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NAHUM: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

by James F. Boris

Luke 12:48 reads, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." Nineveh had been given the privilege of knowing the one, true God. Under Jonah's preaching this gentile city had repented, and God had graciously stayed His judgment. Now, 160 years later, Nahum proclaims the downfall of this same city. The Assyrians have forgotten their revival and have returned to their habits of violence, idolatry and arrogance. As a result, God will use Babylon to



James F. Boris

so destroy the city that no trace of it will remain.

Nahum has a message for us today. Since judgment is coming, we ought to ensure that we will escape. We also ought to ensure that our family, friends and neighbors have been offered

(Continued on Page 3, Col. 5)

STUDIES IN ACTS

by Willard Willis

"And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews" (Acts 18:19).

God the Spirit, by way of Paul, spread the Gospel very quickly in that part of the world to which our text relates. Paul



Willard Willis

was very important in continuing that which our Lord had begun. God, in fact, raised up Paul and filled him with the Spirit for the very purpose of telling the world about what Jesus had done, was doing and would do. God saw to it, by way of Paul, that the work of His Son did not fail to be told to the four corners of the earth. That message is still being told today.

Ephesus was a very important city in Ionia, Ionia which was in Asia Minor. Ephesus, as was true of Corinth, had a temple in it that was dedicated to a goddess. In Corinth it was the goddess Venus

(Continued on Page 7, Col. 3)

Most people only think they think.

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The Baptist Examiner

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"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" -- Isaiah 8:20.

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WHOLE NUMBER 2609

PLAIN REASONS FOR KEEPING TO THE AUTHORIZED KING JAMES VERSION

Why should we keep to the Authorized Version of the Bible in preference to the many modern versions now available? The question is often asked, and here are some of the answers.

1. The Authorized Version is based on a better text. By text is meant the Hebrew and Greek wording of the Bible, from which translations are made into En-

glish and other languages. A good text is one that can be trusted as a faithful copy of the words which God originally inspired. The text of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament is available in printed editions, which are in turn based on handwritten copies known as manuscripts.

The Hebrew and Greek editions

which were used by the Authorized Version translators were based on only a few manuscripts. In the centuries which have passed since 1611, when the Authorized Version was published, several thousands of manuscripts have been discovered which were not used by the early translators.

(Continued on Page 11, Col. 1)

DOES REDEMPTION CHANGE A SINNER?

by T. T. Martin

While the Saviour saves without character, and irrespective of character, God the Father does not leave them without character, but develops in them the right kind of a character. The man redeemed, saved, without character, does not remain without character.

"And such were some of you... (I Cor. 6:11), but they did not remain such characters,

but "...sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (I Cor. 1:2).

God's plan with men, then, is to save irrespective of character, and then develop in the redeemed, saved man a character that "...might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:7).

First, by purifying the motive of the life. Character is not

formed by deeds, but by the motives prompting the deeds. Two men flag the night express train on two railroads; the deeds are the same, but one flags the train that he may warn, and save the lives of the people, because a bridge has been destroyed; the other flags the train that he may rob it. While the deeds are the same, the character of the deeds is different,

(Continued on Page 9, Col. 5)

MATTHEW 16:18 - THE LOCAL ASSEMBLY

by Dr. T. T. Eaton

"Editor of the Western Recorder: Will you not give, briefly and clearly your reason for believing that the word ecclesia, in Matthew xvi, 18 means the local assembly?" Fraternally, A Constant Reader.

Most readily. We have seven reasons, but here we will take space for only three, either of which we believe to be decisive.

First. It is conceded that, according to the usage of classic Greek, the word ecclesia means a

local assembly. It is also conceded that it means the same thing according to the usage of the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, in use in Palestine in the time of Christ. Can it be believed that our Lord, in using this word for the first time, would, without any explanation give it a meaning entirely different from what it would be understood to mean by those to whom He spoke? It is not ingenuous for a teacher, without a word of expla-

nation, to use words to his pupils with a meaning entirely different from what they understand the words to have. Christ knew that the disciples would understand Him to mean a local assembly by His use of ecclesia. Knowing that, He used the word to them, without a word of explanation. To charge Him with using the word with an entirely different meaning is to charge Him with disingenuousness, and this is not to be considered for a moment.

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The Baptist Examiner Pulpit

A Sermon by Pastor Joseph M. Wilson

THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD: SUFFICIENT FOR THE SALVATION OF A CHILD AND THE PERFECTION OF A MAN

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God

may be perfect, thoughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:15-17).

This is the greatest portion of Scripture on the inspiration and profitableness of the Word of God. This chapter begins with a section telling us about the perilous times that are to come - that now are come. The inspired and unchanging Word of God is our only resource, for the chang-

ing times in which we live. Praise God, there is that which does not change.

Let us look first at the inspiration of the Bible. I would say that II Timothy 3:16 is the most important verse in all the Bible. If this verse is not true, then nothing else matters; we might as well throw the Bible away.

(Continued on Page 2, Col. 1)

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THE UNCOMMON GOD OF GRACE

by Gene D. Abbott

It was at my step-mother's funeral that I chanced to meet a visiting minister of the Free-Will Baptist denomination. In my mind, this is a denomination that is separate from and not to be confused with Regular Baptists. When he had identified my affiliation, he suggested that we did all have the same God. He didn't appear to notice that I made no response whatsoever. I didn't care to inform him of my ignorance; for I didn't (nor do I now) know whether he and I have the same God. The question is unresolved in my mind: I cannot be certain whether our perspectives can be reconciled to one common God. I'm not certain that my concept of an absolutely sovereign God will be in harmony with his concept of a God, who takes those who (of their own will) can and do commit themselves to Him. This is not to be inappropriately interpreted, as it quite often is, to mean that I say God is responsible for sin. Indeed! I often contend that God is too powerful to be held responsible to mere man. Omnipotence, to me, is the declaration that God is so completely in control that there's just no way anything cannot be under His absolute control. God is so "in-control" that He must be able to prevent sin; but too sovereign to be held re-

(Continued on Page 12, Col. 2)

STUDIES IN JONAH

by John M. Alber

"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not" (Jonah 3:9).

