No wonder our faith is so important and so precious.*
8. *Now, even though we have never seen Jesus with our physical eyes, yet our belief (trusting faith) in Him causes our joy to be so full that it is described as “inexpressible”.*
9. *Our love for Him has brought us to obedience, so that in the end we will gratefully receive the salvation He has provided for our soul.*
10. *Of course our love for the Lord causes us to want to be with Him, now and forever.*

But even more than this, . . .

4. MY LOVE FOR THE LORD CAUSES ME TO WANT TO BE LIKE HIM.

1 Peter 2:21-24--*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose*

stripes you were healed.

1. *There is no greater example to follow!*

ILL: Picture On The Box – When dad moved our family to Oklahoma City in 1963, we lived in the Britton area. During some of those early years, I would save enough of my allowance and walk a few blocks to the downtown area. Going into the TG&Y store (early day Wal Mart), I would go down the aisle to the model section. I then looked over the different model airplanes and selected one I did not have yet. After going home, I would spend hours putting the model together. After painting and putting the decals on the new model, there was something significant to be noticed about the finished product. If it had been built properly, it looked just like the picture on the box. If it didn't, something was terribly wrong.

2. *The example Jesus left us is the greatest example of all to follow.*

3. *Following the example of Jesus leads us to eternal life.*

4. *Following faithfully the example of Jesus causes us to be like Him.*

5. *As we become more like Christ, something significant takes place in our spiritual lives—we find ourselves looking like “the picture on the box” (i.e., the example of Jesus that we read about in the Bible).*

5. MY LOVE FOR THE LORD CAUSES ME TO LISTEN TO HIM.

John 10:1-5—*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2 But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.*

1. *Whose voice do you listen for?*

2. *Whose voice do you follow?*

3. *As we read the Master's words in Scripture, we listen and follow Him.*

ILL: Shepherd vs. the Butcher – Years ago, a preacher and his wife were spending their vacation in Israel. A part of their itinerary was going on a tour bus. As the tour guide was pointing out various places of interest, the bus passed a number of flocks of sheep. Each was being led by their shepherd, just like Jesus described. The tour guide called to the attention of the travelers that a flock of sheep is always led by their shepherd, just as Jesus indicated. Just about that time, the bus passed a flock of sheep that seemed very upset. Instead of leading the sheep from the front of the flock, this shepherd was in the rear, driving the sheep with his shepherd's crook. Upset by this sight, the tour guide got off of the bus and went to discuss the situation with the shepherd. In their native language, the two men began shouting at each other. In a few minutes, the guide got back on the bus and addressed the travelers. He said he was sorry for the incident, but that he found this to be the butcher and not the shepherd.

4. *We are to examine the Scriptures on a regular basis.*

5. *Because of this, we learn and are familiar with what is written.*

6. *It is this familiarity that helps us know when something false is being taught.*

7. *False doctrine is offensive to us, just as it is to our Master.*
8. *Therefore, the words (voice) immediately sound strange to us and the Lord's followers know not to follow.*
9. *Without being familiar with the word of God, it would be much easier to find ourselves following a butcher.*

6. MY LOVE FOR THE LORD LEADS ME TO REJOICE IN HIS PROMISES.

- A. *The ability to receive the forgiveness of my sins is precious.*

Acts 2:38-39--Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.

- B. *The ability to become a member of God's family, the church, is a wonderful privilege.*

Acts 2:47--And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

1 John 3:1--Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

- C. *To have the reception of all spiritual blessings in Christ truly gives me reason to rejoice.*

Ephesians 1:3--Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

- D. *The promise of the crown of life gives great encouragement to remain faithful to Christ.*

Revelation 2:10--Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

7. MY LOVE FOR THE LORD LEADS ME TO LOVE GOD'S FAMILY.

- A. *This is also a part of this positive leading toward becoming God's child.*

1 John 4:7-11--Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

John 13:34-35--A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

- B. *NEVER FORGET, LOVE IS A VERB – therefore, the church responds toward one another in loving ways.*

Ephesians 4:31-32--Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

C. Peace and harmony in a congregation is what we are to all strive for.

1. This allows us to work well together as we serve God.
2. This allows us to encourage one another all the way to eternal life.
3. But it only takes one person to destroy the peace and harmony of the church.
4. Don't be that person!

8. WHERE MY LOVE FOR GOD BRINGS ME AT LAST.

Revelation 21:3-7--*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.*

Revelation 22:3-5--*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

CONCLUSION:

1 Peter 1:7-9--*(again)-- . . . that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.*

A. The love we develop and grow in for the Lord God leads us to the obtaining of His promised salvation.

B. Our very great desire is to obey Him; we would never want to disappoint our Lord by neglecting His commands.

C. The Christian life is the very best way to live in this world.

1. It is "the life that now is" (1 Timothy 4:8).
2. The Christian life provides the best purpose of life.
3. The Christian life gives us the best goal for living this life.

D. The result of the Christian life is the ability to look forward to the eternal life described in God's Holy word.

John 14:15--*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*

Salvation: from sins committed and forgiven

Dan Fredman



DAN FREDMAN was born in Oklahoma City, OK and he and Pam were married in May, 1968. They have three children: Johnie, Christine, and Lacy. He and Pam have nine Grandchildren.

He graduated from Harding University's Christian Communication Program (Now the School of Biblical Studies) in 1980 – 1982, and he attended Oklahoma Christian College (now University) from 1967- 1968 and 1992 – 1993, receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Bible.

Dan has done local work for the churches of Christ in Texas and Oklahoma and has preached over forty-five years. He worked with the church in Broken Bow, OK for twelve years! He is presently working with the church of Christ in Wagoner, OK. He has spoken on several of the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures.

As a note of interest, Dan attended the Barnes church of Christ in 1952 and attended the Schwartz school in the area. Schwartz was one of the last one room schools in the state and Dan was one of three in the second grade. The family moved to McLoud, OK in 1953.

Dan has written several articles for the Journal, One Heart, and has spoken on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures for several years.

INTRODUCTION

A. My topic for this evening is “Salvation: from sins committed and forgiven.”

1. Salvation from sins means being saved from, being forgiven of sins one has committed.
2. In other words, we are talking about “Understanding Forgiveness”, understanding what it means to be saved, to have God's Salvation applied to our lives.
3. We talk a lot about Salvation, forgiveness.
4. We use the term in lessons, sermons and even in our conversations.

B. But, why is any of this important?

1. Why are you alive, why do you exist in this physical world right now?
2. Why do you have this life you are living? For ONE primary reason, to prepare yourself for the life to come.
3. God has given you the few short years you will live on this earth to prepare yourself to live with Him in heaven for eternity.
4. But, it is your choice! You must choose how you will use this life you have right now!
5. You will choose to serve God OR serve yourself and, in that process, you choose an eternity either in Heaven or Hell. It is your choice!

C. Think of the various ways in which we discuss salvation.

1. Of course, the number one way is in talking to people who are not Christians, telling them about the fact they are sinners in God's eyes and need His forgiveness.
2. We talk about the forgiveness we have received because we responded, were baptized and had our sins washed away.

3. We talk about the need to forgive one another when we have hurt or been hurt by someone.

D. But, what are we talking about when we talk about being saved or being forgiven?

1. We really need to understand exactly what “Salvation” really means.
2. To really understand “Salvation” there are three things we need to know about it.
 - a. What it is!
 - b. Why it is needed!
 - c. How it happens!
3. So, let’s consider the question – what is Salvation?

I. WHAT IS SALVATION?

A. What is the meaning of the word “Salvation?”

1. Hard to talk about something when we, maybe, don’t really understand the word.
2. The English Dictionary gives the following definitions for the word Salvation.
 - a. Preservation or deliverance from evil or difficulty.
 - b. A source, means, or cause of such deliverance or preservation.
 - c. The deliverance of man or his soul from the power or penalty of sin; redemption.
3. Our desire for God’s salvation begins with Matthew 5:4.
 - a. **Matt. 5:4**, *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”*
 - b. This is not talking about being an unhappy person.
 - c. This is talking about getting to the point we see and recognize the sin in our lives and mourn over what we have and are doing.
 - d. Only when we get to this point will we truly seek the Salvation God has extended to all men.
 - e. **2 Cor. 7:10**, *“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*

B. Now, let’s consider the words used to describe “salvation” in the scriptures.

1. Remission - **Acts 2:38**, *“And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*
 - a. To be forgiven of one’s sins is to be saved from them.
 - b. This begins with belief in and obedience to Christ.
2. Justified - **Romans 3:24-25**, *“being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;”*

- a. To be “justified” is to be made right with God.
 - b. Through Christ, our God provides a way for us to have salvation from the sins we have committed.
 3. Blotted out/ Wiped away - **Acts 3:19**, “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
 - a. Here, another description of “salvation” in having one’s sins “wiped” away, that is, done away with.
 - b. This allows one to receive good things, “refreshing” things, from God.
 4. Reconciliation - **2 Corinthians 5:19**, “namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”
 - a. Isa. 59:2 tells us very plainly that our sins separate us from our God.
 - b. In Christ and, Christ only, are we given the means of being reconciled, brought back, to God.
 - c. This is what Salvation is about, what Salvation accomplishes.
 - d. Our sins separate us from God but, when we respond to our Savior in belief and obedience, the opposite occurs.
 - e. At that point we are separated from sin and returned to God.
 5. All of these describe the dictionary definition of the word “Salvation” we looked at.
- C. Now, let’s apply this to what God does when He forgives us, gives us salvation from our sins.**
1. He removes the notation of offence from His record.
 - a. Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;
 - b. One’s previous sins are gone, erased, as if they never happened.
 2. He remembers forgiven sin no more.
 - a. **Hebrews 8:12**, “FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.”
 - b. Again, forgiven sins are completely gone.
 - c. This is hard for us to understand because this we cannot do.
 - d. Someone hurts us, does something really bad to us and, we honestly, truly forgive them but, what they did will always be in our mind.
 - 1) We may never bring it up or mention it again.
 - 2) But, that memory will always be with us.
 - e. This makes it really hard for us to understand or even believe that God totally forgets our past sins.
 - f. We must remember, God is perfect in every way, what He says, He does! Period!
 3. So, what does “Salvation” tell us God does with our sins? A beautiful description is given us in the O.T.

- a. **Psalms 32:1**, “How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!”
- b. **Isaiah 38:17**, “Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is Thou who hast kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back.”
- 4. There are many others that we don’t have time to just stop and read right now but, here is a brief synopsis of them.
 - a. Psa. 103:12 – He removes them from us as far as the east is from the west.
 - b. Jere. 31:34 – He obliterates them from His memory forever.
 - c. Isa. 44:22 – He blots them from His record.
 - d. Psa. 32:2 – He does not impute them.
 - e. Ezek. 18:22 – He will never mention them again.
- 5. This is what God does with our sins when He forgives them, gives us salvation from them.

II. What makes this marvelous salvation available to man, to us?

A. *NOT our ability to do good things.*

- 1. Sadly, a lot of people believe that if they are a good person then God has to save them.
- 2. **Ephesians 2:8-9**, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”
- 3. **Titus 3:4-5**, “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

B. *No one can be good enough to put to put God in their debt so that He HAS to give them salvation.*

- 1. **Luke 17:10**, “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”
 - a. Now, notice what He says here, when you do “ALL” you are commanded, when you are perfect in obedience in every way!
 - b. At that point, God owes you what??? Nothing, this was what you owed God which means you’ve paid your bill but God owes you nothing.
- 2. We owe God complete total obedience!
- 3. So, if we were to be able to obey Him perfectly, that is what we owe Him, leaving Him owing us nothing.

C. *Neither can we buy our way into salvation.*

- 1. People today tend to think if you have enough money you can buy your way into just about anything.
- 2. You know – put enough money in the collection plate God will save you.
- 3. This doesn’t work with God.

4. **Zephaniah 1:18**, “Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD ‘s wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy. For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.”
5. **Acts 8:20**, “But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!”
 - a. This is in reference to Simon the sorcerer who wanted to buy not, the gift of the Spirit but, the gift of giving the Spirit.
 - b. He obviously thought his money would get it for him, uh, surprise – NO! Not at all.
 - c. And, money will not get anything for us from God today.

D. What makes all this marvelous Salvation available to us?

1. It is available ONLY through Christ, the Son of God.
2. It is available only through His blood shed on the cross.
 - a. **Matthew 26:28**, “for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”
 - b. **Ephesians 1:7**, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”
 - c. **Romans 5:9**, “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”
3. Only through Christ is any salvation, any and all forgiveness available to man.
4. Without His death on the cross, without the shedding of His blood there would be no salvation available for us.
5. Each of us would have to die for his or her own sin – means no heaven for any of us.

E. Even with all of this, God’s salvation extended to us is conditional, we must meet God’s conditions in order to have His forgiveness applied to our lives.

1. Salvation is conditional for the alien sinner.
 - a. **Acts 2:37-38**, “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”
38 And Peter said to them, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - b. Some of these were the very ones directly responsible for the crucifixion of our Lord.
 - c. BUT, if they met God’s conditions – even they could be forgiven.
 - d. These people had just heard the Word preached to them, they now believed in Christ with all their heart – Peter tells them what to do next – repent (change directions, turn from sin to God) and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - e. These people did exactly that and had their sins washed away, became Christians, became those right with God.
2. Salvation is also conditional for the Christian.

- a. Do Christians continue to sin? Absolutely!
- b. Notice what the apostle John says in writing to Christians in 1 John.
- c. **1 John 1:8, 10**, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”
- d. What does John tell them they must do about their sin, what must they do to have their sin forgiven? That is vs. 9
- e. **1 John 1:9**, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

III. This is what our God, our Creator wants to do for us!

A. He wants to forgive us! He wants us, all of us to be saved eternally!

1. **2 Peter 3:9**, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”
2. He is the God of forgiveness and pardon and, He doesn’t “just” pardon, He pardons “abundantly!”
3. **Isaiah 55:7**, “Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”

B. And, we need to understand that there is no limit to God’s Salvation, His forgiveness.

1. I mean by this, He extends salvation to the absolute worst, vilest, lowest of sinners.
2. There are those who believe they have been too bad to be forgiven. They’ve been too mean, gone too far, sunk too deep in sin to be forgiven.
3. Nothing is further from the truth! God will forgive the most horrible of sinners IF they honestly, sincerely come to Him in repentance and obedience.
4. Back to 1 John 1:9 again.
 - a. **1 John 1:9**, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
 - b. Notice, no limits of any kind – not to any person, number of sins, severity of sins, etc. – NO LIMITS to what God will forgive.
5. This is the Awesome, Wonderful God we serve!

C. This is what our God does for us but, what does He want us to do for others?

1. Are we just to accept His salvation and go on about our everyday business as if nothing has happened?
2. Or, are we to take what God has done for us and share it with others?
3. We hurt God and He forgives us, others hurt us and we do what?
4. What does our Heavenly Father and Christ our Savior expect us to do with the Salvation they have shared with us?

5. Let's listen to our Lord, Himself in Matt. 6.
 - a. **Matthew 6:14-15**, "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."
 - b. Boy, this puts a whole new slant on things doesn't it!
6. God expects us to forgive others when they hurt us in any way but, exactly HOW does God expect us to forgive them?
 - a. **Ephesians 4:32**, "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."
 - b. Notice, we are to forgive others AS God has forgiven us.
7. What does this mean?
 - a. It means we forgive and let things go!
 - b. It means we will not ever bring it up again, we will not use it against that person.
 - c. It means we will have no hard feelings against that person if we have truly forgiven them.

Conclusion

A. This is true Salvation as God would have us to understand it, the Salvation that our God extends to us.

1. This great Salvation is based on.....
2. **The fact** that there is nothing we can do that God will not forgive if we repent and obey Him.
3. **The fact** that this tremendous Salvation is available only because of what Christ has done for us – dying on the cross so we can be forgiven.
4. **The fact** that we are to take God's forgiveness and share it with those around us – forgive as we have been forgiven.

B. What about you this evening?

1. As I said at the beginning of this lesson – God has given you this physical life you are living for the express purpose of preparing yourself to be with Him for eternity.
2. Use what we have now to prepare for that which is to come.
3. Where does it all begin with us, back to Matt. 5:4 again.
4. **Matt. 5:4**, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
5. It begins with us believing in God, in Christ to the point we listen to them and then seeing and acknowledging our sin to the point we truly "mourn" over our sins against God to the point we will do whatever He says we must do to be forgiven of them.

C. So, what are you doing, how are you using this life, this time with which God has blessed right now?

1. Have you taken God's Salvation and made it your life?

2. Have you responded to God, obeyed God in belief, repentance, confession and baptism into Christ?
3. As a Christian, have you truly and fully confessed your sins before Him and asked for His forgiveness?
 - a. God will not forgive sins we refuse to acknowledge.
 - b. God will not forgive sins we refuse to confess.
4. As a Christian, have you truly and sincerely forgiven those who have hurt you, injured you in any way? Have you forgiven them as God has forgiven you?
5. If not, we give you the opportunity to make things right with God and with others as we stand and sing to invite you.

Salvation: through one disposition

Marion Fox



MARION R. FOX was born in Sayre, OK on September 20, 1943. He and Cynthia Kay were married on December 23, 1966 and to this marriage three children have been born: 1) Brent, 2) Marcey, and 3) Melanie.

Marion began preaching in 1970 in western Oklahoma. Over the years, he attended: 1) Sweetwater Public Schools, 2) Sayre Jr. College, 3) Southwestern Oklahoma State University, 4) the University of Illinois, 5) Oklahoma University, 6) East Carolina University, 6) The University of Texas, 7) Rose State College, 8) The University of Maine, 9) Oklahoma Christian College, 10) Pittsburg State University, 11) Oklahoma State University Technical Institute, 12) Honeywell Field Engineer's School, 13) FFA Academy, and 14) Elk City School of Preaching. Marion graduated from: 1) Sweetwater Public School, 2) Sayre Jr. College, 3) Oklahoma State University, 4) the University of Illinois, 5) Honeywell Field Engineer's School, 6) FFA Academy, and 7) Elk City School of Preaching.

Marion has done local work: 1) Sayre, OK 2) Mountain View, OK, 3) Maysville, OK, and 4) the Barnes congregation, Oklahoma City, OK. He has also held gospel meetings and lectureships in: 1) Wyoming, 2) Colorado, 3) Nebraska, 4) Kansas, 5) New Mexico, 6) Texas, 7) Oklahoma, 8) Missouri, 9) Arkansas, 10) Tennessee, 11) Indiana, 12) Ohio, 13) Georgia, 14) Connecticut, 15) Maine, 16) Russia (Yaroslavl), 17) England (Cambridge and Liverpool), 18) Jamaica (several congregations), and 19) Ghana (around Takorade).

Marion has also written articles appearing in: 1) One Heart, 2) Firm Foundation, 3) Think Magazine, and 4) Gospel Standard.

Introduction: The word “disposition” is not found in the ASV Bible. God’s people must have a proper disposition (heart or spirit) in order to please God.

Definitions of the Terms

Lexical definitions

English definition - disposition “... **2 a**: prevailing tendency, mood, or inclination **b**: temperamental makeup **c**: the tendency of something to act in a certain manner under given circumstances” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 10th ed.)

Greek definitions: Heart - καρδιά “*the heart*; **1**. prop. the organ in the animal body which is the center of the circulation of the blood, and hence was regarded as the seat of physical life ... **2**. univ. καρδιά denotes the seat and centre of all physical and spiritual life; and **a**. *the vigor and sense of physical life* ... **b**. the centre and seat of spiritual life, *the soul or mind, as it is the fountain and seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, purposes, endeavors*” (Thayer, p. 325)

Spirit - πνεῦμα “**1**. *a movement of air, (gentle) blast* ... **2**. *the spirit, i.e. the vital principle by which the body is animated* ... **3**. *spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting*; ... **4**. The Scriptures also ascribe a πνεῦμα to GOD, i.e. *God’s power and agency* ... **5**. univ. *the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one; the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc.*” (Thayer, p. 520)

Definitions from usage.

The heart is equated to the mind by Jeremiah (Jer. 31:33, Heb. 8:10 and 10:16).

Jer. 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith

Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people:

Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, And on their heart also will I write them: And I will be to them a God, And they shall be to me a people:

Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws on their heart, And upon their mind also will I write them; *then saith he*,

Note that in the quote of Jer. 31:33 in Heb. 8:10; the inward parts are equated to the mind. The law was put in the inward parts (Jer. 31:33) and the laws were written in (put in) the mind (Heb. 8:10). Note also that in the quote of Jer. 31:33 the law was written in the heart and in Heb. 10:16; and the laws were written in the mind. This is an instance of Hebrew parallelism where the mind and heart are equated.

The heart is also equated to the spirit by Hebrew parallelism (disposition – Ps. 51:17, Ezek. 11:19, etc.).

Ps. 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Ezek. 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh;

The broken spirit and contrite heart are equal (Ps. 51:17). The expressions “one heart” and “new spirit” are equal.

The prophecies of God’s people being of “one heart.”

A Jeremiah prophesied of God’s people being of one heart (Jer. 32:37-40).

Jer 32:37 Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38 and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39 and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40 and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from following them, to do them good; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from me.

This was to occur when God gathered them out of the countries where He had driven them (Jer. 32:37). This is a reference to their return from captivity. When they returned from the captivity, they would be God’s people and He would be their God. (This expression is found many times in the Scriptures.) This “one heart” would cause them to: fear God (Jer. 32:39) and not depart from God (Jer. 32:40).

Ezekiel prophesied of God’s people having one heart (Ezek. 11:17-20).

Ezek. 11:17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. 18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. 19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; 20 that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I

will be their God.

This would occur when God gathered them from the countries where He had scattered them (Ezek. 11:17). This is a reference to their return from captivity. When they returned from the captivity, they would be God's people and He would be their God. (This expression is found many times in the Scriptures.)

This "one heart" would cause them first: To take away the detestable and abominable things they had practiced (Ezek. 11:18); second To walk in God's statutes (Ezek. 11:20); third To keep and do God's ordinances (Ezek. 11:20); and fourth To walk in God's statutes and keep His ordinances (Ezek. 11:19-20).

We see these prophecies being fulfilled in Acts 4:32

Under Messiah's covenant with His people, they would all be of one heart; this prophecy was said to be fulfilled in Acts 4:32.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one *of them* said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Their heart (disposition) was that spiritual things came first (Acts 4:32). Their hearts were united in one effort to please God when they became benevolent (Acts 4:34).

This "one heart" is the tie that binds Christians together (1 Pet. 1:22, Rom. 6:17, Eph. 6:6, Col. 2:2, etc). When the heart is right, there is a fervent love (1 Pet. 1:22). This love must not be feigned (faked - hypocritical). The word "spirit" should probably not be capitalized in this verse.

"To complete the difference between a modern printed Greek Bible and an early MS thereof, we have the use of the small and convenient 'minuscule' script, in place of the clumsy and space-filling 'capital' letters, which though in early use for non-literary purposes, only in ix/A.D. began to be applied to books." (Moulton, Vol. 2, p. 50)

When the heart is right we will obey God (Rom. 6:17). We do the will of God from the heart (Eph. 6:6) when we have the disposition that pleases God. Our love for one another knits us together (Col. 2:2).

Under the Law of Moses, God's people were not of "one heart" (Jer. 31:31-34). Under the Law of Moses one had to be taught to "know Jehovah" (know the Lord – KJV) after he was under the covenant. Some people who were under the covenant of the Law of Moses did not know God, because they had not been taught. Some people who were under the covenant of the Law of Moses knew God, because they had been taught and they had obeyed God's will. Because some of those who were under the covenant of the Law of Moses knew God and some did not know God; they were not all of "one heart."

Under the covenant with Messiah, everyone would already "know Jehovah" (know the Lord – KJV). They would already "know Jehovah" because everyone who is a member of the Lord's church already knows the Lord. Because they all "know Jehovah," they will be of "one heart," that is they will all have the spirit (disposition) of one who knows God.

What having "one heart" does for us

This one heart binds Christians because it is with the heart that we love God (Mt. 22:35-40). Here the heart is probably used to refer to man's affections. The mind is used here to refer to our rational thinking. The soul is probably used here to refer to our life.

This one heart binds Christians because it is with the heart that we believe (Rom. 10:9). Faith is based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Faith is based upon an honest consideration of the evidence.

Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). We must obey from the heart (Rom. 6:17); therefore our hearts must be right with God. All evil flows from an evil heart (Mt. 15:18-19). All good flows from a good heart (Lk. 6:45).

The word "spirit" frequently refers to a disposition in the Scriptures

People who had an evil spirit (evil disposition). The Psalmist writes of a generation that had not set their heart aright – whose spirit was not steadfast with God (Ps. 78:8). They were stubborn because they had not set their heart aright. They were rebellious because their spirit was not steadfast with God. The heart and spirit are probably equated here by Hebrew parallelism.

One who is hasty of spirit exhorts folly (Ps. 14:29 and Ecc. 7:9). Being slow to anger is the antithesis of being hasty of spirit. A person can control his temper, if he wants to control it.

A haughty spirit brings about one's downfall (Pro. 16:18). Here with Hebrew parallelism the writer equates pride with a haughty spirit. There is an attitude (spirit) of haughtiness that causes one to think more highly of himself (be filled with pride).

One must restrain his spirit (disposition – Pro. 25:28). Clearly the writer of Proverbs intends that one learn how to control (restrain) his spirit (disposition). Failure to restrain our spirit (attitude or disposition) is destructive.

A greedy spirit causes strife (Pro. 28:25). A greedy spirit (disposition) leads to strife. If one will put his trust in Jehovah, he will be blessed and not need to be greedy.

Men who dealt treacherously with their wives had an evil spirit (Mal. 2:15-16). They were divorcing their wives without just cause and it is called treachery. It is treason (treachery) because marriage is a covenant (Mal. 2:14) and God determines the conditions of the covenant. The translators of the LXX rendered this with the Greek word (διαθήκη).

“διαθήκη is properly *dispositio*, an ‘arrangement’ made by one party with plenary power, which the other party may accept or reject, but cannot alter. A ‘will’ is simply the most conspicuous example of such an instrument, which ultimately monopolized the word just because it suited it *differentia* so completely.” (TDNT, Vol. 2, p. 125)

God is the One with plenary power and He determines the conditions of the covenant (responsibilities, rights, and privileges).

The word “spirit” is used of an evil disposition in: Rom. 11:8, Eph. 2:2, 2 Tim. 1:7.

People who had a good spirit (good disposition) were pleasing to God. Caleb had a proper spirit (disposition) to please God (Num. 14:24). Caleb was rewarded for having this spirit. Caleb followed God fully.

A man who does not have guile in his spirit (Ps. 32:2) is blessed of God. God does not impute his iniquity (his sin) to him. The absence of guile probably depicts a willingness to honestly consider the will of God and obey God.

A clean heart and a right spirit are equated by parallelism (Ps. 51:10). The background of this psalm is David's sin with Bathsheba. We see the contrite spirit of Ps. 34:18 in David in his Psalm. When we sin, we need to have a right spirit (a contrite spirit).

David continues with the discussion of his sins with Bathsheba (Ps. 51:17). Sacrifices are not as important as having a broken spirit (they must have the broken heart for God to accept their sacrifices). God does not despise the broken and contrite heart. This same point is made in Isa. 57:15. A man who has a poor and contrite spirit will tremble at the word of God (Isa. 66:2). The poor in spirit are blessed by God (Mt. 5:3). The broken heart is the same as the contrite spirit (Ps. 34:18).

A lowly spirit is preferred over pride by God (Pro. 16:19 and 29:23). Pride will cause one to be brought low, but a lowly spirit will bring honor to the person.

Ruling one's spirit is equated to being slow to anger (Pro. 16:32). One who is quick to become angry (hasty in spirit) is a fool (an evil person). How much evil is committed by a person who is hot-headed?

Being of a cool spirit is equal to sparing one's words (Pro. 17:27). Our mouths speak what we are thinking in our hearts. If we can control our tongues we are mature (Jas. 3:2). One must have a cool spirit in order to control his tongue.

Solomon reveals that being patient in spirit is better than being proud (Ecc. 7:8). A patient person will follow through with something (see it to the end). A proud man is not patient, perhaps because he thinks he is entitled to certain things or certain privileges.

When we have a spirit of heaviness for our sins, God will give us a garment of praise (Isa. 61:3). The Jews put ashes on themselves when they were mourning (obviously they are mourning for their sins [cf. Mt. 5:4]). People would not anoint themselves when they were mourning. The heaviness is obviously (in this context) heaviness for their sins.

Ezekiel exhorts Israel to have a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 18:31). Israel (Judah) was going into Babylonian captivity for her rejection of God and failure to mourn over her sins. This new heart and new spirit were new with regard to what they had been (the sinful state that brought on the Babylonian captivity); they were to mourn for their sins and turn from their sinful ways.

Apollos was of a fervent spirit (Acts 18:25). The word translated “fervent” is only found here and Rom. 12:11. Apollos had a zeal to preach/teach the way of the Lord. This is the heart or spirit that we should have.

SUMMARY

Christians are to have a “new heart” compared with the old heart the Jews had that caused them to go into captivity. This “new heart” was a new spirit (new disposition) that would be intimate with (know) God. This new heart would cause them to be contrite when they sinned and humble before both God and man.

The new disposition was referred to as “one heart” in several passages. This “one heart” would bind Christians to one another. The proper spirit (disposition) is essential for us to believe the evidence that is set forth in the Scriptures. It is from the heart (spirit or disposition) that both good and evil come.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Moulton, James Hope; Turner, Nigel (1993). *A grammar of New Testament Greek, Vol. III*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

TDNT, Vol. 2, p. 125

Thayer, Joseph (1970). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House.

Salvation: from sins committed as a child of God

Bryan Hodge



BRYAN HODGE was born in Blytheville, AR on May 3, 1965. The family moved much as he grew up, due to his father's work with the Army/Air Force Exchange Service. The family finally settled in Texas, mostly South Texas. He attended Cedar Valley College, University of Texas – San Antonio; and the Brown Trail School of Preaching where he graduated.

Bryan and Melinda (Wilson) were married on February 13, 1988 and they have three children: Jasmine Juneau, who is married and has one child (Fort Worth, TX); Jasper Hodge (Fort Worth, TX); and Choe Hodge (Denton, TX). Melinda works for Central Texas College in the hospitality and Culinary Arts Department.

He started preaching in 1991 and has done local work with the church of Christ in La Junta, CO; Savannah, TN; Truth or Consequences, New Mexico; Talco, TX; Marshall, TX; Anchorage, AK; and is now working with church of Christ in Youngsport (Killeen), TX.

He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in: Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alaska, Wyoming, and Louisiana; he has also preached overseas in: India, Jamaica, Ghana, Panama, and England. He has written articles appearing in: the Gospel Journal, Think Magazine (Focus Press), Bulletin Digest, Bulletin Briefs, The Guide, The Apologist and One Heart, a work of the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

This is Bryan's third time to speak on the Annual Oklahoma City Lectures!

As a note of interest, Bryan had a debate with Kevin Miller a Seventh Day Adventist. Also, check out his website – bryanhodge.net; internet radio: Great Bible Texts on thegospelradionetwork.org.

I was once asked in a Q&A, if a person could be forgiven of sins committed after baptism. My immediate reply was said in jest – “I certainly hope so!” (Don't you? Where would we be without the grace and mercy of God? It would be hopeless.) Then, I went on to affirm from scripture that one can be forgiven after baptism (See: Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20; 1 John 1:7-9, etc.).

Consider a couple of examples of those who seem to have been forgiven after their baptisms. (1) Peter seems to have been. It is not explicitly stated, but he no doubt had received John's baptism (would Jesus have selected one who neglected or rejected such?) He denied Jesus thrice (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27). Yet, Jesus exhorts him, “Follow me” (John 21:19). Moreover, Peter went on to preach the gospel (Acts 2). He would sin again, in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-ff). Yet, he would go on to write, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Peter 1:3). “*Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:1); and, “*We according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3:13). (2) The church at Corinth. Paul wrote, “*Now I rejoice not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance... For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation*” (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). What does this mean, if they were not forgiven?

Jesus is our example of forgiveness (Colossians 3:13). Jesus taught that we are to forgive one even seven times in a day (Luke 17:4), and even seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22). If these things are true, then it must be the case that He is willing to forgive us, even multiple times. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

My assignment for this lectureship is to cover the topic – “Salvation: from sins committed as a child of God.” I have been asked to cover two texts – 1 John 1:9 and James 5:19-20. I will cover these two

texts. However, I will include a few more which I believe to be helpful in covering this topic.

Confess and Forsake

“He who covers his sins will not prosper; but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

One cannot conceal sin from God. It will not work (Proverbs 15:3; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Timothy 5:24-25; Hebrews 4:13). It is folly to try to palliate, excuse, deny, extenuate, diminish, dissemble, or blame others for one’s sins (Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 3, p. 785). These things do not lead to God’s mercy.

God’s people, under the Old Testament, were required to confess and forsake their sins to receive God’s mercy. The word confess means to admit. They were to admit or acknowledge their sins before God (e.g. David Psalm 32:5; 51:1-3). They also were to forsake their sins (e.g. Judah/Israel – Jeremiah 7:3, 5-7; 26:13; 35:15; Ezekiel 33:10-11; Nineveh – Jonah 3:10 cf. Matthew 12:41).

I understand that this is an Old Testament passage. However, I have included it, because the New Testament requires the same of us (Acts 8:22; James 5:19-20; 1 John 1:9).

Repent and Pray

“Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you” (Acts 8:22).

Peter gave these instructions to Simon of Samaria. He was correcting a baptized believer (Acts 8:9-13). Simon evidently thought he could make money, or be great and powerful, if he could bestow miraculous gifts to others, as the apostles. Therefore, he offered them money. The word “simony” is used today of buying or selling a church office or position, or spiritual things.

Peter told the man that he needed to do two things. First, he needed to repent. The word “repent” means “to change the mind” (Vine’s). The mind affects behavior. Therefore, repentance may be thought of as “a change of mind which leads to a change of behavior” (Jonah 3:10 cf. Matthew 12:41; Revelation 2:5). Second, he needed to pray to God for forgiveness.

[Note: This sounds very much like what we read in the Old Testament (Proverbs 28:13). However, there are differences. Here is one: Under the Old Testament, an offering as to be made (Leviticus 4:1-5:13; 5:14-6:7). Today, Christ is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1), and daily sacrifices are not needed (Hebrews 7:27; 9:28; 10:11-12)].

Why did Peter say, *“If perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you”*? The doubt seems to be not of God’s willingness to forgive (cf. 1 John 1:9), but of Simon’s sincere repentance. Matthew Henry commented, “The doubt is of the sincerity of his repentance, and not his pardon, if his repentance be sincere” (Matthew Henry Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 83). J.W. McGarvey commented, “The doubt was based on uncertainty in Peter’s mind, whether the repentance of such a man under such circumstances could be sufficiently thorough to secure forgiveness” (McGarvey, New Commentary on Acts of Apostles, p. 148).

Confess

“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).

Confession is to be made. To whom are we to confess our sins? This is speaking of confession to God (1 John 1:9-10 cf. Acts 8:22).