In our last study of Jonah we had noted the message that had been preached and the sudden response of the people of Nineveh. The news of Jonah's message



John M. Alber

spread throughout the city like wildfire; and, whether he spoke to small groups or large crowds is immaterial in that the people heard his message. Their idle curiosity of the "Man of God from Israel" changed suddenly to fear and consternation, their own wicked and sinful hearts condemning them.

The question kept coming up: is there any possibility of escaping the wrath of Almighty God that we justly deserve and should receive? What will the God of heaven do unto us? Is there any

(Continued on Page 11, Col. 3)

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INSPIRED

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Everything else in the Bible depends upon this verse being true. The truthfulness of all else in the Bible depends upon the truth of this verse. Every doctrine taught in the Word of God depends upon the truth of this verse. If we have an inspired Bible, then we have a sure basis for our faith and a sure guide for our practice. If we do not have an inspired Bible, we have exactly nothing at all so far as faith and practice is concerned. The argument is not, or should not be, over inerrancy; it is over inspiration. If the Bible is inspired (and it is), then, of course, it is inerrant. If it is not inspired, if it is only the word of men, of course it is filled with error. The inspired Bible is the only standing place for faith.

There are a multiplicity of proofs that the Bible is inspired. It tells us that this is true. We cannot believe the Bible at all if we cannot believe in its inspiration. Again and again the Bible bears witness to its being from God. You either believe that the Bible is inspired of God or you do not believe the Bible. Of course, this does not mean that it is inspired in parts. Oh, the scholars speak of partial inspiration. They tell us that some of the Bible is inspired, and that some of it is not. Oh, do not leave me here. Pray tell me how can I know which is and which is not inspired. What part am I to believe, and what part to disbelieve. A partially inspired Bible would do me no good unless I had an inspired book to tell me which is which. Brother, it is in-

spired in every part and in every word. Neither do we believe in the scholar's position of degrees of inspiration. They tell us that some is inspired, some is more inspired, and some is less inspired. Away with such folly. Inspiration is a word which does not admit of degrees. It is either inspired or it is not inspired at all. It cannot be more or less inspired.

Jesus believed and taught that the Bible is inspired. He rested on it wholly in His ministry. One cannot believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and deny that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. If Jesus was ignorant of the truth in this matter, or if He knew the truth and lied about it; in either case He could not be the divine Son of the living God.



Joe Wilson

And if He is not God, we have no Saviour. It is as simple as this: either the Bible is inspired, or Jesus is not God; and if Jesus is not God, we have no saviour.

The multitude of fulfilled prophecies - and they are a multitude - prove that the Bible is inspired. There were a large number of prophecies concerning the coming of Christ; His life, miracles, and teaching, His death and resurrection, that were fulfilled exactly and as to detail. No man could have foreseen or foreknown these things. Only a Book inspired by God could have given these prophecies.

The marvellous unity of the Bible is irrefutable evidence of its inspiration. The Bible was written by around forty authors, it was written over a period of around fifteen hundred years, the authors came from different walks of life, most of them did not know another of them; yet this Book is a marvellous unity. It is a unity in its geography, history, biography; and especially so in its doctrine. Its greatest unity is in its testimony about Jesus Christ. This unity, in the diversity of human authors, proves that the one Mind of the Holy Spirit is the real author of the Book.

The saving and transforming power of the Bible proves its inspiration. Oh, this Book, this Book; what multitudes have been saved and transformed by its message! Drunks have been made sober, harlots have been made pure, liars have been made truthful, thieves have been made honest; men have been saved from the depths of sin to the heights of holy living, men have been transformed from enemies of God to being His faithful servants, gladly dying for Him. No other Book manifests this saving, transforming power. Let the enemies of the Bible produce millions of saved and transformed lives in witness to their teaching against this blessed Book. Maybe then we will give some credence to their thinking.

The Spirit's testimony bears witness to the inspiration of the

Bible. One who does not believe that the Bible is inspired simply does not have the dwelling of the Spirit within. He is a lost man. He has not yet been made the subject of the saving work of the Holy Spirit. Understand me. I am saying that the denier of the inspiration of the Bible is not a saved person. In the salvation experience, the Holy Spirit teaches the inspiration of the Bible. The saved man has no trouble believing in inspiration, he has no problem with it; he is as sure of it as he is of his salvation, even of his own existence. You can't argue with him on the subject, you can't make him doubt it; he has the witness within in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. One could go on and on presenting proofs of the inspiration of the Bible, but what needeth it? If you are unsaved, all my proofs will not necessarily convince you. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. If you are saved, you don't need my proofs; you already know the truth whereof I speak.

Now let us notice the power of the Word of God to save a child. Read again v.15. Salvation, is the most important of all matters. Man, from conception, is an eternal being. He must and will exist knowingly and feelingly somewhere eternally. He will be in a heaven that is wonderful beyond the power of the tongue to describe or the mind to fully receive, or in a hell as terrible as heaven is good, and as eternal. Salvation makes the difference as to where man will dwell eternally. Surely, nothing can be as important as this. Oh, my friend are you saved? Hear me; you need to be saved. Hear me, Jesus Christ is God, He was born of a virgin, He lived a sinless life, He died at Calvary for the sins of all who would ever trust Him as Lord and Saviour, He was buried, and He rose from the dead three days later. Receive Him as your Lord and Saviour, believe His gospel for salvation, and you will be eternally saved. Oh, I plead with you, repent of your sins and believe the gospel and be saved.