There are times when confession should be made to others. When we sins against others, confession should be made to the one(s) we have sinned against (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4). When the prayers of others is desired and accountability needed, confession to others may be helpful (James 5:16). [Note: One never reads in Scripture of the need to confess one’s sins to a “priest” in order to be

forgiven].

However, this text is speaking of confession to God. All sins are ultimately against God (cf. Genesis 39:9), and therefore needs to be confessed to God. Guy N. Woods commented, “The word *homologeō*, from which the word ‘confess’ is translated, means to say the same thing, to speak together, and figuratively implies a dialogue between God and the sinner, in which the Father describes the condition of the sinner, and the sinner finally accedes to the correctness of the description and this confesses that God is right!” (Woods, *A Commentary on The New Testament Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude*, p. 219). This does seem to be correct (cf. 1 John 1:10).

What about repentance? This text does not mention repentance. However, it was mentioned in Acts 8:22; and there it preceded prayer. This is a synecdoche. The part “confess” is put for the whole “repent and pray (confess).” Repentance is implied by the total context of the New Testament.

Restore

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourselves lest you also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

Let’s notice three points from this passage. First, it is possible for one to sin. The word “man” (*anthropos*) refers to a person, whether male or female. The word “overtaken” (NKJV) or “caught” (NASB, ESV) may suggest that this is not speaking of willful rebellion. Tom Wacaster commented, “It is not a case of some Christian overtaking a trespass, but that of the trespass overtaking him. Paul is not referring to someone who has committed a deliberate or willful sin. Nor is he describing someone who is beyond the point of no return” (Wacaster, *Studies in Galatians*, p. 187). It is possible for a child of God to fall from grace (Galatians 5:4; 6:9; Hebrews 10:25-27).

Second, it is possible for one to be restored. The word “restore” means “to mend, to furnish completely” (Vine’s); “put in order, restore, restore to its former condition... put into proper condition, complete, make complete” (BAG). The same word was used of mending nets (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). It was used of a dislocated limb being brought back into its proper place (Adam Clark, *Clark’s Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 414).

Third, it is possible for one to help restore another. Those who are spiritual (that is: those who live by the teachings of the Spirit cf. Galatians 5:16, 18, 22, 26) should try to restore the one overtaken in a trespass. It should be done in a spirit of gentleness. Remember this one does not seem to be in willful rebellion (cf. Jude 22-23). Charles Crouch commented, “When one is already down in misery, such is no time for heartless, brutal, unkind words of abuse and condemnation. It is not our duty to step on, trample or stamp one who is down: our God-given duty is to try to help him get up!” (Crouch, *Studies in Galatians*, p. 90). We should consider ourselves lest we also be tempted. The meaning seems to be that we need to be cautious when correcting others not to become self-righteous, or puffed up (Galatians 5:26 cf. 6:1, 3-4). One does not become a saint by another’s sins.

TURN

“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20).

The same three points are found in the passage. First, it is possible for one to sin. The words “among you” refers to the church (James 1:26; 3:13; 4:1; 5:13; 5:14 cf. 5:19-20. Also see: Acts 6:3; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Peter 4:8; 5:1-2 for similar usage). The word “wander” (NKJV) or “err” (KJV) is in the passive voice. He was led or seduced away. It is possible to be misled.

Second, it is possible for one to turn from the error. One can come back. His soul can be saved from “death.” I believe that this refers to the second death (Revelation 2:11; 20:12-15). His sins can

be covered (NKJV) or hid (KJV). I believe that the reference is to forgiveness (cf. Psalm 32:1; 51:9; 85:2), or God's removing it from His sight (cf. Psalm 51:9; Isaiah 38:17; Micah 7:19).

Third, it is possible for one to help turn (NKJV) or convert (KJV) a sinner from the error of his way. Guy N. Woods, "The love we have for our brethren prompts us to busy ourselves in their behalf in restoring them to the truth so that God may forgive them and this cover their sins" (Woods, A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter, John and Jude, p. 112). Jimmy Jividen has written, "One of the most unloving acts that one could do – is nothing – when he knows that a brother is being overcome by sin" (Jividen, Koinonia, p. 147). Again, he has written, "It is a shallow and misguided love which prefers to let a brother go to hell rather than correct his wrong. Brotherly love cares enough to correct" (Jividen, Koinonia, p. 179). Again, "Perhaps the strongest test of brotherly love is the willingness to confront a brother who is involved in sin or error" (Jividen, Koinonia, p. 33).

An Advocate

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

John wrote to them so that they "may not sin." The wording is in the aorist tense. John did not want them to sin. He wanted to help them avoid sin. The inspired word, when taken to heart, helps one avoid sin (cf. Psalm 119:11). Every Christian should strive to live a holy life, free from sin.

However, we do sin. What happens when we sin? Are we without hope? John addressed this. He wrote, "And (kai – the word may be rendered "but" depending on the context. The E.S.V. so renders it here) if (ean – the word sometimes carries the meaning of "whenever" or "when," e.g. 1 John 2:28) anyone sins (aorist tense. It is rendered in the singular, "sin" in the K.J.V.) we have (present tense; the force of which is "we keep on having" even after baptism!) an Advocate (a defense attorney) with (pros – literally before or facing) the Father..." This advocate is said to be Jesus Christ. We are not without hope.

How does this advocate defend us? Does He argue that the law is unjust, and therefore should not be enforced? No! Does He do so by technicalities and unintended loopholes? No! Does He do so by appealing to the emotions of the Judge and jury, hoping that such will outweigh the law? No!

How then? 1 John 2:2 reads, "*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins...*" I have heard it expressed this way: This lawyer's methods are highly unusual (1) He admits his client's guilt; (2) He pays the price with His own blood (1 John 2:2 cf. Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10).

Does this deny human conditions for the Christian's forgiveness? No, no more than it does for the alien sinner. Watch the words, "*...and not for ours only but also for the whole world*" (1 John 2:2b). Certainly, there are conditions to be met for the child of God to be forgiven (see 1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22). However, these conditions are not being emphasized at this point. What is being emphasized is that we have an advocate. We are not without hope.

This is possible because of the blood of Christ. Wayne Jackson has written, "While many Bible students are aware of the fact that the blood of Jesus is applied to their souls in their initial obedience to the gospel... some do not realize that the Lord's cleansing blood continues to function on their behalf as they struggle with sin in their Christian lives" (Jackson, Notes From the Margin of My Bible, Vol. 2, pp. 163-164).

What About...?

Let's consider a few passages which trouble some Christians, who desire to repent. We will provide a very brief explanation for each passage.

1. "*There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that*" (1 John 5:16).

First, there is no definite article before “sin.” No specific sin is in view.

Second, John has already taught that God is faithful and just to forgive sin, even all unrighteousness, if one will confess and repent (1 John 1:9 cf. 1:6). Therefore, this must be speaking of a sin for which one will not acknowledge and repent. Guy N. Woods commented, “The sin unto death is this a disposition of heart, a perverseness of attitude and an unwillingness of mind to acknowledge one’s sin and from it turn. Such a disposition effectively closes the door of heaven in one’s face” (Woods, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles of Peter, John and Jude*, p. 322).

2. *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the power of the age to come, if they fall away to renew them again to repentance since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6).*

First, this cannot be saying that one cannot repent, if he wants to do so. Many passages teach that one can repent (e.g. Luke 17:3-4; Galatians 6:1; James 5:20; Revelation 2 – 3).

Second, this may be teaching that one cannot renew a sinner, so long as the sinner willingly persists in sin. The present participles “crucifying the Son of God” and “putting Him to open shame” are contemporaneous with the verb “to renew.” Wayne Jackson commented, “In other words, these rebels cannot be brought to repentance so long as they go on feeling about, and treating the Lord in such a shameful way” (Jackson, *Treasures from the Greek New Testament*, p. 50).

Third, this may be teaching that some have reached the point of no return. If one willingly returned to Judaism, after becoming a Christian and fully experiencing all that is offered, how could one help them to return? They had: (a) been enlightened (Luke 24:26-27, 32; Luke 24:44-47); (b) tasted the heavenly gift (Ephesians 2:8); (c) been made partakers of the Holy Spirit (possible reference to miraculous gifts); (d) tasted the good word of God (1 Peter 2:1-3); (e) known the powers of the age to come (Ephesians 1:15-23; Ephesians 2:7; Mark 10:30). What can be said to one who knows, but willfully turns away?

Note: Hebrews 6:6 begins with “if” in the K.J.V. and the N.K.J.V.. However, “if” is not in the original. It literally reads “and falling away.”

Moreover, this clearly is speaking of a child of God who has fallen. Gary Workman commented, “The five blessings enumerated in Hebrews 6:4 and Hebrews 6:5, plus their initial state of repentance alluded to in Hebrews 6:6, cannot be ascribed to any but actual Christians” (ed. Devin Dean, *The Gospel Journal Commentary Series, Studies in Hebrews*, p. 694, reprinted from “Studies in Hebrews – the 2nd Annual Denton Lectures in 1983).

3. *“For if we sin willingly after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27).*

First, this may be teaching that there is no forgiveness or sacrifice for sin, so long as one continues to engage in it (cf. 1 John 1:7). The present participle “willingly sinning” is contemporaneous with the verb “no longer remains.” So long as one keeps on sinning willfully, there keeps on remaining no more sacrifice for sin.

Second, this may particularly have to do with returning to Judaism. Gary Workman commented, “Now that the New Covenant has replaced the Old, the Levitical system cannot even do what it once did with its limited accomplishments. The Old can now do nothing at all for it has been taken away (Hebrews 10:9). Therefore, with the Old Covenant it is now “impossible to renew them again unto repentance” (Hebrews 6:6) because under that system “there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26)... It is not ‘impossible’ for such apostates to return to Christianity, but rather it is

‘impossible’ for them to be saved under Judaism” (ed. Devin Dean, The Gospel Journal commentary Series, Studies in Hebrews, p. 697, reprinted from ‘Studies in Hebrews – the 2nd Annual Denton Lectures in 1983).

Conclusion

Forgiveness is available. A Christian can repent. One can come back. He will welcome one as the Father did the lost son (Luke 15:17-24). Do you need to come home? Come home!

Salvation: all spiritual blessings

Chris Hill



CHRISTOPHER HILL was born in Oklahoma in 1971 and graduated from Norman High School and Moore-Norman Technology Center in 1990. His focus of study was automotive technology. He passed his ASE certifications and worked as a mechanic while attending college. He graduated from Oklahoma Christian University in 1997 with a Bachelor's degree in Bible and Ministry. In June of 1997, Chris married Joanna (Duta), also a graduate of Oklahoma Christian University, who is from Romania. They have two children: Rachel, 15 and Luke, 13. Rachel and Luke are both nearing completion of the second year of their studies at the Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies.

Chris has been with the church in Luther for over 16 years and currently serves on the board of directors for the Luther Community Service Center, a ministry that provides food, clothing, and other necessities for low-income families in the Luther area. Chris has been a student at the Oklahoma School of Biblical Studies since 2014 and is currently one of the instructors.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all”:

Text: Ephesians 1:3 “the life that now is”

A father and his son were seated at the dining room table while the mother was finishing the final preparations on the family's dinner. While the father and son were waiting, the father asked the son if he would say the prayer for the meal. The youngster nodded his head and said that he would pray. The mother placed the last of the meal on the table and sat down. The boy looked around the table at the food for a moment and began to pray. He said, “God, I’m not sure what it is. But thanks anyway. And I’ll still eat it.”¹



Sometimes it is hard to be thankful when we really are not sure of how we have been blessed. On the other hand, it is hard to keep quiet when we realize how blessed we are because of God's love! In Acts 3, Peter and John are about to go into the Temple when a lame man, sitting by the gate called Beautiful, asks them for alms. Alms could provide some temporary relief for the man's daily struggles, and he is probably appreciative to everyone who helps him in this way, but Peter and John don't have any alms to offer. They offer him something so much better. In verses 7-8 Peter says, “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!” And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.” Through God's power, this lame man is healed. Unlike the boy, who was only moderately thankful for food that his mother prepared, this man knows instantly that he is greatly blessed! What follows next in verses 8-10 is an outburst of praise: “With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at

Photo sourced from Healthy Food House.

<https://steemit.com/steemiteducation/@meherin/the-real-reasons-your-kids-refuse-to-eat-your-kid-s-table>

¹ Chapman, Steven, A Father And His Son Were Seated At The Dining Sermon Central. <https://www.sermon-central.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-steven-chapman-humor-joy-1950?+ref=TextIllustrationSerps>. (Accessed January 10, 2018).

what had happened to him.” Something special changes this man’s life, and he cannot keep quiet about it. This miracle changes the crippled man’s life and demonstrates God’s great power. The healed man praises God publicly for blessing him with the ability to use his legs again. Others around him are filled with amazement at what they are witnessing.

There is something even greater and longer lasting than physical blessings; that is spiritual blessings. God, through Jesus the Christ, has blessed Christians in a variety of ways for now and the future because of the gospel of Christ.

When we realize how much God has blessed us with his words and deeds, it is hard to keep quiet about it because we want the whole world to know. In fact, outbursts of praise may be seen in the life of every Christian because God has blessed each of us with great spiritual blessings. Jewish people used the word “bless” to express both God’s kindness to them and their thanks and praise to Him.²

The book of Ephesians is filled with praise for God, who loves us and sent His Son to bring us the gospel through His teaching, His example, His life, His death and His resurrection. Near the beginning of the apostle Paul’s letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul has an outburst of praise for God who has blessed those in Christ with every spiritual blessing. It is a long outburst of praise that begins in Ephesians 1:3 and continues through verse 14. In the Greek New Testament, verses 3-14 are one continuous sentence, and is probably the longest sentence in the Bible.

The apostle Paul writes,

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly **places** in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. --Ephesians 1:3-14 (NASB)³*

This passage with its outburst of praise takes the form of an extended blessing or “barakah.” The word “barakah” is the Old Testament Hebrew word often translated “Praise or blessing”⁴ which begins something like this: “Blessed be God, who has...” and then continues with a declaration of something that God has done. The New American Standard Bible translates this word as: benefit (1), blessed (1), blessing (48), blessings (11), generous (1), gift (3), most blessed (1), peace (2), present (1).⁵

In the New Testament, the word “eulogetos” is translated “praise” or “blessing.” It is the word Paul uses in Ephesians 1:3 to describe his praise to God who has blessed those “in Christ.” The word “eulogetos” is related to our word “eulogy.” The word “eulogy” is made up of the prefix “eu” which means “good” and the word “logos” which means “word.” We praise with good words.

In 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 the apostle Paul uses the word “eulogetos,” translated “blessed,” to give praise to God for the comfort He provides. He writes, “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 affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves

2 Garrett, Duane, and Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *Archaeological Study Bible Notes*, Ephesians 1:3.

3 All Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible* unless otherwise noted.

4 The word “barakah” is the Old Testament word often translated “Praise or blessing.”

5 *NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*

are comforted by God.”

The first example of an outburst of praise in the Bible is found in Genesis and is expressed by a special priest Melchizedek king of Salem. Genesis 14 records the story of a great battle with four kings against five. Chedorlaomer and the three kings who were with him defeat the five kings among whom are the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah. Chedorlaomer and the kings who are with him take all the goods, food supply, and people of Sodom and Gomorrah and departed. They also take Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions because he is living in Sodom. A fugitive comes and tells Abram what has happened; when Abram hears that his relative has been taken captive, he leads out his trained men, three hundred eighteen, and goes in pursuit. He defeats Chedorlaomer and his allies and rescues the captives and brings back all the goods, including his relative Lot with his possessions.

This outburst of praise comes after Abram’s victory secures the rescue and return of Lot and many others who are now free from captivity. Genesis 14:17-20 gives us the details:

Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said,

*“Blessed⁶ be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand...”*

Abram is blessed because he places his faith in God. God is praised because he grants Abram victory in his quest to rescue Lot and his household. Abram’s victory is a complete victory because he trusts in God.

When we praise God we acknowledge His grace, power, comfort, and love: and we worship Him. He blesses us with his words and works. As Christians, we need to have a mind focused on proclaiming God’s greatness and goodness because He deserves all praise and glory for the blessings we have now and for the ones we look forward to in the future. Paul’s words of praise in Ephesians 1:3-14 are closely akin to thanksgiving and show us that we should be full of praise for God’s great blessings.

There are earthly blessings we need and want, and we know God is a generous provider. Jesus, in speaking about God, says in Matthew 5:45, “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” God is a generous provider for everyone. We must keep in mind that there are better and longer lasting things than material blessings. God wants us to have those better things that last. That is why the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

What are these spiritual blessings that Paul praises God for? Whatever blessings we learn about in this verse and in this chapter, we must acknowledge that God is the ultimate source. In Ephesians 1:3, the word “places” is italicized. The word “places” is added to try to clarify the meaning of “heavenly.” The word translated “heavenly” is not in the masculine gender, but neuter gender. “Heavenly things” would be a viable translation.⁷ The expression “heavenly things” in Ephesians easily conforms to the idea that it refers to the things that Paul had preached. The expression is also found in John 3:12 where Jesus says, “If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heav-

6 The Septuagint translation (the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures of the Old Testament into the Greek language) of Genesis uses a form of the word “eulogetos” to describe this praise given to Abram and to God.

7 Marion Fox translates this passage with the expression “heavenly things.” His translation of Ephesians 1:3 is as follows: “Blessed *be* the God even *the* Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one blessing us with all spiritual blessings by means of the heavenly *things* in Christ.”

only things?” All spiritual blessings come through the heavenly message that Jesus brought to earth. It is the message that originates in heaven. The gospel is the message that saves for those who believe and obey.