We note in this Scripture the possibility and blessing of the salvation of a child. It is wonderful for anyone to be saved. Oh, how blessed it is for a child to be saved: thus saved from hell; but not only this; also saved from the depths of sin to which many go, and his life saved to be lived and used to the glory of God. Let us know and believe and preach the salvation of children.

Children should be taught the Bible, yes, they should. Parents and grandparents should teach the children the Word of God. Timothy was doubtlessly taught the Bible by his grandmother, and by his mother. What a noble duty and obligation is theirs to teach the Bible. Friend, if you have the ear of a child, fill it with the Word of God. Children will listen. All of you who are related to and have opportunity to do so, teach the Bible to little children. At the store, at the playground, on the street, in the neighborhood; teach little children the Word of God.

Children can learn and know much of Scripture. I know that only the Holy Spirit can teach in saving power, but He can use the truth that has been taught to that child by others. Away with the Hardshell anti-Sunday Schoolism that says the children can't learn. Give us good Sunday Schools with divided classes

where children can be taught in child language to a child mind the wonderful truths of the Bible. Teach the children. Teach the children. Teach them the Bible. Who knows what the Holy Spirit might later do with the Bible that we teach the children?

There is, in this verse, a connection between knowing the Scriptures and salvation. Oh, I know that Hardshell heretics teach that regeneration is apart from the Word of God - the gospel, but they don't believe the Bible on this subject. And note

this, the Hardshell cannot show us, in the Bible or in history, one who was ever saved apart from the blessed Word of God. Show me that one who never had any contact with or knowledge of the Bible and who is a regenerated person; come on you Hardshell, show me this. You can't do it and you know you can't. The Bible here teaches that the Holy Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation - and no one can be saved apart from them.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The exceeding Folly of the Four-pointer. There are five points to salvation by grace. They are often represented by the word "tulip," with each letter standing for one of these doctrines. T stands for Total Depravity - that man by nature is depraved in every part of his being and consequently unable to save or to help save himself. U stands for Unconditional Election - that out of totally depraved mankind God unconditionally and eternally elected a multitude that no man can number and predestinated them to be the recipients of saving grace. L stands for Limited Atonement - that Jesus Christ died only for and savingly for the elect of God. I stands for Irresistible (better "Efficacious") Grace - that the Holy Spirit irresistibly and efficaciously works repentance and faith in those elected and redeemed quickens them to spiritual life (using the gospel), and works the salvation experience in them. P stands for Perseverance - that the elected, redeemed, and called will persevere in repentance, faith, and holiness through all of life; that they are eternally secure; and that they are "once saved, always saved."

There are those who call themselves sovereign gracers (and I can recognize them as such) who do not believe the third point of these glorious truths. They are "four-pointers." They do not believe in the Limited Atonement. They believe that Jesus Christ died for every individual of mankind - as much for one as for another.

Now, one would expect the Arminian to believe in the universal atonement; but it is somewhat shocking to find Sovereign Gracers agreeing with the Arminian on this point. It is exceeding folly for the Sovereign Gracer to deny the Limited Atonement. His unlimited atonement does not accomplish any more than the Limited Atonement of the total Sovereign Gracer - it does not honor God any more (really, it dishonors God), it does not save any more. It is not necessary to the free offer of the gospel, for total Sovereign Gracers believe this and preach it - at least, most of them do.

The unlimited atonement theory introduces great disharmony into the Bible doctrine of salvation. Election is limited, Effectual Calling is limited, Perseverance is limited; but then the atonement is viewed as unlimited. Is not this a shocking disharmony? There is harmony and beauty and glory in the five points standing together. There is a lack of these things when one teaches the unlimited atonement.

There is harmony in the five points of Arminianism. Of course, they are all false, but they are in harmony. They fit together. If one accepts one of them, it is easy to accept them all. They are consistent - false, but consistently false. Unlimited atonement introduces a jarring note of disharmony into the doctrines of grace.

The unlimited atonement theory by a sovereign gracer introduces disharmony into the Trinity as to purpose. According to this theory, the Father elected some to be saved, the Spirit works salvation in those thus elected; but the Son tries to save everyone by dying for everyone. Oh, my brother, there is no such disharmony of purpose within the Trinity. The Triune Godhead covenanted together in the council halls of eternity relative to the salvation of the elect. There was no quarreling, no difference of opinion, no difference of purpose between them then - and there is none in the carrying out and accomplishing of that which was then covenanted. They were in perfect agreement as to those from among fallen mankind who were included in that saving Covenant.

When Sovereign Gracers hold to an unlimited atonement they aid and abet the Arminian enemy, they give comfort thereunto; and they open the door for the introduction of Arminian heresy into the Sovereign Grace camp. The Arminian will enter that door and seek thereby to destroy all of the doctrines of grace. The Sovereign Gracer who teaches an unlimited atonement is placing in the hands of the Arminian a weapon with which he will wreck havoc among the doctrines of grace. A consistent following of the unlimited atonement will lead to the overthrow of all of the doctrines of grace - thank God that most of the Sovereign Gracers who hold to an unlimited atonement still hold to the rest of the doctrines of grace, but they do this by being inconsistent - I praise God for this inconsistency.

The Sovereign Gracer, by teaching four points and denying the Limited Atonement gains nothing at all and loses much. Oh, that these brethren would consider this. I will still welcome such into our circle, and recognize them as Sovereign Gracers; but oh, that they would see the folly, error, and danger of what they are doing, and turn from this false doctrine even as they turn from heresy on the other four points.

I will say this: most four pointers are very weak on the four points they do believe. I do not say that all are - I hear that some of them are very strong on the four points they do believe; but I do say that most of them are as I have said. Furthermore, there is, in the doctrine of an unlimited atonement, a weakening influence as to the other four points of the doctrines of grace. Brother four-pointer, beware of your error on this very important matter lest it lead you to a weakening of your belief in the four points you do believe, lest it lead you closer and closer to the camp of the Arminians. You have learned much, you believe much; come on now and study a little more on this point, apply what you already have learned as to the four points; and I believe this will lead you to the truth of a Limited Atonement, and you will become a total and consistent Sovereign Gracer.