God’s purpose from the beginning of time was to create an entity upon whom He could lavish spiritual blessings. The Bible is the account of how He accomplishes this; Jesus Christ is the person through whom He accomplishes this; the church is the entity for which He does it. In Ephesians 3-14 Paul describes the nature of the blessings that God gives to the church through Jesus Christ. God blesses, or gives gifts that are spiritual in nature, to the church in connection with Jesus.⁸

God is the provider of what we need to receive and keep. All spiritual blessings come through the heavenly message that Jesus delivered. He provides every blessing that we need—for our salvation from sin, instruction for life, preparation for death, every motivation, every reason, every spiritual blessing is provided by God in Christ.

Note that little preposition “in” because it carries great meaning. In some passages, the word “in” pertains to physical or geographic location.⁹ In verse 3 the preposition “in” describes a spiritual location: “in Christ.” God put every spiritual blessing in Christ. To participate in these blessings, we need to be in this place, in this relationship: “in Christ.”

In Galatians 3:26, 27 the apostle Paul explains how we get “in Christ.” He writes, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” God provides for all our spiritual needs when we are “baptized into Christ” and live faithfully for Him. God is to be praised for sending His Son to save us.

Knowing our sins are forgiven is a spiritual blessing. The information whereby we can get out of darkness and into the light is a spiritual blessing. Sonship and inheritance are spiritual blessings. Eternal life is a spiritual blessing. God wants us to have these rich spiritual blessings.

God, our Creator, has let us know what He is like and what He wants us to do. He has not left us to guess or to stumble around in the darkness. He has told us all that we need to know in order to seek Him and find Him and have a relationship with Him. He has not left us to speculate or guess about the important choices of life. God has spoken to man and revealed Himself in a way that we can understand, using the language of man. The written word of God, the Bible, is His communication. All that we can know for sure about Him while we are on this earth is there —open, available, and waiting to be learned, accessible to all those willing to study it. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

God has revealed himself in a very special way by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, the very embodiment of that Word of God. John the apostle said in John 1:18, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” The writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews wrote, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” In John 1:1, Jesus is called “the Word.” We learn of the great blessings we have in Christ through the word of God.

In Ephesians 1:3-14 the apostle Paul reminds those that are in Christ that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. Here are just a few of our spiritual blessings that he writes about:

- Selection in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him,
- Love so great that He predestined us, to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, to Himself,

8 Mazzalongo, Mike, “Ephesians For Beginners.” <https://bibletalk.tv/all-spiritual-blessings-in-christ> (accessed January 2, 2018).

9 See Ephesians 1:1, “In Ephesus.”

- His grace, which He freely bestows on us,
- Redemption through His blood,
- The forgiveness of our trespasses,
- Wisdom and insight to understand the mystery of His will,
- An inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away.

The knowledge of these spiritual blessings helps guide people's lives. Even in the difficult circumstances through which he wrote, Paul has reasons to rejoice and praise God. His reasons are not dependent on a political outcome, a physical blessing, or any worldly comforts — his joy and purpose in life is based on what he has been given by God through His Son- Jesus Christ.

In 2 Peter 1, the apostle Peter reminds Christians of the great blessing that come through faith in Jesus Christ. This is not just future blessings, but blessings we have right now. The letter begins:

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.¹⁰

The apostle Peter also has an outburst of praise for those blessings in 1 Peter 1:3-5,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter's praise to God focuses on "our Lord Jesus Christ." He focuses on the spiritual blessings of God's great mercy, our living hope, our inheritance in heaven, and our salvation because of Christ's love and sacrifice.

How should we live today with a knowledge of these great spiritual blessings? I will begin with a story of a woman who had great physical wealth, but failed to realize how to use that wealth in a way that could benefit herself or others. She didn't benefit much from her wealth during her life, and she certainly didn't benefit from her wealth in death. Next, I want to compare that story to a woman who didn't have many worldly possessions, but once she came to know of the great spiritual blessings in Christ, changed her life to enjoy the spiritual blessings she has now and the looks forward to the spiritual blessings to come.

First, let's look at the folly of a lady who at first was admired for her wealth and wisdom only later to be known for her unwillingness to benefit herself or her loved ones with the wealth that she had acquired.

Hetty Green, who lived from November 21, 1834 – July 3, 1916, was an American businesswoman, known for her extremely frugal behavior, as well as for being the first American woman to make a substantial impact on Wall Street. Her family were Quakers who owned a large whaling fleet. When

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:1-11.

her father died in 1864, she inherited \$7.5 million in liquid assets, which she later invested in Civil War bonds. She also invested in the stock market with great success.

She formulated an investment strategy to which she stuck throughout her life: conservative investments, substantial cash reserves to back up any movement, and an exceedingly cool head amidst turmoil. She claimed to have made \$1.25 million from her bond investments in one year alone.

Because of an incident later in life, Green became best known, not for her wisdom in investing, but for her greed and stinginess. Her son had broken his leg, and due to her unwillingness to pay for medical care, she did not seek immediate medical attention for him. She wanted to find a free medical clinic for her son. It is reported that because she took so long to get him adequate care, his leg did not heal correctly and was eventually amputated.

Also Green, did not turn on the heat or use hot water. Her long black dresses would turn green and ragged from wear and filth. For 20 years she suffered from a painful hernia before she finally saw a doctor. She was outraged by his fee for surgery, which was only \$150.00. She eventually paid the fee; but later she tried to cheat the doctor out of his payment even though it was a fair price for his service, and she could easily afford it.

Green was given the nickname the “Witch of Wall Street.”¹¹ However, she was a successful businesswoman who dealt mainly in real estate and invested in railroads, in addition to lending money. On several occasions, New York city officials came to Green in need of loans to keep the city afloat, most particularly during the Panic of 1907; she wrote them a check for \$1.1 million and took her payment in short-term revenue bonds. Intensely detail oriented, she would travel thousands of miles – alone, in an era when few women would dare travel unescorted – to collect a debt of a few hundred dollars.

Called the “World’s Greatest Miser” by the Guinness Book of World Records, Hetty Green died at 81, in a rage, probably from a stroke, when she was arguing with a maid about the virtues of skimmed milk, claiming it was cheaper. An estimate of her net worth was around \$100 – \$200 million, perhaps making her the richest woman in the world at the time.¹²



Hetty Green was known as “The World’s Greatest Miser.”
Source: File: Hetty Green
cph.3a42973.jpg - <https://en.wikipedia>

Green neither enjoyed nor benefited from the riches that were hers. The apostle Paul gives a long list of spiritual blessings which are ours in Christ in the book of Ephesians and encourages us to walk in them. We often get so caught up in worldly priorities that our vision becomes shortsighted and we lose our eternal perspective.

Now I want to tell you about a woman, Mrs. Erma Wright, who didn’t have many worldly possessions. She was at a low point in her life, serving time for criminal activity in a state correctional facility in Oklahoma. She was a Christian who got caught up in sin and needed to turn her life around. During her incarceration, Christians studied the Bible with her, and she came to understand the great spiritual blessings for those who trust in Christ and live for Him. She changed her life to live for Christ and enjoys the spiritual blessings she has now, looking forward to the spiritual blessings to come.

For the past few years, I have had the privilege to work with Mrs. Wright, a member of the Northeast church of Christ in Oklahoma City. She lives in Oklahoma City and works with several correction facilities, teaching inmates tools to make better choices in life.

We met soon after a large fire caused great damage in Luther. Volunteers from the Northeast church of Christ came to Luther to work with the Luth

11 Rosenblum, Constance (December 19, 2004). “‘Hetty’: Scrooge in Hoboken”. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 2007-07-21. Hetty Green was that rarity, a woman who largely through her own efforts amassed a ton of money during the Gilded Age, a time when virtually everyone else getting rich -- Rockefeller, Morgan, Carnegie -- was a man. By nearly all accounts she was also a thoroughly unpleasant individual, greedy, petty and often downright nasty.

12 Slack, Charles, Hetty: *The Genius and Madness of America’s First Female Tycoon*. New York: Ecco, 2004.

er church of Christ and the Luther Community Service Center to provide relief for those suffering losses from the fire.

Soon after, Mrs. Wright started bringing inmates to Luther twice a month to help our local volunteers distribute food and to get the free store ready for shoppers in the evening. The inmates come on a volunteer basis and appreciate the opportunity to do something good for someone else. One inmate said that he felt like he was helping his own family by having the opportunity to help others. Each time they come, we have a Bible lesson together and a meal before they return to their facility.

Mrs. Wright is highly motivated in prison ministry because she knows exactly what it means to be in prison. When younger, she had made some poor choices that resulted in several felony convictions and prison time. During the time she was incarcerated, Mrs. Wright met Jo Anne North from the Memorial Road church of Christ in Oklahoma City, who offered Bible studies to the inmates. The studies helped Erma turn her life around. Not only did she turn her life around, but she also wanted to help others turn their lives around, too! People took notice of her new way of life, and once out of prison, Mrs. Wright worked in the church helping others. Her ministry grew to the point that she now works in several state correctional facilities, teaching a Department of Corrections class called Victims Impact Program. This class is for those wanting to learn how to have a better way of life and how to see things from the victim's point of view.



Erma Wright pictured center with volunteers from the Northeast church of Christ, Luther church of Christ, and inmates from the Oklahoma City area.

Mrs. Wright's new way of life even got the attention of the governor of the State of Oklahoma. On November 12, 2014, Governor Mary Fallin issued Mrs. Erma Wright a full pardon from the State of Oklahoma. In January 2016, the State of Oklahoma expunged Erma's criminal record. Many times, I have heard Mrs. Wright shout out "Praise God" while working in Luther. I don't think she can really stop from shouting it out loud. She has so much to be thankful for. She has much to praise God for in her life—there is Jo Anne North who took the time to teach her while she was incarcerated and strengthen her faith, there is her mentor Arnelious Crenshaw Jr., the preacher at the Northeast church of Christ at that time; her church family at the Northeast church who love her and her passion to help others; the supervisors in the Department of Corrections for giving her the opportunity to teach others; there is the pardon and expungement of her criminal record from the State of Oklahoma. But what she is most thankful for is her pardon that she has received from God—that great spiritual blessing of forgiveness that benefits her now and the future. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:8, "for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." That is one of the many reasons Christians, like Erma, shout out praise to God.

Once we realize how blessed we are today, it can change our lives in profound ways and help us look forward to the spiritual blessings to come. Paul's writing in Ephesians 1 reminds us of the great spiritual blessings we have in Christ. He writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing." We are blessed in the present life and we are looking for and preparing for the life which is to come!

God provides everything we need for our spiritual well-being for now and the future. All through the Bible, there is a trail of distinctive evidence: God always delivers what He promises. He has proven His sufficiency and power to supply everything we need through Christ. We have a benevolent Lord who rules for the good of His people. Spiritual blessings are not for worldly people but for spiritual people—godly people.

A little boy came to the Washington Monument and noticed a guard standing by it. “I want to buy it” he said.

“How much do you have?” asked the guard.

The boy said, “35 cents.”

“You need to understand three things,” the guard explained. “First, 35 cents is not enough to purchase the monument; in fact, 35 million dollars is not enough. Second, the Washington Monument is not for sale; and third, if you are a US citizen, you already own it.”¹³

Like the little boy, we need to understand three things.

1. All of the money in the world is not enough to purchase the spiritual blessing in Christ.
2. The spiritual blessings are not for sale.
3. If we are in Jesus Christ, we already have every spiritual blessing because of the gospel of Christ. As Christians who are enjoying these spiritual blessings now, we can also look for, and prepare for that which is still to come!

Do you have these spiritual blessings in Christ? Have you obeyed the gospel? Have you been baptized into Christ — where all these blessings are located?



The Washington Monument in October 2016. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Monument

Bibliography

- Chapman, Steven, A Father And His Son Were Seated At The Dining Sermon Central. <https://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-steven-chapman-humor-joy-1950?+ref=TextIllustrationSerps>. (Accessed January 10, 2018).
- contributors, Wikipedia. *Hetty Green*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. December 23, 2017. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hetty_Green&oldid=816855074 (accessed December 23, 2017).
- Fox, Marion. “Ephesians, Notes on Paul’s Letter to the.” Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Marion Fox, n.d.
- Garrett, Duane, and Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *Archaeological Study Bible Notes*. n.d.
- Huss, Davon. A Little Boy Came To The Washington Monument And Sermon Central. <https://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-davon-huss-stories-63821> You Already Own It, (accessed January 10, 2018).
- Mazzalongo, Mike. *Ephesians, Spritual Blessings in Christ*. n.d. <https://bibletalk.tv/all-spiritual-blessings-in-christ> (accessed December 23, 2017).
- NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*. The Lockman Foundation, 1981, 1998.
- Rosenblum, Constance. “Hetty: Scrooge in Hoboken.” *The New York Times*, December 19, 2004.
- Slack, Charles. *Hetty: The Genius and Madness Of America’s First Female Tycoon*. New York: Ecco, 2004.

¹³ Huss, Davon. A Little Boy Came To The Washington Monument And Sermon Central. <https://www.sermoncentral.com/illustrations/sermon-illustration-davon-huss-stories-63821> *You Already Own It*, (accessed January 10, 2018).

Salvation: fellowship in worship

James Rennaker



JAMES RENNAKER – was born December 27, 1971 in Pratt, Kansas. He grew up in Rush Springs, OK and later attended USAO in Chickasha, OK before serving 4 years in the United States Marine Corps. He then attended Memphis School of Preaching where he graduated in 1996.

James and Julie (Pipkin) were married July 22, 2005. Julie is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma with a bachelor's in education. They have been blessed with six children: Nicholas, Leah, Isaac, Eli, Andrew, and Asher. They currently homeschool the youngest four boys.

James started preaching in 1995 and has done local work in Clarksville, TN and Sterling, OK where he is currently in his fifteenth year.

He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships in Marlow, OK; Rush Springs, OK; Marshall, TX; Talco, TX; Fullbright, TX; Carthage, TX; Redwater, TX; and Foulke, AR.

John 4:23-24

Worship is one of the dominant themes contained in God's word. It was our Savior who pronounced to the tempter, *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve."* (Matthew 4:10).¹ Implied within this text and its Old Testament reference is not only the worthiness of God only to be worshipped but also the need of man to be the worshipper.

Problems arise though, when men know not or forget the Creator of heaven and earth and therefore place their worship at the feet of a false deity. These futile attempts to worship are seen in the remnants of ancient civilizations: The Pyramids of Mexico, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and Machu Picchu in Peru are among hundreds of sites testifying to the religious nature of man.

Introduction to John 4:23-24

During the days of Jesus, the land of Palestine was divided into three parts. Galilee was in the north and Judea the south and between the two was Samaria. The Jews hated the Samaritans to the extent that they would not travel through Samaria if at all possible. Jews commuting from the south to the north or vise-versa would often travel east and cross the Jordan before heading in their desired direction. All of this simply to avoid the land of the Samaritans.

Who were the Samaritans?

After the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel, the king of Assyria exiled the Jews to lands outside of their own. He then brought captives from other conquered lands and colonists from his provinces into the cities of Samaria (2 Kings 17:23-24). This would be repeated later when the Babylonians overran the southern kingdom of Judah. These peoples would offer worship which consisted of bits of the Mosaic Law mixed with idolatry.

When King Cyrus began releasing the Jews (starting in 606 BC) to return to their homeland, they encountered these paganistic occupants. Some of the Israelites intermarried with the foreigners and their children would be a half breed people called Samaritans. By the time Ezra returns about 457 BC, these children were now adults with children of their own and problems would soon begin. Ezra records one specific event when the Jews were rebuilding the temple and the Samaritans offered to help. Their help was not accepted but rather they were told to leave. The Samaritans responded by making accusations against the Jews unto king Ahasuerus resulting a temporary stoppage of the rebuilding effort. Similar opposition arose when Nehemiah came into the land to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Sanballat the

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scriptures are taken from the KJV

Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite attempted to disrupt God's people in their work.

Ezra 10 records the identifying of many mixed marriages of Jewish men and strange women. Most likely these were Samaritan women. What was required of these men was to put away their wives and this was done without exception. 25-30 years later, Nehemiah encountered a similar situation and the requirement was the same (Nehemiah 13). These men also put away their foreign wives with the exception of one.

"And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son in law to Sanballat the Horonite" (Nehemiah 13:28)

Manasseh, the grandson of the high priest Eliashib, was married to the daughter of Sanballat. The very Sanballat who had troubled Israel during the construction of the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah's response was, "I chased him from me." Manasseh was unwilling to put away his forbidden wife and was expelled from his people. He found refuge among the Samaritans who would construct a temple upon Mt Gerizim and Manasseh would serve as their first high priest.²

Animosity would continue to fester between the Samaritans and Jews. The Samaritans claimed their temple was greater than the temple in Jerusalem. They accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament while rejecting the other thirty-four. They also viewed their copy of the Pentateuch to be superior. The Samaritans were also willing to accept Jews who were reprobates, unwilling to conform to the Law of Moses. These reasons among others help the student of the Bible better understand the friction between the sides as seen in the New Testament (John 4:9; Luke 9:51-56).

Background to Sychar

Near the middle of Samaria was a small village called Sychar. Many scholars have equated this with the Old Testament city of Shechem. Without doubt, this area is rich in Biblical history. Here was the first recorded sacrifice offered when Abram came into the land of Canaan.

"And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him" (Genesis 12:6-7).

Jacob also offered a sacrifice here upon buying a parcel of land,

"And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel" (Genesis 33:18-20).

Simeon and Levi killed all the inhabitants of the city to avenge the rape of their sister Dinah,

"And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males" (Genesis 34:25).

Upon taking the promise land, Joshua called the Israelites together at Shechem for his final speech as he stood between the mountains of Ebal and Gerezim,

"And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God" (Joshua 24:1)

The bones of Joseph, carried out of Egypt, were buried here,

"And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph" (Joshua 24:32).