PREACHING TO SINNERS

by C.H. Spurgeon

We shall always, I trust, as a church, cultivate an anxious desire for the conversion of all who come within our gates; yea, and of all who dwell around us. Never, I hope, will you wish the Pastor to preach so that you shall be fed, careless as to whether sinners are saved or not; nor will you make yourselves into a snug corporation for purposes of profit and mutual admiration. We long to see the wedding furnished with guests, and our Redeemer seeing of the travail of His soul. The public ministry must not be confined to a part of the truth, for it should reflect the whole counsel of God as far as mortal mind can do so. It is my delight to preach the doctrine of election, and all the other grand teachings which declare Jehovah's special love to His chosen; but, at the same time, I have felt it to be my duty to preach the Gospel to every creature. We know no other limit to our invitation than this, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

I have been amused, lately, with a story told me by a dear fellow-labourer in the Gospel. One of his church-members came to him, and said that she was going to unite herself with another church, a church higher in doctrine, and less given to evangelistic efforts. She said, "When you preach the doctrines of grace, I am very happy; but when I hear you inviting sinners to Christ, my heart goes down into my shoes." "That is a very sad thing," said the minister, "but I cannot alter my preaching on that account, for I think you are wrong." When our brother met his people at the prayer-meeting in the evening, he told them what had occurred, and said, "I cannot help preaching to sinners as I do; and even if more of you go, it will be the same. I shall preach to sinners as long as there are any sinners left." Our friend then went on to say that the mode of preaching among certain friends reminded him of his school-boy

days. A boy had a nice, rosey-cheeked apple, which he tossed up in the air before our friend's eyes, and then he shouted to him, "Do you see this apple?" "Yes." "Well, now, take a good look at it," replied the boy, "for that is your share of it," and he put it back into his pocket. Another playmate pretended to be more generous, and said, "Oh, give the poor fellow a smell!" Even his liberality went no further. Have you never heard preaching of that sort? "Here is a precious salvation! I hope you sinners see how precious it is, for that is your share of it." The minister puts the heavenly fruit back again into his pocket, and the sermon is over; and this is called free-grace! The most liberal of those who dare not invite the sinner, try to give him a smell of the Gospel by telling him of the peace and joy which it brings.

Now, when I am preaching to sinners, I feel inclined always to beg every one of them to put the golden apple in his pocket, for this choice fruit of the tree of life may belong to millions, and yet the whole of it will remain for

millions more. There is not a sinner in the world who is to be told that he may not come to Jesus, and receive the whole of the blessings of the Gospel. What a blessing to have a free salvation to preach as well as a full salvation! At least, I feel it to be so. Everyone must speak according to his light; but while I see clearly the doctrines of distinguishing grace, I see also the universality of the Gospel command.

Many years ago, I had a good old friend, who, like myself, had a very sweet tooth for Calvinistic doctrine; and I cannot do with any other doctrine any more than he could. He said to me, one day, "I love to hear you preach the doctrines of grace, but I feel very uncomfortable when you are giving free invitations to sinners; I feel as if I could not sit in the place." I said to him, "Well, shall I give up inviting sinners in order to please you?" "No," he replied, "by no manner of means; for, a month or two ago, my son-in-law, about whom I was very anxious, went to hear your sermon, and you were very persuasive with sinners, and set Christ before them most freely. I did not enjoy it at all; but when I got home, I found my son-in-law in tears, and that sermon, by the blessing of the eternal Spirit, brought him to the Saviour. Therefore, I think you had better go on in your own style, and not alter your preaching to please a poor old man like me."

I answered, "That is just how I feel; I would gladly agree with you in everything, but I dare not try to appear consistent by leaving out one side of the truth." He said to me afterwards, "If I do not quite agree with your invitations to sinners, it is clear that God blesses them; and therefore I must look into the matter, and see whether I am right or not. You have declared the doctrines of grace, yet you have freely given the invitations of the Gospel; and I hope, my dear sir, you will long continue to preach what you feel you have learned in your own soul." I have followed his advice, and I hope to do the same as long as the Lord spares me. We shall proclaim the doctrine of God's sovereignty without toning it down, and electing love without any stuttering over it; but we shall proclaim the other truth also.

Those who differ from us, in one direction, ought also to remember that there are others who differ from us on the other side. A sister has written to me saying that, even if I do believe in election, she would not have me preach it, but keep it in my own mind, and get comfort from it for myself. I do not know who the friend is, for she forgot to put her name in her letter; but I would like her to know that I cannot accept her idea for a moment. I feel sure she does not expect me to do as she says; for, if I did, I should act like a Jesuit; I should say one thing and believe another, and that be far from me! I hope that no earthly power could bring me to do that; no, not even an anonymous letter from a good lady!

Everything that I believe to be in God's Word, I shall preach, whether my hearers accept it or not. It is to me a great comfort that such numbers do receive my teaching; and I never feel surprised when I meet with those who do not. I do not expect everybody to eat everything that I

put on the table. I may flavour a dish with too much salt or too much pepper at times, but your own prayerful judgment will guide your tastes. We must preach all the truth; and this one thing is certain, we shall never give up loving the souls of men, or cease from trying to bring in the lost from the highways and hedges. We shall, throughout life, echo that blessed call of our Lord Jesus, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Labourers and burden-bearers shall hear continually that gracious Word; and if they do not come to Jesus, their blood shall be upon their own heads, for the invitation is as free as the blessing is full. The Gospel trumpet rings out clearly over hill and dale. "The Spirit and bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." We cannot make men come; that is the work of the Holy Spirit; but we can persuade them, by the love of Jesus, and by the terrors of the Lord. We can preach Christ to sinners if we cannot preach sinners to Christ; and we know that the Lord's Word shall not return unto Him void.

INSPIRED

(Continued from Page 2)

Of course, there must be the work of the Spirit. We know that. We are not gospel regenerationists. We are gospel Spirit regenerationists. The Spirit must give faith. Man does not have this by nature. No man can give this to another. Know this: I can give a man the gospel, but only the Spirit can give faith. Also, know this: it takes the gospel that I (or someone else) gives and the faith which the Holy Spirit gives to produce the salvation experience.

Notice the amazing simplicity of Scripture. (along with its marvellous profundity)- It is so plain that the wayfaring man, though he be a fool, need not err therein. It is so simple and so plain that a little child can understand enough of it to be eternally saved. The greatest mind among men cannot understand the depths of Scripture, yet the little child can know enough of it to be saved - praise the Lord. This lesson of salvation is the first lesson that must be learned from Scripture. No one can go further or deeper into the treasures of the Bible until he has learned, and learned believingly and savingly, this lesson of salvation.

Now, learn this: this Scripture that is sufficient for the salvation of a child is also totally sufficient for the perfection of the man of God (read vss. 16-17). This perfection is not that of sinlessness - oh, no, we don't believe that blasphemous heresy. We are all sinners - some are unsaved sinners, some are saved sinners; but all are sinners. We would not dare to claim sinless perfection. But there is a perfection whereunto one can attain. It is the perfection of maturity. One can grow in grace and knowledge. One can grow in ability and strength. One can grow in holiness of life. One is a babe when first saved, but that one can grow and develop and become a mature Christian. That is the perfection taught in

v.17.

One can be mature relative to the length of time he has been saved. One, when he is first saved, is a babe in Christ. But he should not remain a babe. Oh, that is one of the great troubles today. We have too many who have been saved a long time, and are yet mere babes in knowledge, life, strength, and service - this should not be. One need not know much to be saved. He must only know two things. He must know that he is a sinner and that Christ is a Saviour. But after one has been saved a while, he should know much more than this; and he should continue to grow and develop until that time when he goes to be with the Lord. Though the Bible teaches clearly that no man is or can be sinlessly perfect in this life, it also teaches that there is a relative perfection unto which one can attain.

The inspired Scripture is sufficient to this perfecting of the man of God. How does the Scripture perform this great work? Note what the inspired Scripture is profitable for according to my text. It is profitable for doctrine. The man of God can learn the great and wonderful doctrines of the Bible by studying the Scriptures. One does not need to remain a babe in knowledge. He can grow in knowledge and understanding. He can learn the five glorious doctrines of grace. He can become a strong Sovereign Gracer, able to confute and confound the doctors of Arminianism by his knowledge of the inspired Word of God. He can learn church truth. He can come to know that Baptist churches are the only true churches of the Lord. He can become a good member of a true Baptist church and serve the Lord faithfully in that church. He can become a theologian in the prophetic Scriptures. He can learn the prophetic time table set forth in the Bible. He can become a pretribulationist, premillennialist. He can learn the truth about the ordinances of the church. He can learn about the woman's place in the church. He can learn the truth about the heathen holidays of xmas and Easter. The Bible is profitable for doctrine. All true doctrine comes from the Bible. Men receive false doctrines, not from the Bible, but from the teachings of uninspired men.

When the man of God becomes corrupt in doctrine or in practice, the inspired Word of God will reprove him - it is profitable for reproof. As he reads that Word, he will see where he is wrong; he will be brought under conviction. Then that same Word will correct him. It will bring him back to the ways of truth. It will show him how to come back into sweet and blessed fellowship with the Lord.

After the man of God is corrected and brought back into sweet fellowship with the Lord, the inspired Word will instruct him in the paths of righteousness. Oh, this blessed Book will perfect the man of God. It will teach him the true doctrines. It will reprove him as to his sins. It will bring him back into fellowship. It will instruct him in a life of righteousness. What more does he need? These things will perfect the man of God. Through these workings of the inspired Word of God the man of God will be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He will know what good works are and what works are good. He will know the mo-

tive that is necessary to good works. He will be instructed and strengthened in every good work. His life will be filled with good works to the glory of God.

Have I not presented and proved my proposition? Is not the Scripture inspired of God? Is not this inspired Scripture sufficient for the salvation of a child. Of course it is sufficient for the salvation of any one. Is not this Scripture sufficient for the perfection of the man of God? Are not these things blessedly true?

What then? What then, indeed? Let us give to this Bible the honor and respect that is its rightful due. Let us stand boldly and uncompromising for the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. Let us believe every Word of this blessed Book. Let us love it. Let us study it. Let us obey it. May it be the only rule of faith and practice for each individual believer and for each true church. Let us teach it to children. Let us teach it to the unsaved. Let us pray that God will use it in the salvation of the lost. Let us study it and teach it for the perfection of the man of God. Brother, God has inspired this Book, He has inspired it for some purposes. Let us use it faithfully for those purposes.

All hail to the Bible. All honor to the Bible. Give it its proper honor and respect. It is not just another Book. It is the Book. It is above and beyond all other books. It is the monarch of the books. Let us study it diligently, let us believe it totally, let us love it supremely, and let us obey it completely. God bless you all.

NAHUM

(Continued from Page 1)

the great grace offered in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross.

There are three reasons why we ought to share God's message of grace in Christ and ensure that we have trusted Christ's cross-work ourselves. First, the character of the judgment is awful. Second, the character of the judged is depraved. Third, the character of the Judge is gracious. Let us consider each of these points from the book of Nahum.