While not exhaustive, this gives a glimpse of the history of Sychar/Shechem.

2 Smith, William, "Entry for "Samaritans", Smith's Bible Dictionary, 1901

Jacob's well

It is at Sychar, our Lord arrived and specifically stopped at Jacob's well. This well can still be seen today and may be the only existing place we can be certain that our Lord visited. Brother J.W. McGarvey traveled the land of Palestine over 100 years ago and commented in his book concerning this well:

"Jacob's well is still there, about one hundred feet from Mount Gerizim, which rises high above it to the west. The well is a perfect cylinder, seven and a half feet in diameter, walled with stones of good size, smoothly dressed, and nicely fitted together, an excellent piece of masonry. Its depth was stated by the earliest modern who visited it (Maundrel) at 105 feet with fifteen feet of water. In 1839, it was found to be seventy-five feet deep with ten or twelve feet of water. All visitors of more recent date have found it dry and gradually filling up from the habit of throwing stones into it to hear the reverberation when they strike the bottom."³

Jesus used the well and its water to lead into a discussion concerning the living water that He could provide (John 4:10). The woman "perceived" that Jesus was a prophet and desired the water. Jesus then began to teach this woman concerning what was to come pertaining to true worshipers and worship as will come to be in His kingdom.

The True Worshiper

Worship is designed to glorify and please God. It is with sincerity, humility, and reverence that Christians bow themselves to the Creator. The Psalmist wonderfully expresses the sentiment of the souls of those desiring to worship the Almighty.

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" (Psalm 42:1-3).

While it appears the writer (probably David) seems to have been cut off from the public worship, the cry of his heart is analogous to the deer long deprived of water, now panting for relief. This should be the very cry of the Christian heart! Not that one HAS to go to worship with the saints but rather one is BLESSED to do so. True worship is characterized as such.

But what of the worshipper? Do children of God receive anything from their efforts? Too often we hear the complaint expressed by some brethren, "I just don't get anything out of worship." While we understand that we must put something into worship, we must also see there is something received accordingly. Consider the sage words of brother Alan Highers:

"Worship is not only to please and glorify God; it is designed for the benefit of the worshiper. One of the most important lessons we could learn is that we tend to become like what we admire. Our goal as Christians should be to become more godly. It is not that God needs our worship, but rather that we need to worship."⁴

True worship is not only seen in the attendance and attitude of the Christian but also in the actions. What constitutes true worship is found within the pages of Holy Writ. Sadly, within these same pages are also found examples of false worship and warning against such. The apostle Paul was combatting such in the church at Colossae when he penned the epistle bearing their name.

"Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Colossians 2:23).

Take special note of the term "*will-worship*." This is translated from the Greek word *ethelothreskia* which is rendered as self-made and self-imposed in various translations. In other words, it is worship which originates within the human mind and is contrary to what God has prescribed. It's irrelevant

3 J. W. McGarvey, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Standard Publishing Company, 1914), p. 56

4 Alan E. Highers, "Improving Our Worship," *The Spiritual Sword*, January 1993

whether or not the offerer is doing such out of defiance or ignorance.

Consider several accounts of will-worship from Scripture. King Jeroboam serves as a warning to those desiring to change God's assigned way of worship. 1 Kings notes that Jeroboam changed:

- The object of worship – 12:28a
- The place of worship – 12:28b-29, 31
- The priesthood – 12:31
- The Feast of the Tabernacles – 12:32-33

These changes perfectly illustrate the principle of will-worship. In fact, the text pinpoints the beginning of troubles as Jeroboam, *"Said in his own heart"* (1 Kings 12:26). The result of his devising is summed up with this fact, *"And this thing became a sin"* (1 Kings 12:30).

Jesus similarly described the efforts of the scribes and Pharisees by proclaiming, *"But in vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:9). Their worship was vain because it was will-worship. Too often the Law of Moses took second place to the traditions of the elders (Matthew 15:3, 6). What resulted would be self-made or self-imposed worship. That which attempts to worship God in a way contrary to His way will always be unacceptable. Albert Barnes commented on this verse,

"God only has a right to declare what shall be done in his service; but they held their traditions to be superior to the written word of God, and taught them as doctrines binding the conscience."⁵

What an amazing admission from someone attempting to worship from denominational doctrine!

Our worship is a foretaste of what is to come. The book of Revelation gives a glimpse of the heavenly scene and the worship offered therein. One must not try to literalize each passage remembering that this book contains much symbolic language. While the text may not openly declare who or what these beings are which are worshiping, this does not deny the fact that they are worshiping!

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

(Revelation 4:8-11)

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour; and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever. (Revelation 5:8-13)

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. (Revelation 14:2-3)

5 Albert Barnes, Barnes Notes on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI., 1975), 71-72

The Spirit of Worship

Our Lord describes the true worshipper as worshipping in “spirit.” There are several ideas as to the meaning of this word in its context but most, while not teaching error, are not what the Master intended. It must be remembered that Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman, so therefore, what he was teaching had meaning to her. The woman declared, *“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship”* (John 4:21). The words attributed to Jesus were never spoken, so far as recorded, so the woman was simply referring to the known Jewish teaching. The Lord responds that the time approaches, *“When ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father.”* These were physical locations to which each party could travel and worship in their appointed ways but soon this would cease to be so. The physical would soon end and what would begin is termed by Jesus as *“worship in spirit.”*

The obvious teaching of the passage is the changing of the law. Therefore, the question at hand is, “How does ‘spirit’ differentiate New Testament worship from Old Testament worship?” Remember, the Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone (Exodus 34:1, 28) and the other ordinances on unspecified materials. It was necessary that the people commit these to their hearts and live them daily (Deuteronomy 6:6). While there were exceptions, it appears the majority of the nation of Israel was not in compliance with this. They saw God as a brazen serpent on a pole or in a box (ark) to be carried into battle ensuring victory. Saul thought as long as the sacrifice was offered then the requirement was fulfilled (1 Samuel 13:12). But Samuel strongly rebuked Saul for not keeping God’s commandments. Saul would again fail to obey God when he spared King Agag and the best of the flocks. Samuel said, *“Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22).

While the actions might have been correct, it was the heart that failed to comply with God’s word (Matthew 15:8). The Jews in general were always looking to the physical and never beyond.

The New Testament is described by the Hebrew writer in stark contrast to this.

“For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Hebrews 8:8-10).

Under the Old Testament, one was born into the law and later taught but under the New Testament, one is taught in order to be born (John 3:5).

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath set me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:44-45)

It is the inspired word which enlightens the soul and the word is then inscribed onto the heart.

The New Testament is more in keeping with the spiritual nature of God. Doesn’t it seem odd that man always tries to go back to the glitter of Old Testament? “Christendom” wants to separate clergy and laity, elevating the priest/pastor above the member in the pew. Robes, elaborate buildings, candelabras, titles/names, chairs resembling thrones, burning of incense, rosary beads, and a host of other items which are simply for the outward show. These external forms of will-worship do not express the very heart of man as he offers spiritual worship to God Almighty.

The Truth of Worship

“Truth” is set forth by our Lord in the following words, *“Ye worship, ye know not what: we know*

what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). Jesus stressed the possession of knowledge and the lack thereof. He said of the Samaritans, “*Ye know not,*” and of the Jews, “*We know.*” It was essential to know who was to be worshiped along with how that worship was to be conducted. Therefore, possession of all the Law of Moses and not just the Pentateuch was mandatory. Jesus acknowledged who had this information as the verse concludes, “*For salvation is of the Jews.*” Paul expressed the same concerning his brethren in the flesh as he wrote, “*Unto them were committed the oracles of God*” (Romans 3:2). The Samaritans fell short by rejecting most of the Old Testament. The woman at the well knew that “*Messiah cometh*” (John 4:25), but she was woefully ignorant of the wealth of information revealed in the poetry and prophets. The Jews received all the law and had the means of salvation.

While this was an advantage for the Jews, it did not guarantee anything concerning their salvation. Truth still had to be applied else vain worship would result. Paul again wrote,

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer in God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 1-3).

This had been a problem for some time and had reached a crescendo during the ministry of our Lord. It is He who said, “*The hour cometh and now is*” (John 4:24). There was a change coming!

True worshipers worship God sincerely, genuinely, and intelligently as opposed to those who worship mechanically, ceremonially, and ritualistically. This is the very thought of worshiping in “truth.” Consider the acts of worship and the hearts of those so engaged.

The Lord’s Supper

Truth sets forth the components of communion. The day of the week, frequency, items used, and who partakes. While some seek to change any or all of these, to do such would put the church in the same position in which Jesus found the Samaritan woman. Sincerity may be in the heart but the truth is not.

The Lord’s Supper consists of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:26-28). This observance occurs upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). As Christians partake, they commemorate the death of Jesus and remember the Lord’s resurrection. Fellowship in this act is both horizontal among brethren and vertical with God.

Singing

Raising our voices in praise to Jehovah certainly requires the heart but also must be done according to instruction. Consider first that we are authorized to sing.

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19).

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

By allowing the two verses to commentate upon each other, the reader quickly arrives at several truths.

- 1) This singing is a form of teaching
 - * Speaking one to another (Ephesians 5:19)
 - * Teaching and admonishing one another (Colossians 3:16)

- 2) This singing is joint participation (fellowship)

Both verses direct the singing/teaching to be, “*One to another.*” Each worshiper is to participate in order to fulfill the command. Hence, there is no authority for solos, choirs, or singing groups. To obey the simple instruction “*sing*” is to worship in truth.

Giving

Contribution is also a weekly privilege presented in the Bible. The blueprint for our giving is in the following passages,

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

To summarize, giving is:

- Upon the first day of the week
- As one has been prospered
- Not grudgingly or of necessity

These contributions were used in part for helping relieve the burdens of poorer saints (1 Corinthians 16:1, Romans 15:26). Those contributing are “fellowshipping” with those who are receiving and vice versa (Philippians 4:15).

Prayer

Prayer is the Christian lifeline to the Father. Sin must never be allowed to diminish our prayer lives or the effectiveness of our prayers. This right of communication is how the Christian expresses his desires, fears, anxieties, and thanksgiving unto God (Philippians 4:6). Not only does prayer benefit the one praying but also for those for whom the prayers are made.

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Whether in the assembly or in private, prayers offered from the heart of the righteous individual are powerful (James 5:16).

Preaching

The book of Acts describes the first century church as having, “*Continued in the apostle’s doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). Among the things taught to the early church by the apostles was, “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*” (Hebrews 10:25). It was in these assemblies the early church would worship and, “*Provoke unto love and good works*” (Hebrews 11:24). The preaching of the word would bring those gathered for worship into unity, “*And all that believed were together*” (Acts 2:44).

Not only did preaching affect the church, but also those still in the world. Consider the result of the preaching of the first gospel sermon. The listeners (sinners) were, “*Pricked in their hearts,*” and conviction followed as they asked, “*Men and brethren, what shall we do*” (Acts 2:37). Preaching caused men to ask questions as they ponder the message. Upon being presented with the plan of salvation, “*They that gladly received the word were baptized*” (Acts 2:42).

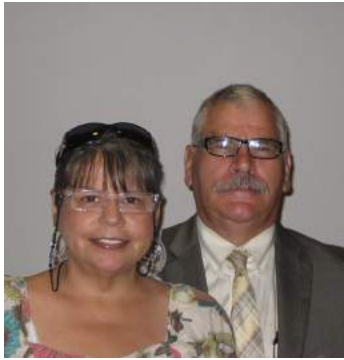
It is the desire of man to worship so it is imperative that the knowledge of the true God be presented to all. The apostle John presented the foundational truth of the worthiness of God only to be worshiped,

“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, see thou do it not: for I thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Revelation 22:8-9).

Let us praise God in our worship and prepare ourselves, “*For that which is to come*” (1 Timothy 4:8).

Salvation: fellowship in work

Jeff Hendrix



JEFF HENDRIX was born in Los Angeles, CA on May 7, 1961. Jeff enlisted in the Marine Corp in 1978. His family moved to Oklahoma in 1981. He and Gloria were married November 13, 1985 and they have one child, Farrah Shalah. The last 13 years, Jeff has worked for Oklahoma Freight Liner as a Master Journeyman Technician.

Jeff started preaching in 2002 and has done local work with Grand Boulevard church of Christ and has preached at the following congregations: Nicoma Park, Wellston, and the Barnes church. He has preached on the "Annual Oklahoma City Lectures" and this will be his second time to do so.

He has been attending the "Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies" for a number of years and is prepared to graduate at the end of this year.

Jeff has served in the United States Marine Corps.

In the letter that Paul wrote to the church in Rome he made this statement

Rom 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

There is but one way unto salvation, and that is through the gospel of Jesus Christ. if one reads of the salvation of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1-42) one can see the work of the Holy spirit and of the angels involved in the preparing the way. But God left it to man to tell the good news to those of that day, whom gladly accepted that very day.

Jude wrote to brethren with this statement, to prepare themselves of what was to come, pertaining to false teachers

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

That same plea for contention, is still as vital today as it was the day it was written.

It is us today the church, who now is to prepare for fighting for the truth. Never again will the truth be delivered from heaven. That responsibility of telling the good news is given to us today.

Eph 2:10 *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

In Paul's writing to the brethren in Ephesus, he states that we who are Christians, those of the church of Christ, are created by God (His workmanship) through Christ Jesus for a particular reason, and that reason is for good works which were also created by God for us, and it is in these good works we are to dwell. Paul writes that it was by the blood of Jesus Christ that brought them into this realm of salvation.

(see Eph. 2:11-22)

And in so doing they too (the Gentiles) were accountable to good works

Eph 3:6 *that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,*

To be fellow heirs means that we now see the workings of fellowship that of one mind and purpose.
Eph 4:4 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;*

Eph 4:5 *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;*

Eph 4:6 *one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Paul writes that we are called into fellowship

1Co 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

When we enter in these good works in which we are to dwell, we do so in fellowship being of one mind and spirit. So what are these good works that we are to dwell in? When our lord walked this earth he stated what His purpose was, to do the will of the one who sent Him.

As a young man Jesus had been traveling with his parents and while the family journeyed back from passover and as the event unfolds it appears they had lost him, so they back tracked back to Jerusalem and when His mother had found Him and His reply was *"I must be about my fathers business"*(Luke 2:41-49)

It was later on in the life of our savior that He had a conversation with a tax collector and Jesus told this man what our Lord's reason for coming to this world. (Luke 19:1-10)

After the resurrection of our Lord, He gave a command to His disciples and it was this

Mat 28:18 *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*

Mat 28:19 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

Mat 28: *"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* Amen.

Many in the church today will lay claim to this being the marching orders of the church today. This is truly our first and primary good work which has been given to us, and that is to seek and save the lost, and an honest bible student will realize that this conversation that Jesus was having with His disciples has in fact been fulfilled, look at what the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Collossise and to those Rome.

Col 1:23 *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Rom 16:25 *Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began*

Rom 16:26 *but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—*

Rom 16:27 *to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*

One needs to remember to whom our lord was speaking when he commanded to *"go into all the world"* was given (Acts 1:1-8)

So what am I saying that we, that is the church, do not have the responsibility to teach the lost? Absolutely not !!!, within this saving the lost lays the very works we have been given to dwell in.

It is by the love we have for our fellow man that we teach, Jesus made a profound statement when ask this:

Mat 22:36 *"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"*

Mat 22:37 *Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'*

Mat 22:38 *"This is the first and great commandment.*

Mat 22:39 *“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*

If there is one thing I picked up in this life, it is this I do not want to be lost eternally and if I am to love my neighbor as myself, then the last thing I want to see is a soul that is lost. This should be our motivation to save the lost.

The second way we teach and preach to the lost is through inference, that is passing on what we know as truth. Meaning that Jesus taught the apostles, the apostles taught the churches, and this is where we come in. And a great responsibility has been placed on us today, just as it was on those in years past, and so it will be for those of the church in future.

Those of the church of the first century are our examples: we see that they preached, 43 times the word preach is used, think just maybe some has something vital to say? What was it our lord said on many occasions?

Mat 11:15 *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*

Act 8:4 *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.*

What was it they preached, and to what was the results of the preaching?:

Col 1:28 *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

Act 8:5 *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.*

Act 8:6 *And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.*

Act 8:7 *For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.*

Act 8:8 *And there was great joy in that city.*

Act 8:27 *So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,*

Act 8:34 *So the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”*

Act 8:36 *Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”*

Act 8:38 *So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*

Act 8:39 *Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*

Read the second chapter of Acts, and see the end results of those whom had been preached. In Paul’s writing to Timothy he instructs him to preach the word

2Tim 4:2 *Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

Question, if we do not preach and teach those who are seeking the true word of God, then who will? Who else has been created by God through Jesus Christ to do the works which God has created for us? Another good work these brethren did was to teach, look what Barnabas and Saul had done with the brethren in Antioch

Act 11:26 *And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called*

Christians in Antioch.

1Co 14:19 *yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

This word teach is used 104 times in the scriptures. Paul wrote Timothy with this: 1Ti 4:11

These things command and teach.

1Tim 6:2 *And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.*

2Tim 2:2 *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

2Ti 2:24 *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,*

Look at what our lord did with His disciples

Mat 11:1 *Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.*

Another good work that was done by those in the first century is visitation

The word visit is used 25 times in the scripture

Act 15:36 *Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."*

Act 24:23 *So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.*

Jas 1:27 *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

We are given examples of where brethren had written letters of encouragement

Act 18:27 *And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;*

Would not the letters that we have in the bible account for letters of encouragement and correction?

Another good work we have at our means is prayer, Jas 5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another; that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

When the apostles had entered the upper room Luke writes that they prayed along with those who were there with them.