In Nahum chapter 2, we have described the character of the judgment. Historically, the picture is of the destruction of Nineveh. Verses 1-2 tell us that Assyria will be conquered, but Judah will be restored. Verses 3-7 describe the siege of Nineveh, and verses 8-13 tell of the actual fall and sack of that city. As we read these verses, we cannot help but be impressed with the vividness of the battle portrayed. It is a horrible scene, full of terror, fear and death.

This scene has more than a mere historical reference. It is indicative of the terrible judgment of God which will one day fall on every man. For the elect, God's judgment of sin has already taken place at Calvary. For the rest, that terrible day of judgment is yet to come. Contrary to those who do not believe in eternal punishment of the wicked, the following verses are offered: Joel

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The Baptist Examiner Forum I

SUBMIT QUESTIONS ON ANY BIBLE SUBJECT
THE BAPTIST EXAMINER--P.O. BOX 60--ASHLAND, KENTUCKY 41105-0060

Explain I John 5:8. Who or what are the three witnesses?

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Please read I John 5:6-12. I John 5:8 says, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

The main thing that we are looking at in these verses (v.6-10) is the fact of Jesus' incarnation; the fact that He is the incarnate Son of God. The witnesses to this fact all agree in pointing to Jesus as such. I will spend no time in arguing against those who say that part of verse 7 and verse 8 do not belong in our KJV translation. If we listened to all the would be correctors of the KJV translation, we would be in confusion and in a sorry state indeed.

Verse 8 is pointing out that there are three witnesses which point to and agree that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. The same three witnesses named in verse 8 are found in verse 6; the Spirit, the water, and the blood. The water, I believe, refers to the baptism of Jesus, which began His Messianic work. He there declared that His purpose was to fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15) His public ministry was initiated here. I believe the blood in verse 8 refers to His bloody death on the cross for the elect at which time His earthly work was terminated. It was then He said, ".....It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John 19:30) I believe that these two witnesses of water and blood are used here for they are the formal setting apart for His Messianic work and the culmination of that work on earth. The Holy Spirit is the third witness to the Incarnation. As the last part of verse 6 says, "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, (Greek-is constantly bearing witness) because the Spirit is truth.." He bears witness to the saved and to the world as He chooses.

Verse 8 is telling us that these three witnesses (Spirit, water, and blood) converge upon one truth; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God come in the flesh. I realize that John through the Spirit, was answering the Cerinthian Gnostic heresy of his time concerning Jesus as only a man upon whom the divine element came at His baptism and left just before the crucifixion, but the truth of the witnesses to His duty should cause us to rejoice at the life which is in Him. As verses 11 and 12 of I John say, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this

life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." May we be faithful witnesses and add our witness as living temples of the incarnate Son of God.

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I. John 5:8: "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

Let me state from the beginning that I do not agree with some who say that this is not a part of the inspired Word of God. I believe that it is and we will deal with it as such.

Let us look at these one at a time. First, we have the Spirit. I believe this either means the work of the Spirit in regeneration or has reference to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers and their showing forth that Spirit. Surely, either of these bear record of Christ. When the Holy Spirit saves a person, He bears record to him that Jesus is the Son of God; He bears record that Jesus is all that He claimed to be. He bears record that Jesus is there to be his redeemer. The Holy Spirit indwelling us bears this same record throughout our Christian life. I believe Spirit here has reference to the Holy Spirit's work in salvation.

Secondly, we have water. I believe that water has reference to baptism. We know that baptism shows forth the death of Christ until His return. We know that baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Therefore we know that baptism does indeed bear record of Christ and His work while here on this earth. Baptism shows the world a declaration of what Christ has done. So, I believe that water here has reference to the waters of baptism as it illustrates to us Christ's death.

Thirdly, we have blood. To me, this is the most difficult witness to identify. I think about the shed blood of Christian martyrs and wonder if that could be what is referred to. I think about how they shed their blood in order to bear witness or record of Christ. I think of how their blood was shed to honor Christ's blood. This is a possibility, but I do not think it is the correct answer. I believe blood here has reference to the Lord's Supper and wine in that Supper. Jesus told the church that the Lord's Supper would show forth His death until His return. Surely, the Lord's Supper bears record of Jesus and His work on earth. There is no better record of Christ and His sufferings. I believe wine, as a type or picture of the blood is

referred to here as bearing record of Christ. Whether it is referred to here or not, we know that it does indeed bear record of Christ. We know the afore mentioned things do also. Well, this is my opinion of these three witnesses. May God bless you all.

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"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (I John 5:7,8).

There are six witnesses that testify that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, that He is deity come in the flesh, the only one that is able to save people from their sins. The first three are One; they make up the Trinity. The other three agree in one. That is, they agree to the fact of the testimony about Christ. The latter three are the three that are in question. Who or what are they?

I believe the Spirit in verse 8 has reference to the new birth. Being born again we have the witness living in us, which is the Holy Spirit. I John 5:10 says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself..." The Holy Spirit living in the believer testifies, and is the testimony that Christ is deity come in the flesh, to reconcile sinful man to an all-holy God.

The water, I believe, in verse 8 has reference to baptism. Baptism testifies to the facts stated about Christ and His work. Galatians 3:27 says, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Baptism points to Christ; that is, it gives testimony to Christ and His work.

The blood is the third thing that testifies about Christ. I believe the blood in verse 8 refers to the Lord's Supper. I Corinthians 11:25,26 says, "...This is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he comes." The supper of our Lord testifies of Christ and His reconciliatory work on Calvary.

Therefore we conclude that there are six that testify to the fact of Christ's deity, humanity, and finished work on Calvary. Three in heaven (the Trinity) and three on earth. The three on earth; the new birth, water baptism, and the Lord's Supper are not one, but

agree about one fact and give testimony about that fact, which is the fact of Jesus Christ, His person, relationship to man, and His finished reconciliatory work. Thank you.

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"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (I John 5: 6, 8).

The apostle John has been writing to show that "Jesus" the man, and the "Son of God" is both human and divine in one person. Here in verse six we have a description of Jesus, the Son of God. "This is he," that is the One whom we have been speaking of, and we have three that bear witness to that fact. To what do they bear witness? To the fact that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, and that He came to earth to redeem His people. The three witnesses here on earth which God uses to show that Jesus is His eternal Son are the Spirit, the water, and the blood. The Spirit of course, is the Holy Spirit. Christ told His church just before He went to the cross, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit gives testimony as to the person and work of Christ.

What about the water and the blood? In what way did God use them as witnesses? There is much confusion concerning this passage. But we must remember that many, many years before this was written John stood and saw a Roman soldier, with a spear pierce the side of Jesus as He hung upon the cross. From that pierced side he saw blood and water come forth. John, now an old man, had never forgotten that event; and is now inspired by the Spirit to give as witnesses, the water and the blood. In what way are they witnesses? There is nothing unusual for blood to come from the side of one who has died. The remarkable thing was that both blood and water came from our Lord's side at the same time. The fact that both blood and water flowed from His side caused John to note and record this event. For this to occur must indeed be a miracle. The water and the blood are God's witnesses to His Son and to the eternal life that believers have in Him. The blood of Christ cleanses from the guilt of sin, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Water is often used in the Scripture to mean the Word that is used to cleanse the believer's walk, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself

for it: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25, 26).

The blood witnesses that the penalty for our sins has been settled, the Word witnesses that there is power to deliver us from not only the penalty, but also from the power of sin; and the Spirit bears witness that this is true for all who place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. The poet has well expressed it in the song, "Rock of Ages":

"Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which
flowed,

Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me
pure."

NAHUM

(Continued from Page 3)

2:11 "The day of the Lord is very terrible"; Revelation 19:15 "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God"; Hebrews 10:31 "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God". While God is certainly a God of love, as we will see, this generation has emphasized the love of God while de-emphasizing His justice and holiness. Make no mistake God will judge wickedness, and you are not exempt from this! Either your sins have been judged by God in Christ at the cross, or you face an eternity in hell.

The judgment of God is terrible and is to be avoided at all costs. Repent and trust Christ or perish!

Notice, in Nahum chapter 3, the character of the judged. They are totally depraved.

In chapter 3, Nahum deals with God's reasons for the pending overthrow of Nineveh. What are these reasons?

First, they are bloody. "Woe to the bloody city!" (3:1). The ancient records of Assyria and Babylonia certainly bear out this description of Nineveh. One of their leaders, Ashurbanipal, described his treatment of a captured leader in this way: "I pierced his chin with my keen hand dagger. Through his jaw I passed a rope, put a dog chain upon him and made him occupy a kennel." He said that his officials "hung Egyptian corpses on stakes and stripped off their skins and covered the city walls with them." Ashurbanipal II said, "I stormed the mountain peaks and took them. In the midst of the mighty mountain I slaughtered them. With their blood I dyed the mountain red like wool. The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against their city; their young men and their maidens I burned in the fire."

No wonder Nahum called Nineveh "the bloody city" (3:1) noted for its "wickedness" (3:19)!

Secondly, they are deceitful. They are said to be "full of lies" (3:1). Lest we think that lying is no big deal with God, consider the following verses: Revelation 21:8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death": Proverbs

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The Baptist Examiner Forum II

SUBMIT QUESTIONS ON ANY BIBLE SUBJECT
THE BAPTIST EXAMINER--P.O. BOX 60--ASHLAND, KENTUCKY 41105-0060

Can a man be a God-called preacher if he is not a Baptist preacher? What about Edwards, Henry, Brainerd, etc.?

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"This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (I Timothy 3:1). I take this to mean that if a man has a strong desire, an overwhelming desire, a desire that he cannot quench or put aside or put behind him, thus, a God given desire. If it is a God given desire, then it is the calling of God.

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;" (I Timothy 1:12). Here is proof that Paul's ministry was of God, that he was called of God. His strength and ability came from Jesus Christ, for said Paul, "...who hath enabled me..."

When God calls a man to the ministry, He calls him to preach the truth. A God called man is to preach the doctrines of Christ and of God. When the God-called man preaches the truth, he does not transgress. If a man transgresses when it comes to doctrine, he is going against God and Christ. When he does this he is not abiding in the doctrine of Christ, he hath not God. But, to continue in the doctrine of Christ he hath both the Father and the Son. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace" (Galatians 1:15). We see from this verse, that the call of Paul was from God. This calling was for the purpose of preaching the gospel of God in its purity, in its truthfulness. Thereby Paul would be blessed. Paul said in another place, "...woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16). I wonder as we think of this, what do you suppose will happen to those who are called, at least say they are called, and do not preach the gospel in its purity, in its truthfulness?

What is the gospel? It is the good news from heaven, it is good news about the love of God for His people. It is good news about the love of Christ for His sheep and the sacrifice that He made on Golgotha's hill on the old rugged tree for the salvation of the elect of God. How can we say that a man is called of God when he will not

preach the truth of God, when he will not preach the doctrine of Christ and of God. Is not baptism a doctrine of Christ and of God? Is it not a doctrine of God's precious Word? Isn't baptism a pictorial ordinance? Does it not picture the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Yes it does. Isn't the Lord's supper a doctrine of Christ and of God? Does this memorial supper picture the death of Christ and show forth His death until He comes again? Yes, it does. Those who deny the truth of these ordinances, by their teaching, are they called of God? Is a man called of God when he teaches baptismal regeneration? When men, who say they are called of God, desecrate these two all important doctrines, are they really called of God? Does God call a man and put him in the ministry, when he does not preach the truth about these two cardinal doctrines?

How can it be that a man is called of God when he tells men to repent and be baptized, when he himself will not obey God's Word concerning these truths? If one repents and then will not receive Scriptural baptism, but rejects it and continues to preach and continues to tell sinners to be baptized, but he rejects it himself, is such a man called of God? Does God put a man in the ministry when he will not receive John's baptism, but rejects it as did the Pharisees and lawyers.