Act 1:14 *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

Paul in his writing to the saints in Ephesus of how we are to dress for battle he too includes the instruction for them to pray

Eph 6:18 *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints* —how can prayer be counted as a work? Because the scriptures points out that God does not hear those that are separated from Him

The writer of proverbs wrote:

Proverbs 28:9 *One who turns away his ear from hearing the law,*

Even his prayer is an abomination.

The prophet wrote of these same actions:

Isa 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.*

This same action by God is carried over into the New Testament

Jhn 9:31 *“Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.*

Jesus in giving a parable pertaining to prayer

Luk 18:9 *Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*

Luk 18:10 *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

Luk 18:11 *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.*

Luk 18:12 *‘I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’*

Luk 18:13 *“And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’*

Luk 18:14 *“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

So here is another question pertaining to good works which was created by God, for those who have been created in Christ Jesus?

If God does not hear their prayer does he recognize their work? We see and hear the things those of the “religious world” do to help those in need, all the millions and millions of dollars spent on feeding, sheltering and giving aid for those in need. These are works of a humanitarian, this work they do are for those who are present at the time, to give praise to those who have done these good thing.

To say to them what our Lord spoke of pertaining to doing charitable deeds would be foreign to the world, because this world today is about self, and self will not give up one whit, to blow its own horn, and proclaim ones self a good person.

Mat 6:3 *“But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*

How many times in our news media do we hear of someone helping those in need? If this deed was true and honest the name of them would never be mentioned, and how humiliating is to have your picture and name of the one receiving the help? It is a sad statement to make but we today are much like the Pharisees that our lord spoke of.

Mat 23:5 *“But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.*

Jesus told His disciples, that you have the poor with you always

Mar 14:7 *“For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always.*

In Paul’s closing of his letter to the churches in Galatia, he instructs them to be there for one another, if one sees his brother stumbling due to the load they are under, they are to help ease the load. He speaks of if one has the opportunity to help we should not hesitate to do so.

Gal 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith*

James in his writings tells us that if a brother is in need to fill that need

Jas 2:15 *If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,*

Jas 2:16 *and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

James also writes we are to care for the widows and orphans, in their time of need

Jas 1:27 *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

According to scripture as Christians, when it come to helping those in need our duty is to help our or own brethren. We need to understand that in the first century when one obeyed the gospel, many lost their families, homes, jobs their whole physical existence was turned upside down. Peter had asked the Lord why it was He spoke in parables and in His discourse Jesus said this;

Luk 12:51 *"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.*

Luk 12:52 *"For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.*

Luk 12:53 *"Father will be divided against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."*

The Lord knew that when one became obedient in some cases it would destroy their physical lives, we need to remember to whom it was that the lord was speaking. Under the old law a Jew did not give up nothing to live under the ordinances of the law, because they were physically born in to it. When one became, (and this still occurs today in some case) obedient to the gospel they are told they no longer are privileged to live under the auspices of their physical family. And our Lord advised those who chose to follow after Him to count the cost.

Luk 14:28 *"For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—*

Those that gave up all had no where to turn except to their own spiritual brethren.

Yes the world, sometimes does great humanitarian work, but theirs are counted for naught. It is our job to care for our own brethren first.

James wrote in Jas 4:17 *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

We need to understand the responsibility that has been placed upon on us and the sense of urgency that goes along with it. We are a particular people, with a particular task which was created for us, and to fail to commit to these works means we have failed in every aspect of them. God has set before those who have been obedaint a place to dwell with Him. we no longer walk like those in the world today who walk as if they had no course. without God there is no certianty. James tells us that this life is so short in the scheme of eternity and that to walk it with out the proper purpose is futile. In all that we do we should do it in such a matter that our very existence is that if God wills it. We know what God's will is He wills that we walk within His ordinances. James Mofft wrote a commentary on this verse and he writes "I have shown you what is right to do and failure to do it on your part is therefore sin" We have been given a great task,

In Jesus telling of the parable of the talents Matt. 25:14-30, our Lord makes it abundantly clear he does not take our servitude lightly, and neither should we. Peter writes that God has given us talents and it is up to us to exercise, those talents to learn what they are and to grow in them and to use them in the benefit of the Lord

1Pe 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the mani-*

fold grace of God.

1Pe 4:11 *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

God has made us and saved us for good works that we may walk in them, we need to remind ourselves of what we have been blessed with, eternal salvation, we need to remind ourselves of what has been done for us, our Savior died on a cross to pay for our redemption and whatever has been asked of us we should freely do.

Salvation: in knowledge

Mike VonTungeln



MICHAEL VonTUNGELN was born on February 27, 1949 at Clark Air Force Base, Philippine Islands. He and Connie were married on November 25, 1970. To this marriage two children: 1) John and 2) Amy.

Michael is not a “preacher,” but has fill in for regular preachers on several occasions. He preached his first sermon in Goodwell, OK. He has attended: 1) Panhandle State College, 2) Pepperdine University, and 3) Hawaii Pacific University and he graduated from each of these Colleges and Universities. He has been a faithful member of the following congregations: 1) Goodwell, Ok, 2) Manassas, Va, 3) Lawton, OK 4) 29 Palms, CA, 5) Beaufort, SC, 6) Jacksonville, NC, 7) Norfolk, VA, 8) Choctaw, OK, 9) Kailua, HI, 10) Midwest City, OK, and 11) Ardmore, OK.

He has also served as a deacon in Jacksonville, NC, Norfolk, VA and he served as an elder in the Ridgecrest congregation in Midwest City, OK from 2001 – 2014.

Mike has spoken on the Oklahoma City Lectures several times and he has written articles appearing in : One Heart and the Marine Corps Gazette.

Of interest, Connie and Mike are involved in server ministries of the church of Christ in Merrick Drive, OK and they recently returned from helping with hurricane relief work in Orange, TX

1 Timothy 4:8 - For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. (NKJV)

1 John 2:3-4 - 3. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (NKJV)

Before we start discussing Salvation in Knowledge, let’s take a quick look at the comparison between bodily exercise and godliness. Taking care of our physical bodies is important. In most cases, the better our physical bodies function, the better we can serve the Lord. In First Corinthians 6:19, the apostle, Paul, tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit whom we have from God. This specific verse should be all we need to motivate us to take care of our physical bodies. However, taking care of our physical bodies only profits us as long as we are in those bodies. Few of us will be in our physical bodies longer than 100 years. Contrast that to our souls. Our souls are eternal. Anything we do to improve our souls yields permanent benefits.

Now, getting on to our topic, Salvation in knowledge. It is very clear from 1 John 2:3-4 that knowledge is more than just intellectual awareness that God exists. Knowledge of God involves knowing what He wants us to do and doing it. That brings us to another question, how do we know what God wants us to do? Before we can answer that question, we have to know how speaks to us. We find that answer in scripture. Hebrews 1:1, 2 tell us that in these last days, God has spoken to us through His Son. But how does the Son speak to us? Scripture also provides that answer. In John 14:26 Jesus tells the disciples that the helper, the Spirit of truth, whom the Father would send would teach them all things. In John 16:13-15 Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit of truth would guide them to all truth, taking what belonged to Him (Jesus) and declaring it to them (the apostles). A significant portion of the New Testament was written by four the Apostles of Christ, Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul. What about the rest? In Acts 18:8 we read that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands. We read in 1 Corinthians 12:10 that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit was prophecy which means delivering a message from God. The writers of the New Testament who were not apostles of Christ were men whom the apostles had laid hands on. These men, like the apostles wrote what the

Holy Spirit directed them to write.

Since God speaks to us through Jesus Christ, and since Christ speaks to us through the New Testament, the New Testament is where we need to go to find out what God's commandments for us are. Rather than going through a list of things the New Testament commands us to do, we'll look at the words Christ spoke when he was asked, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" In Mark 12:30-31, Jesus answered,

"30. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Paul made a similar statement in Galatians 5:14

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Steve Chisholm, preacher for the Ridgecrest congregation has said on more than one occasion, "Love is not something you feel. Love is something you do." These scriptures give us a framework. Every time we face a decision, we can ask ourselves, "How does this choice show my love for the Lord?" or "How does this choice show my love for my neighbor. We will spend the rest of our time discussing ways we can obey these commandments. First, loving the Lord and loving our neighbors involve choices we make. We make choices one at a time and the choice we made last influences the choice we make next. For example, if we decide, this week, not to assemble on the first day of the week, it makes it easier for us to make the same decision next week. We do not grow stronger in the faith at once. We don't fall away at once. We do these things one choice at a time. The Ridgecrest congregation in Midwest City has a program called Whiz Kids where they bring students from a local elementary school into the building each Monday. They feed them, give them a Bible lesson, and tutor them in reading. A young man from the East Side congregation usually presented the Bible lesson. One thing he almost always told the kids was, "Good choices, good things happen. Bad choices, bad things happen."

Joshua 24:15 - And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua tells where to start. The first thing we must do is choose to serve the Lord. When we make the decision that we will make serving the Lord (obeying His commandments) our first priority we need to figure exactly how we will do it and what it will look like when we do. The examples I am going to give about serving the Lord are not unique, and they're probably not the most important ones. I've selected these because they are things that I struggle with.

Refraining from the works of the flesh. The first thing we'll talk about is the 'thou shalt not' part of the equation. Paul lists the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21.

Galatians 5:19-21 - Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 . idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 . envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

When we're tempted to do any of the things on Paul's list we can stop and ask ourselves how a sudden outburst of wrath, for example, demonstrates my love for God or for my neighbor. This scripture enlightens us to another very important fact. Sins which some today consider virtues like selfish ambition are listed right there with sins that most agree are sin like adultery, idolatry, and murders. This passage also shows us that many things our society sees as normal are actually sin in the eyes of God.

How do we use our time? God gives each of us 168 hours every week. What is our priority do we put on the use of our time? Do we give God His hours first, or do we give him what's left after we've done what we want to do. I've found it useful to try to establish a routine where the first things

I do each morning are prayer and Bible study. Sometimes this works well and sometimes it doesn't. Another thing we can do is consciously select activities that provide service to the Lord. Usually these activities involve serving others. When we do these things, I believe it is important to let those we're serving know that we're serving because of what Jesus has done for us. There are some things that are not negotiable. I believe that our attendance at the congregation's scheduled worship and classes are some of those things. One more thing, the point we are in life is a big influence on how much time we have to devote to the Lord and what activities we will use to serve Him. A young mother once asked the preacher about church work. The preacher replied that her church work was the four children in the pew with her.

How do we use our money? In the Old Testament, God's people were required to give one tenth of all they received. Under the New Testament we're not given a percentage or an amount. Rather we are told:

1 Corinthians 16:2 - On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper; that there be no collections when I come.

Another example from scripture that is very useful to us when we talk about giving is found in Mark 12:41-44.

41. Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. 42. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. 43. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; 44. for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

From the widow's example, we need to learn that our giving must be significant, not incidental. In other words, we need to be giving enough that we're giving up something in order to give. One thought about giving God the first share of our money is that if we've already set it aside for God, we're usually not conscious about giving something else up.

How do we respond to those in need? The Jews often thought that if a person was in physical need it was because He was a sinner. We need to avoid that attitude. Two scriptural examples immediately come to mind.

Matthew 25:31-46 31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35. for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36. I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." 37. "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38. When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39. Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" 40. And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." 41. "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42. for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43. I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me." 44. "Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" 45. Then He will answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." 46. And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Galatians 6:10 - Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We need to realize that God wants us to have the same love for others that He has for us. There is an old proverb that says, “He who gives to the poor lends to God.” This is another opinion, but I do not believe God is going to hold us accountable for giving to someone who did not need it or who might be a scam artist. The scriptures plainly teach, however, that God will hold us accountable for not giving to those in need.

How do we react when others don’t treat us the way we think we should be treated? A few days ago, I was walking out of the Wal-Mart in Ardmore. A car pulled through the crosswalk without looking and almost hit me. Immediately I yelled at the top of my lungs, “Hey stupid, don’t you know this is a crosswalk?” How receptive do you think that driver would be to me sharing the gospel with him? I was angry because I had to stop walking to keep from getting hit by a car. My anger was not appropriate. In Mark 3:5, Jesus was angry because of the hardness of the people’s hearts in the synagogue when He was healing the man with the withered hand. Although the scriptures don’t explicitly say it, I believe Jesus was also angry when he drove the animal vendors and money changers out of the temple in John 2. The example we have from Jesus is that he was not angry at insult or inconvenience. We need to follow his example. It makes it easier for me to watch my tongue and temper when I remember my anger and words might keep some soul out of heaven.

Sharing the gospel with others. The last item I’ll discuss is sharing the gospel with others. Is there anything we can do for others that shows our love more than sharing the words of life with them? What shows love more than trying to help them escape eternal damnation? Sharing the gospel also demonstrates our love for God.

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

If the Lord wants all to come to repentance, shouldn’t we want the same thing. If that is what we want, we need to be sharing the gospel if we, the members of the Lord’s church are not sharing the gospel, the true gospel will not be shared.

The remainder of this paper consists of the notes I’ve used. These notes came from two sources, James Burton Coffman’s Old and New Testament Commentaries found on Studylight (www.studylight.org) and James Sheerer’s One Volume New Testament Commentary, Copyright 2001, Yeomen Press, Chickasha, OK. The format for these notes is Book-chapter-verse, verse quote from the American Standard version of the Bible, commentator’s name, and comments. Space available does permit list all the notes.

1 Timothy 4:8

for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come.

Coffman

This is denominated a “faithful saying” in the next verse. The contrast between the mere care of the body and the far more important care of the soul is the thing in view. It is incredible how much time, effort, expense and concern men lavish upon exercise and care of their bodies; and, while Paul allows this to be profitable “for a little,” that is, “for a little time, only,” the far more important requirements of the religious life of the soul should be stressed more than the other.

Sheerer

There is value in bodily exercise. The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Christian should take care of his body; however, there is much more value in godliness. Paul is contrasting the two. Godliness is by far the most important. Godliness means giving God his due. God must be worshipped and obeyed (Matthew 4:10). Godliness brings happiness and contentment in the present life and eternal glory in the life to come. Spiritual exercise is more important than physical exercise.

1 John 2:3-4 - 3.

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (NKJV)

Coffman

Verse 3

And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

Contrary to the criterion accepted by many for determination if they are or are not saved, this denies that a person's "feelings" in such a question can be trusted. "It is all too easy to fall into illusions about ourselves if we make too much of our religious feelings, even those of an elevated kind." 12] Keeping the commandments of God is the prerequisite and the test either of loving God (John 14:15) or of knowing God. Macknight supposed that John here was teaching against "the Nicolaitans and Gnostics who affirmed that the only thing necessary to eternal life was the knowledge of the true God." 13]

Hereby we know ... Similar words are used several times in this letter to introduce "tests" by which the validity of one's faith might be tested (1 John 2:5,29; 1 John 3:19,24; 1 John 4:2,6,13, and 1 John 5:2). In the last analysis, it is keeping the commandments of the Lord, walking in the light, doing the truth, obeying the word, etc., which are the final determinator of whether one is saved or lost. Which commandments are meant? All of them. There is no way to limit these to the ethical or moral commandments; those relating to the worship of God are likewise included. To keep God's commandments is equivalent to keeping his word, "And this means the truth of God as it is in Christ." 14] The obligation extends to the entirety of the New Testament revelation. Verse 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; This is the negative of the same teaching given in 1 John 2:3. John's converse statement of the same principle here is blunt, powerful, and incapable of being misunderstood. It reminds one of Jesus' saying, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). All talk of knowing God, loving God, or even of "believing" or "having faith" is meaningless in the mouths of people who dishonor the commandments of the Lord through disobedience and failure to do the "work of faith." It is even more than meaningless; it is falsehood.

Sheerer

3 And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

John reveals the test of how one knows if he knows God. One does not know God by mere intellectual acceptance that a God exists. It involves moral action. To know God is to obey his commandments. "Walking in the light" means to keep his commandments. Keeping his commandments involves searching the word of God to find out what the commands of God are and then diligently applying them to one's life. One can know if he knows God in this way. God is not only to be believed, he is to be obeyed. This is the real test of whether one knows him or not. This strikes at the heart of the Gnostic problem, but it is just as applicable today.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; This is the negative side of verse three. If keeping his commandments is proof one knows God, then failing to keep his commandments is proof that one does not know God. The word for know means to know by observation and experience. The way one can really know God is by knowing his will and obeying it. For one to say that he knows God while neither seeking to know his will nor obeying it shows that he is false and does not know what knowing God means. John says he is lying and the truth is not in him. The only way that truth can be in a person is by knowing the truth and living it.

Mark 12:30-31

30. and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy

mind, and with all thy strength. 31. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Coffman

This is actually the goal of all God's dealings with the human family, namely, that they should love God. This purpose of the Almighty explains everything in the Bible. When Adam and Eve were placed in the paradise of Eden, God could have created them so that it would have been impossible for them to have violated his will, just as animals cannot sin. God, however, desired that his human creation should love him; and, because love that is coerced or forced is not actually love, God made the principle of freedom of the will operative in humanity; but with that freedom of choice, the consequences of the wrong choice became inherent in human life. From the Adamic fall there came the need for redemption, and the whole drama of human salvation was set in motion.

God's purpose, however, has never wavered, the great intention continuing to be that men shall love their Creator. Love of God is a far greater thing even than faith; for if men love God, they will also invariably obey him (John 14:15), something that is not true of faith at all. It is in this supreme truth that the justification is found for Paul's declaration that "the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13); and it is the undergirding of Jesus' declaration that the first and greatest commandment is to love God.

Here also is the explanation of why there was a forbidden tree in Eden, why Satan had access to the human creation, the environment having been specifically ordered by an all-wise God for the purpose of giving Adam and Eve freedom of choice. Had they not sinned, there is no reason to believe that the testing inherent in such a situation would have been discontinued. It is God's will that every man shall have a right of choice, a choice that derives finally from the man's moral nature. This accounts also for the truth that God's revelation to man has never been so overwhelmingly objective as to take away from men the right of denying it **IF THEY SO DESIRE**. Therefore the love of God cannot be induced by purely intellectual proof, or demonstration, faith having ever been not altogether an intellectual decision but a moral one (John 3:19).

As noted in the discussion under the preceding verse, Christ here gave a summary of the Decalogue, equating the first four commandments with the love of God and the last six with the love of neighbor. Jesus' answer, however, is far more than a mere summary of ancient law. Without love, first of God, and then of other human beings, there can be no unity with God who **IS** love. Moreover, Jesus' mention of a second commandment is more than a mere gratuitous extension of his answer to the scribe's question; for the first and second commandments are a compound unity. Can a man love God and hate his neighbor? "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John 4:20).

Sheerer

In answer to the Pharisees, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:5. He says that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your being. Jesus knew that when one loved God, he would obey the commandments of God (1 John 5:3). All of the commandments in the Old Testament are derived from the Ten Commandments which God gave Moses (Exodus 20). The first of the Ten Commandments have to do with one's relationship to God. The last six commandments had to do with one's relationship to man. The **heart** includes the whole man, all his thoughts, words and attitudes. The **soul** refers to the eternal spirit which is the essence of man and which dwells in a physical body at this time. The **mind** includes man's intellect and his will. **Strength** includes not only physical strength, but moral and spiritual strength. The idea that Jesus is expressing is to love God with all your being. When one loves God, he will worship God, serve him and put him first in his life.

Jesus now quotes Leviticus 19:18. When one loves God with all his being, he will worship God, obey God's commands including loving his neighbor. When one loves God, he will obey all of the Ten

Commandments. When one loves his neighbor, he seeks to do him good and will not harm him.

Galatians 5:14

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Coffman

The “law” in view here is the “law of Christ,” mentioned again in Galatians 6:2. True, this was a commandment of the Law of Moses (Leviticus 19:18), but that is not the frame of reference applicable here. Christ himself had made the “*first and great commandment*” to be the “*love of God, and love of one’s neighbor*” (Mark 12:29-31), nor has there ever been, from the morning of creation, the slightest relaxation of this primary obligation of all who were ever born on earth. In Romans 13:8-10, Paul outlined this principle more fully, specifying as specific components of this law of Christ such commandments as “*Thou shalt not commit adultery ... nor steal ... nor kill ... nor covet, etc.*” There also, Paul indicated that love of the brethren is the heart condition that makes the honoring of such commandments possible for the Christian. As Huxtable said, “This passage in Romans is a lengthened paraphrase of the one before us.”

Sheerer

Paul quoted Leviticus 19:18. Love was the summary of the God given law. Man was to love God (Matthew 22:39). Loving God meant keeping God’s commandments (I John 5:2-3). Loving God meant loving one’s fellowman (I John 4:20-21). When one loves God and obeys him, he is living as God would have him live. When one loves his fellowman and serves him, he is living as God would have him live. The law is fulfilled in love.

Joshua 24:15

And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

Coffman

These two verses place the decision squarely up to Israel. They must choose between serving the pagan gods of their early ancestors which the patriarchs (some of them) worshipped beyond the Euphrates River, or the gods of the Amorites whom Jehovah had driven out of their land to provide an inheritance for Israel, or they must choose Jehovah.

“*The gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell ...*” (Joshua 24:15). What a “*reductio ad absurdum*” this is! He seems to say, “If you had served those gods, you would not be here, nor would the Amorites have been driven out before you.”^[29] We also offer in this connection the inspiring words of Plummer:

“Joshua invites the people as Elijah did on an even more memorable occasion, to make their choice between the false worship and the true, between the present and the future, between the indulgence of their lusts and the approval of their conscience ... No desire to stand well in the eyes Israel, no temptation of this lower world to pervert his sense of truth deters him. The experience of a life of service to Jehovah have convinced him that Jehovah is the true and only God, and from that conviction, the venerable warrior does not intend to swerve”^[30]

What is taught in these two verses is absolute loyalty to the sovereign Lord, involving, of course, the putting away of all false gods. Morton pointed out that this corresponds exactly to the ancient form of the old suzerainty treaties, in that, “The historical prologue is followed by a statement of covenant obligations.

Galatians 5:19-21

19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20. idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, 21. envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Coffman

This is another of Paul's lists of evil works, similar but longer than the one in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10, and also resembling those given in Rom. 1:27-32, 2 Timothy 3:1-8. Extensive comments on various items in this list have already been made in my commentary on Romans and my commentary on 1,2 Corinthians in this series.

There are fifteen evils listed here by Paul, and Ramsay identified them all as characteristic of "the kinds of influence likely to affect the South Galatians recently converted from paganism."¹⁶¹ Any thoughtful person could today make up his own list of the sins, perversions and gross wickedness characteristic of the current culture.

Sorcery ... has been cited by some as proof that Paul believed in the reality of witchcraft; and, in the sense of believing that it was a gross work of the devil being practiced in the culture of those times, of course he did believe. But from this, it is not inferred that Paul believed that so-called witches or sorcerers could actually do the things they claimed and pretended to do. This writer believes in witchcraft in exactly the same way, as being a work of the devil advocated and practiced in the city of Houston at the present time, and being just as sinful now as it was in the days of the apostles; however, it is also believed that the claims and devices of such practitioners are fraudulent, untruthful, deceitful and powerless to do anything either good or evil, except in the sense of causing evil in the people who resort to such things.

Salvation: in hope

Lucian Farrar



LUCIAN FARRAR, JR. was born in Natchez, Mississippi, on September 15, 1939. He and EuEllen Kay (Ousley) were married took place on September 2, 1962. To this marriage four children were born: 1) Monte, 2) Michael, 3) Melisa, and Mark. EuEllen departed this life on April 16, 2015.

Lucian began his preaching life in January, 1961 and it was in Chickalah, OK. In preparing for his preaching work, he attended: 1) Harding College, 2) Arkansas State Teachers College (one semester) and he graduated from Harding College in 1962, receiving a BA with a Bible Major, and a History Minor. He has done local work in: Ozark, AR (1962 – 1964), Aurora, MS (1964 – 1966), Qulvira Heights in Topeka, KA (1966 – 1971 and 1979 – 1989), Danvill, AR (1971 – 1974, the Fifthe & Greenwich congregation in Russellville, AR (1974 – 1979), the 49th & Tacoma congregation in Tulsa, OK (1989 – 2001) and at Sperry, OK 2001 to the present).

In the course of these years, Lucian in gospel meetings at: Burlington, KS, Emporia, KS, Junction City, KS, Mount Vernon, AR, Russellville, Ar, Overcup, AR. New Blaine, AR, Quivira Heights, KS. And he preached in the Oklahoma City Lectures starting in 2017. Also, in his years of preaching, he had three books publishing through James Kay Publishing and through Amazon: 1) The Minor Prophets – God's Spokesmen, 2) The Book of Daniel – The Most High Rules, and 3) The Victorious Church in the Book of Revelation, 2016 edition with over 1,000 copies of the of the 2006 edition are in circulation.

Over interesting events that have taken place in the life of Lucian Farrar, Jr.; he taught high school history and civics for one year at Danville, AR (1971 – 1972). He also spoke on a weekly radio while with the Russellville, AR church. His teaching history and Bible at the Greater Tulsa Christian Academy (1993 – 2002) led to his being included in Who's Who Among America's Teachers. He is now teaching at the Owassa School of Biblical Studies beginning in 1990 to the present and this year he is teaching the book of Revelation.

“Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” (1 Timothy 4:8) The blessed life is the life of godliness. Our hope is the promise of the life that is to come. Our motivation for living a godly life is our hope of eternal salvation, made possible by the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *“For we are saved by hope.” (Romans 8:24)* *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teachings us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own people, zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11-14)*

Hope is an encouraging word. Hope is surrounded by faith and love in 1 Corinthians 13:13, which says, *“Now abides faith, hope, and love.”* Hebrews 6:19 states, *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.”* Many individuals are living today like those described in Ephesians 2:12 who *“were without Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world.”*

Because “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,” we can have hope! When Jesus was born, an angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds, saying, *“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:8-10)* The Lord Jesus Christ is “our hope”, according to 1 Timothy 1:1. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” (John 14:6)

He is the only Savior of the world! Peter said concerning Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be*

saved.” (Acts 4:12) He is “*the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.*” (Hebrews 5:9)

The Old Testament predicted the hope we can have in Christ. After sin entered the world, God promised in Genesis 3:15 that the Seed of woman would crush the head of Satan. So, in Galatians 4:4 we read, “*When the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, and that we might receive the adoption as sons.*” Seven hundred years before Christ entered the world, the prophet Isaiah predicted, “*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.* (Isaiah 7:14) Matthew 1:23 tells us that “*Immanuel*” means “*God with us.*” Thus, the Old Testament predicted the coming of God in the flesh. John begins his account of the life of Christ by writing, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” John 1:1, 14) *An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, who was betrothed to the virgin Mary, and said to him, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:20, 21)

The life of Jesus proved that He is our hope. He “*was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*” (Hebrews 4:15) He showed us how to overcome sin when he was tempted by the devil in Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus used the Holy Scriptures to overcome each temptation. When tempted, He said, “*It is written,*” and then he would quote a Bible verse that dealt with the temptation. He left us a perfect example to follow. As we face the temptations and trials of life, let us remember what is written in 1 Peter 2:20-22, “*When you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God, for to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow in His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit in his mouth,’ who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*” We are admonished in Philippians 2:5-10, “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.*”

His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead is the basis of our hope. The apostles preached the good news “*that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen*” of witnesses – over 500 witnesses. (1 Corinthians 15:1-8) Jesus was “*declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the death.*” (Romans 1:4) He “*bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed.*” (1 Peter 2:24)

Jesus gives us a new life of hope. Speaking of Christ, Paul wrote to Christians: “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh and of our mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, just as the others. But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them.*”

(Ephesians 2:1-10) As Christians we are enjoying the godly life with Christ in the heavenly places and the hope of great riches with Him in the future (speaking of heaven). Therefore, we should be “*denying ungodliness and worldly lusts*” while living “*soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age.*” (Titus 2:11-13)

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) Our hope is not to be in the material blessings and pleasures of this world. John warns, “*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is of the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*” (1 John 2:15-17) Our hope is not realized during this life here on earth. For after saying, “*We are saved by hope,*” in Romans 8:24, the apostle Paul adds, “*but hope that is seen is not hope.*” The apostle Peter wrote, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.*” (1 Peter 1:3-4) Our hope is in heaven. Jesus said, “*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” (Matthew 6:20-21).

Have you ever felt like your world was crashing down all around you? It may have been a fire or tornado that destroyed your earthly possessions. It may have been the loss of a job, the loss of health, or the loss of a loved one. The prophet Jeremiah felt like his whole world was gone, as he stood in the ruins of Jerusalem – all the houses, the businesses, and even the temple of God had been destroyed by the Babylonian army. Jeremiah writes in Lamentations, chapter three, “*I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath ... he has besieged me and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation ... My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; so I say, ‘My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord.’ ... But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness, ‘The LORD is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I will hope in him.’*” (Lamentations 3:1, 5, 17, 18, 21-24, ESV) Regardless of your circumstances in life, if your portion is your relationship with the Lord, you can hope in Him. **Fanny J. Crosby** wrote these words,

Thou, my everlasting portion, more than friend or life to me;
All along my pilgrim journey, Savior, let me walk with thee.
Not for ease or worldly pleasure, not for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer, only let me walk with thee.
Lead me thro’ the vale of shadows, bear me o’er life’s fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal, may I enter, Lord, with thee.

What is your portion in life? Is it things? Is it pleasures? Is it other people? Or is it the Lord?

Jesus promises, “In Me you may have peace, in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Christ’s resurrection from the dead gives hope to his followers that they also will be raised from the dead at His coming. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, “*Now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.*” The apostle Paul tells Christians not to “*sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught*

up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) The night before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:1-3, NASB)

Our present heavens and earth will pass away. Peter writes, “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*” (2 Peter 3:10-12)

But there will be new heavens and a new earth for those who are righteous in Christ. Peter says in the next verse, “*Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*” (2 Peter 3:13) The apostle John writes in Revelation 21:1, “*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.*” He was seeing a symbolic vision of heaven, in which, “*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*” He who sat on the throne said, “*Behold, I make all things new.*” And He promised, “*He who overcomes shall inherit all things.*” (Rev. 21:4, 5, and 7)

Those that will inhabit the heavenly city have “*washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God.*” (Rev. 7:14-15) John the Baptist introduced Jesus, in John 1:29, as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” Romans 6:3 asks, “*Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death.*” The blood of Christ is applied in baptism. Paul states in Galatians 3:26-27, “*For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*” The apostle John exclaims, “*Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God ... Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*” (1 John 3:1, 2) What a wonderful hope we have! Some day we will see God!

However, to have this hope, we must be living a life of godliness. Remember, our theme verse, 1 Timothy 4:8 – “*Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.*” As Christians “*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” (1 John 1:6-9) We must be living lives that are guided and corrected by the light of God’s word.

I want to close with the words of Hebrews 10:35, “*Therefore, do not cast away your confidence which has great reward.*” I ask you this morning, “*Are you looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ?*”

Salvation-The Life That Now Is And That Which Is To Come

Brian L. Berry



BRIAN BERRY was born November 11, 1962, in Hobart, OK. He has attended Oklahoma Christian University from which he graduated and Bear Valley Bible Institute, Denver, CO, from which he also graduated.

Brian and Susan were married December 20, 2014 and between them they have five children: Brandon, McKennah, Ethan, Micah, and Dylan.

He started preaching in 1991 and has done local work with the following congregations: Moore, OK; Paden, OK; Erick, OK; and is now working with the Sycamore church of Christ in Cookeville, TN. He has preached in gospel meetings and lectureships with the Edmond church of Christ Vacation Bible School Adult Series Lectures; Bear Valley Institute Homecoming Lectures, Denver, CO; Edmond church of Christ; Prague, OK; Leedey, OK Summer Series; Erick, OK; Carnegie, OK Summer Youth Series; Mountain View, OK church growth Seminar. He has written articles appearing in the local newspaper in Sayre, Oklahoma Record.

Introduction:

When the apostle Paul met with the elders of the church at Ephesus, during a brief stop at Miletus (Acts 20:17), it was already apparent there was unrest brewing within that region. He warned these brothers concerning those who would destroy the church from within and without (Acts 20:29-30).

Thus, this great apostle, moved by the Holy Spirit, writes to the young man Timothy who is laboring in Ephesus, and who sees this warning directly fulfilled (1 Timothy 5:15). False teachers, some mentioned by name (1 Timothy 1:19-20), were assaulting the faith with their false knowledge system” (1 Timothy 6:20). This latter reference appears to refer to a progressing Gnosticism, i.e., those who basically that salvation was gained through secret knowledge, that would trouble the church presently and in the future.

This letter is both personal and ecclesiastical. First, after being commissioned to carry out his work (1:3-4), to dedicate himself to this noblest of endeavors (4:15-16), and to never fear those who might dismiss his instruction on the grounds of him being but a youth (4:11-13), Timothy is prepared. Second, since evil influences were threatening God’s people, the success of the church is foremost in the apostle’s instructions. Timothy must address these dangers. Possibly a combination of Judaizers, i.e., those who live according to Jewish customs, and Gnostics (1:7; 6:20), false teachers must be exposed and confronted. Too, the development of church leaders was paramount. Thus, in a comprehensive and tactful manner, elders and deacons and their qualifications, possible financial support for elders, and how to handle leadership issues, are addressed (3:1ff; 5:1ff). The possibility of being obsessed with material gain is ever a point of concern among brethren (6:3ff). This letter, abounding in practical instructions, is extremely beneficial to any minister.

It is within this context that the Holy Spirit seeks to motivate the reader: *“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”* (1 Timothy 4:8).

“The Life That Now Is”

We are faced with a decision that becomes more urgent with each passing day. Will we follow or will we continue to follow God into the fulfillment of our love for and desire for the abundant life in Jesus right now (John 10:10)? The choice to begin or continue on this pilgrim journey can happen any time and from any place in life. We are here, the time is always now, and the way is always unfolding.

This relationship with our Lord is evident every moment of our lives. It is evident in the beauty of His creation, it invigorates us through the laughter of our brethren, it reaches the depths of our souls through the touch of someone we love. We hear it in our favorite gospel hymns, we sense it at the birth of a child, we are drawn to it while watching the sunset. It is present even in times of great personal suffering – the loss of health, the illness of a child, the loss of a marriage, the death of a dear loved one. This relationship is the solid foundation of who we are.

This longing is the most powerful part of any human soul. It fuels our search for meaning, for wholeness, for a sense of being truly alive. And the voice that calls to us is none other than the voice of God in His holy word. The only choice before us each day that is worth following is to enter into the journey God set before us. So much of the journey lies within us, our deepest desires not only for *“the life that now is,”* but also of *“...that which is to come.”*

Author John Bunyan, in *Pilgrim’s Progress*, a seventeenth-century allegory, wrote about a man who comes to see his own journey as he has never seen it before, and he is appalled by it. He longs for true life, and he knows to stay where he is means death. Against the protests of his family and friends, he launches on a remarkable adventure, “I saw in my dreams,” Bunyan wrote, “that this man began to run !” But as Bunyan tells it, “he had not run far from his own door” before the characters in the man’s old life, ran to bring him back, shouting out all the threats and excuses imaginable.

He begins his journey towards redemption by turning away, and turning toward his deepest love and desire, God. When the going gets rough, we’re going nowhere without our love for and desire for the abundant life right now, and ultimately the indescribable life to come. The going will get rough. The world, the darkness, and our own double – mindedness, are all set against us. People will hate us for this life in Christ, will strive to force us back to the way things used to be, or will attempt to kill us at the soul level. This is no easy journey and that’s why Scripture admonishes us to fix our eyes on Jesus as our supreme example. It’s the only way we will make it. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds”* (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Far more than the character in Bunyan’s allegory, Jesus ran because He wanted to, not because He had to or because the Father told him to. He ran *“for the joy that was set before him,”* which means He ran out of His love and desire. To borrow a familiar phrase, “His heart was fully in it.” And ours must be too.

In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, the story is about two Olympians: Eric Liddell and Harold Abrams. Both are obviously passionate about running, but in two very different ways. Abrams runs so that he might prove something; he is a man whose entire life has been motivated by “ought to,” or “it’s my duty.” Liddell runs because he can’t help himself. He just has to. “When I run,” he says, “I feel God’s pleasure.” He knows the freedom of heart in running that Abrams can only watch from a distance. Liddell, rather than Abrams, is so freed by grace that when he runs, Abrams says, “He runs like a wild animal – he unnerves me.” “Where,” Liddell asks, “does the power come from to see the race to its end ?” “It comes from within.” His heart is fully in it.

Once we realize the precious blessing our heart, we must realize that to guard it is worth our all. *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). To neglect it is foolishness. To kill it is spiritual suicide. To allow it to wander aimlessly, to be trapped by imposters, is disaster.

Let’s revisit the story Jesus told in Matthew 25 of the man who entrusted three of his servants with the equivalent of millions of dollars (literally, “talents”), urging them to handle his affairs well while he was away. When he returned, the man listened eagerly to their reports.

The first two went out into the market place and doubled their investments. As a result, they were

handsomely rewarded. The third servant was not so fortunate. His “talent” was taken from him and he was thrown into “...outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Why ? All he did was bury the money until his master’s return. Many would fall in with this servant - maybe because they might think this is the safe route. But his reasoning is faulty. Listen to him explain his choice. *“Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew Thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where Thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid Thy talent in the earth: lo, there Thou hast that is thine”* (Matthew 24:24-25).

He was afraid of the Master, whom he saw as a hard man. The issue was not capital gains, but what he thought of the Master, what he thought of God. When we bury the desires in our hearts, having been made in His image, it’s as if we are saying to God that we don’t dare desire because we fear Him. He is hard – hearted. Killing desire may look sanctimonious, but it’s really godlessness, or our way of handling life without God. Those who trust God are willing to risk desire and run the race fully in it.

So how is my faith? Jesus teaches about how one way God answers prayer by telling the story of a persistent widow who wasn’t getting the justice she deserved from a belligerent judge (Luke 18). The woman wins her case because she refuses to let up, and Jesus uses her as a picture of unrelenting desire. He urges us not only to ask, but to keep on asking. And then he ends the parable by wondering out loud, *“...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ?”* (Luke 18:8b).

We know in our hearts the connection he is making, and we must always admit it to ourselves. To live with desire is to choose our own vulnerability over safe, self – protection. To admit our desire and seek His help beyond ourselves is even more vulnerable. It is an act of trust. It is an act of faith.

Those who realize this love and desire, and embrace it, looking to God to fulfill it, are the ones who live by saving faith in the, *“life that is now,”* with a burning desire for the life, *“which is to come.”* So drink deeply every morning, and see what the day will bring.

“And Of That Which Is To Come”

Everyone wants to know about heaven or everyone wants to go there, might be a stretch, but according to some recent polls as many as 80-90 % of all Americans believe there is a place called heaven. In an age that appears more and more skeptical, that percentage would be encouraging. There is a desire deep inside the human heart that cries out, “There’s got to be something more; something more than the pain and suffering of this life.” Within every human is a “God-shaped vacuum,” or a “heaven-shaped vacuum” longing to be filled; the longing to live somewhere forever. God desires that somewhere to be heaven. The reason ? *“...He has also set eternity in their heart...”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

According to some recent polls, not only do most Americans believe in heaven, but most people expect to go there when they die. Whenever one talks about living somewhere forever, it would help to know for sure where you are going. After all, if you’re wrong about heaven, you’re going to be wrong for a long, long time. With this in mind, ultimately, it doesn’t matter what one thinks. The only things we can know for certain about heaven are the things revealed in the Bible. Everything else is just speculation and hearsay. The Bible tells us everything we need to know and everything we can know for certain about heaven, the life “which is to come.”

What Heaven is Not

Unfortunately, when man is involved, the biblical representation of heaven will become extremely distorted. By constructing their own personal concepts of the eternal abode of the saints, consider some examples of how man has perverted the eternal abode of the saints.

Atheism’s heaven - For the atheist who believes there is no God, there will be no heaven, because there is no soul. Once human existence ends, there is no consciousness ever again. It’s over for good.

Heaven is on earth - This belief is that this earth will be purified by fire at the Second Coming and

restored to a material paradise. In other words, the earth shall become heaven. Many in the denominational world believe this theory.

Jehovah's Witnesses heaven - They possess a distorted view by failing to distinguish between the literal and figurative language used in the Bible. They believe that with the Second Coming of Christ, the earth will be purified by fire, and this material planet will be the abode of the faithful throughout eternity. In other words, what is commonly thought of as heaven will be a new earth instead. From two highly symbolic texts in the book of Revelation (7:1ff; 14:1ff), the conclusion is drawn that the final number of the heavenly occupants is exactly 144,000, according to God's decree (Let God Be True, 1946, p. 113). The remainder of humanity, they believe, will live on God's glorified earth.

Mormonism's heaven - The heaven of Joseph Smith, Jr., in no way resembles the biblical concept of heaven. This man, allegedly in a vision, proclaimed three levels of heavenly bliss corresponding with the sun, moon, and stars of 1 Corinthians 15:41. The telestial realm is inhabited only by the Holy Spirit, and those who received not the gospel, liars, murderers, adulterers, and whoremongers, who have been cast into the eternal fires of hell. These can be rescued when Christ has finished his work. The terrestrial realm is inhabited only by the Son and Holy Spirit, by those who are moral, but have rejected the gospel, those who have not remained faithful to the gospel, those who never heard, and those who obey post-mortem, salvation or baptism for the dead. The celestial realm is inhabited by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the faithful, those who would have been if presented the opportunity, unaccountable children, and those in the covenant of celestial marriage. All can eventually become gods.

Believing most of the human race would eventually inhabit one or the other of these levels was the result of his being significantly influenced by universalism. He eventually believed there is no eternal punishment for any man.

Islam's heaven - The Islamic heaven is described as a paradise that is sensual, with gardens that perennially bloom, with fresh fountains, and an abundance of beautiful virgins. Being filled with abundance, the destination for the righteous is heaven with the imagery of two gardens. The idea: a return to the Garden of Eden. Each garden, with branches sprawling, two flowing springs, and two of every kind of fruit, is an environment where the righteous recline on beds whose linings are of silk brocade and the fruit of the two gardens is hangs low. This view of heaven is an eternity during which the righteous experience God's infinite grace.

The fact that sound Bible teaching on heaven has been so distorted, by well-meaning souls at times, and thus so misunderstood, is tragic.

What Heaven Is

What does God look like ? What will heaven be like ? These are questions that have been contemplated through the ages. Since, no one has seen God, no one has seen heaven, and "*God is spirit*," (John 4:24), and heaven is in the spiritual realm (Matthew 6:9), Scripture accommodates our obvious limits with figurative language. A method of describing things figuratively so that humans may understand is called anthropomorphism, i.e., attributing human attributes, such as eyes, ears, arms, hands, etc., to God (Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 53:1; 59:1), or terms such as city, country, kingdom, etc., to heaven (Hebrews 4:13; Hebrews 11:10; 14-16; 2 Timothy 4:18).

Scripture uses a variety of figures of speech to describe the rich beauty of heaven, which if taken literally would be a serious exegetical error.

Heaven has been described as the realm of the birds (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 20:8), the realm where weather occurs (Genesis 8:2; James 5:18) and the realm where the sun, moon, and stars reside (Genesis 1:14; 22:17). But the realm where we will focus our attention, the life "*...which is to come*," is the abode of God, called "*heaven*" (Matthew 6:9), the "*heaven of heavens*" (Deuteronomy 10:14), or the "*third heaven*" (2 Corinthians 12:2).

This realm, described as a “city” (Hebrews 11:10), a “country” (Hebrews 11:14-16), a “house” and a “place” (John 14:2), a “temple” (Isaiah 6:1), a “throne” (Matthew 5:34), is called “glory” (1 Timothy 3:16), a “kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18), the ultimate “holy city, the new Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2) and the garden-like Paradise of God (Revelation 2:7), is our eternal “home” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

In Revelation 21:1-22:5 there is a marvelous description of the heavenly home of God’s people.

The New Jerusalem – Revelation 21:1-22:5

Scripture depicts the beauty of the heavenly home of the people of God (Revelation 21:1-22:5). Within this marvelous passage, the life “*which is to come*,” is symbolically described as “*a new heaven and a new earth*,” “*the holy city, new Jerusalem*,” “*coming down out of heaven*,” and breathtakingly celestial in nature.

The New Heaven and New Earth (21:1-8)

Just as the image of the “holy city” itself is the eternal abode of the redeemed, the victorious people of God, the image of a beautiful bride appears, prepared for her husband. The dwelling place of God, an image of the tabernacle appears. His people belong to Him. He is in their midst. All trouble and sorrow have vanished away, giving way to “all things new.” The thirst of God’s people is perpetually quenched by the “river of life.” Through God’s amazing grace, the reward has been freely given yet, the gift has been richly bestowed only on those who have “overcome,” through their obedient faith.

The Security and Beauty of the City (21:9-21)

This city, heavenly in nature, is bathed in the glory of God, surrounded by a wall, great and high, providing absolute, eternal security. The gates to this city are always open, no enemies shall enter therein, and no inhabitants shall ever desire to leave.

The twelve gates contain the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and are flanked by a wall, resting on a foundation that contains the names of the twelve apostles, representing the redeemed of all ages, Old and New Testament alike.

This heavenly “Jerusalem,” depicted by measurements, is cubed in shape, reminiscent of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle of the Old Testament, the dwelling place of God. Its beauty is unparalleled: magnificent stones and brilliant gold. It is humanly impossible to describe the radiance, glory, wealth, and beauty of such a magnificent, great city.

The Sufficiency of the City (21:22-27)

The Father and the Son are the divine sanctuary. The Lamb, Jesus Christ, the precious sacrifice for sins, has an inseparable connection to the Father. He and the Father are one. He and the Father are deity. In this wondrous city of purity, where nothing unclean shall ever enter, there is no night, for the Lamb and the Father are all the light that is necessary. These redeemed inhabitants from all nations, who are enrolled in heaven by obedience to Christ, have their names written in the Lamb’s book of life, never to be removed.

The Blessings of Heaven (22:1-5)

Fascinating is the connection between the book of Genesis and the book of Revelation. As revealed in Genesis, everything that went woefully wrong when God created mankind and everything was good and history for mankind began as we know it, are now presented as being restored to their rightful place in the eternal order of things. Despite the rebellion of lost multitudes of mankind, God’s great plan will never fail. He is good always.

As this section concludes, the image of the river of life, the sustainer of life eternal, which emanates

from the throne of God, shows man's utter helplessness and dependence on Almighty God.

Our God will supply all our needs: refreshing water to quench the thirst, life-sustaining food from the tree of life, precious healing and health provided by the leaves of the tree of life, for there is neither sickness nor death in heaven.

Ultimately, the curse, imposed in Eden, has been removed forever. Those with the Lamb's name on their fore-head, bask in the radiance of His face and rejoice in serving Him forevermore.

The Wonder of Heaven

Reaping the Reward

Realized only through loving, obedient service, the gracious reward of heaven will be unimaginable. Throughout Scripture, God teaches His principles of each individual reaping exactly what they have sown (Galatians 6:7-9). By the amazing grace of God, the faithful who have sowed to the Spirit shall reap the everlasting life which God has prepared for them.

The Realm of Righteousness

Thrilling indeed will be the eternal abode in the presence of the Holy Godhead (Revelation 4:8), in the presence of God's holy angels (Luke 9:26), and in the presence of God's holy, redeemed ones who have been made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). Heaven is a place wherein only righteousness dwells, where all is peace, joy, and love forever, and ever.

Blissful Rest

What an image of the hope of every child of God: the blessing of rest, an endless state of bliss, and one that has been diligently sought by humble obedience to the Lamb. What an eternity to anticipate where there will be rest from the wearisome, exhausting labor of this life on earth (Revelation 14:13).

The Realm of Responsibility

Within an atmosphere of euphoric joy, heaven will be a place of loving service for God's faithful who shall serve Him in perpetual, enjoyable service without end (Revelation 7:15:22:3b). It will be so consuming heavens inhabitants will never grow weary of it.

The Reliability of Hope

Our hope, a desire for this eternity and our confidently expecting to attain this desire, is not merely wishful thinking, nor blind hope, but a blessed assurance, firmly grounded in the unalterable facts of the resurrection of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Acts 24:15; Revelation 21 & 22). Just imagine realizing this hope.

Recognition and Reunion

Although classified as a parable by some, a parable representing an actual truth, the rich man and Lazarus are in the unseen world, characterized by memory and recognition between the two (Luke 16:19-31). Christ was transfigured on the mountain and there appeared the recognizable Moses, having been dead almost 1,500 hundred years, and Elijah, having never tasted death (Matthew 17:18; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Kings 11). With God's love being so much greater for humanity than humans can possess, we can be confident that heaven's joys will far outweigh the sadness of this life's remembrances. (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15). There will be no tears in heaven. Won't that be a happy reunion.

The Apostle Paul and the Life "...Which Is To Come"

According to history, God's apostle to the Gentiles was brutally beheaded at Aquae Salviae, about three miles outside the city of Rome on the Ostian Way. More than likely, the murder of the great apos-

the Paul resulted from the general persecution against Christians begun by Nero during or shortly after A.D. 64. One cannot help but recall Cambridge author and lecturer, T. R. Glover's, remark as to how so ironically this execution verdict against this inimitable apostle would be reversed: "In the course of time, men would name their sons, Paul, and call their dogs, Nero."

In the 5th century A.D., a chapel in memory of Paul was built at this site on the Ostian Way. Standing above it is now the present-day Church of St. Paul. History says that Paul was beheaded under a pine tree near this location. In the 1800's, excavations behind the church building uncovered a sizable number of fossilized pine cones, and a mass of Neronian coins. This, however, is not the end of the story. Oh, no, it's not in Rome, it's in heaven. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6-8). What an inspiration to all is this great apostle of God !

Conclusion

Just recall the joy we feel when someone saves a place for just for us. If we walk into a crowded place, anxiously looking for a seat, and someone motions for us to come over, pointing to a place they've saved especially for us, we feel a sense of relief, but we also feel a sense of importance, a sense of great value, a feeling of another desiring that we be close to them. Now, listen to Jesus: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2b-3). The gracious Jesus promises He is saving a place especially for each one of us who are faithful.

When we walk into the excitement surrounding the symbolism of the festive mood of the quintessential wedding feast of the Lamb (Jesus) and His bride (the church) (Revelation 19:7-10), with the sound of a thousand conversations and laughter, the clanging of silverware and dishes, our hearts will leap like never before. Disappointment will never enter our hearts. We will be welcomed to the table by our Jesus Christ, our Savior Himself. No one will be scrambling for another chair for us, no one will be making room for us at the end of the table, and no one will be rustling up an extra place – setting. There will be a seat especially for us, saved for us at Savior's command, for us and no other.

But for now, our life, the life "*that now is,*" is a journey and the stakes couldn't be higher. The way is ever dangerous. We, however, by becoming Christians have already turned the corner. As the moments tick by to never return, the years in exile are rapidly winding down and we are approaching our heavenly home. With our love for Jesus and our desire to be with Him, there is no longer any question as to whether we will make it and if it will be overwhelming when we get there. Now, listen to Jesus again, and let this sink in: "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*" (John 14:2b-3).

One day soon we will round the bend in life's journey and our deepest, heartfelt desires will burst into view. We really will live happily ever after. The long years in exile will be swept away with the unimaginable joy and overwhelming welcome of our arrival home. Right now, every day when we rise, we can utterly assure ourselves that today my journey will draw me ever closer to my heavenly home and it may be just around the bend. Once we get home, all we've ever longed for as His, we will have. All we've ever longed to be as His, we will be. All that has hurt us so deeply in this life will all be swept away for good, never to return. And then real life will really begin - for all eternity.

Bibliography

Ali, A. Yusuf. 1946. *The Holy Qur'an – Translation and Commentary*. Islamic Propagation Centre International.

- Bird, Michael F. 2008. *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission, and His Message*. Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press.
- Bunyan, John. 1678. *The Pilgrim's Progress*. London.
- The Life and Epistle of St. Paul. 1856. Coneybeare, W.J. & Howson, J.S. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Danker, F. W. et al. 2000. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Let God Be True*. 1946. Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- McClintock, John and James Strong. 1969. *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, & Ecclesiastical Literature*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Mounce, William D. 2006. *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Schmidtke, Sabine. 2016. *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
- Schaff, Phillip. 1894. *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. Vol. 3. New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls.
- Smith, Joseph, Jr. 1952. *Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City, UT: Church of the Latter-day Saints.
- Tanner, Jerald and Sandra. 1987. *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality*. Salt Lake City, UT: Lighthouse Ministry.
- Smith, Gary Scott, 2011. *Heaven in the American Imagination*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

S