"But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:30).

When a man does not abide in these two doctrines, baptism and the Lord's supper, I mean the truthfulness of them, as found in the Scriptures, does he have Christ and God? John says he does not.

As to those men mentioned in the question, I leave them to the judgment of God and of Christ. They will have to give a good and satisfactory reason to Christ as to why they preached outside the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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In an attempt to avoid foolish and unlearned questions that gender strife, I will take liberty to qualify this question. First of all, by saying I believe God-called means God-authorized. Many claim God's calling without proper authorization. Jesus commissioned His church and gave her authority to preach the gospel, baptize believers, and teach them to observe those

things He had commanded. The authority to fulfil His command rests in the Lord's church. The power rests in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe and repent. They are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Faith and repentance grants entrance into the family of God. Scriptural baptism grants entrance into a church. Since baptism is not essential for salvation (it is the first step of obedience), there are people saved outside the Baptist Church. They are empowered to preach, to witness, to teach and write books, to work in the mission field, but they are not Scripturally authorized to do so.

I will illustrate what I mean concerning authority and power. Let's say there was a condemned building in town that was a danger and a nuisance to the citizens of that community. You, being a well meaning citizen, take a bulldozer and level that building. You may be highly commended for your action, but I doubt it, you definitely would not receive payment, you may even have to pay a fine, because you didn't have authority or the permission to do what you did. You had the bulldozer; you got the job done, but without proper authority. People that preach, teach and baptize without authority are doing the same thing.

What should our attitude be towards those that go out without authority? Look to yourselves first. Are you doing all you can do to further the cause of Christ? Rejoice that Christ is being preached. This is what Paul said... "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." (Phil. 1:18).

NAHUM

(Continued from Page 4)

19:9 "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish".

Third, they are proud. Again, from the records of Assyria and Babylonia: "I am Ashurbanipal, the great king, the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria. The great gods magnified my name; they made my rule powerful." But he is humble in comparison to Esarhaddon who said, "I am powerful, I am all powerful, I am a hero, I am gigantic, I am colossal, I am honored, I am magnified, I am without equal among all kings, the chosen one of Asshur, Nabu and Marduk."

God will share His glory with no one. He hates pride. Proverbs 6:16-17 "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: A proud look..."; Proverbs 15:25 "The Lord will de-

stroy the house of the proud..."; Proverbs 16:5 "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished."

Fourth, they are idolatrous. Consider Nahum 3:4: "Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts." It is evident, then, that gross idolatry and abominable practices were to be found in Nineveh. This is expressly forbidden by God in Exodus 20:3-5: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."

As we consider these four reasons for God's judgment on Nineveh, we are perhaps moved to say, "Surely they deserved God's terrible judgment on them!" Yes, they were deserving, but are any less deserving? They were bloody, but I John 3:15 says,

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." Have you ever had such feelings of hate in your heart? They were deceitful, but Romans 3:13, speaking in the context of everybody, says, "Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit." Have you ever lied? True, they were proud, but I Timothy 6:4 says of those who reject New Testament doctrine, "They are proud" (and remember that "A proud heart is sin" according to Proverbs 21:4). Have you a proud and disobedient heart? Yes, they were idolaters, but I John 5:21 says, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Anything that takes the place of God in our lives is an idol. (cf. Hosea 9:10). What is it in your life that keeps you from worshipping God and serving Him as you should? What is your idol?

While Christians are already judged at the cross, Hebrews 12:3-15 makes it clear that believers are nevertheless subject to God's hand of discipline. As for the unsaved, they will be judged, either at the Cross or at the end of the age. Which will it be for you? Have you trusted Christ as your Savior and Lord or do you continue to reject His gift of Grace? Repent and trust Christ or perish!

We have considered two reasons why it is imperative that you ensure that you escape the judgment of God, and that you tell others about the gift of Christ offered in the precious gospel: first, the judgment is terrible and second, the judged are depraved. There is one final reason which I see in the book of Nahum. It is found in chapter I and regards the character of the Judge.

First, He is morally pure. There are two aspects of His moral purity given in chapter 1:

Holiness and Righteousness. Regarding God's holiness, we are told in verse 2 that He is "jealous." While jealousy in the sense of envy is wrong, jealousy in the sense given here is ethically right. This jealousy can be defined as being zealous to protect what belongs to God alone. In this sense, jealousy, on God's part alone, is right and proper. Only one who is unique and holy has a right to be jealous. Does God have this right? Indeed He does! Deuteronomy 6:4 describes God's uniqueness: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One Lord." He is unique. He is also the only sinless One. I John 3:5 tells us: "In Him is no sin." Only He who is completely holy has a right to be jealous.

Regarding God's righteousness, verse 2 of Nahum I reflects that God is a God of vengeance. This is strongly emphasized in this verse as the word "avenging" is used three times. Righteousness is the holiness of God applied to His relationship with other beings. This holiness is reflected in His law, which is a genuine reflection of His holy nature (cf. Psalm 19:7-9). God's vengeance is not capricious, but is in full accord with His holy law and character.

A second characteristic of the Judge in chapter 1 is love. The love of God is shown in four aspects. He is persistent, benevolent, merciful and gracious. Note the persistence of God's love in verse 3. He is called "slow to anger." This is His longsuffering. God withholds judgment for those who are willing to repent. Jonah, you remember, was unwilling to go to Nineveh 160 years before Nahum because of God's longsuffering. He knew that if they repented, God would forgive them. Jonah says as much in Jonah 4:2: "...Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

Such longsuffering accounts for the delay in God's judgment on Nineveh.

Notice God's benevolence in Nahum 1:7: "The Lord is good." God is concerned for the welfare of His elect. In this case, it is His elect nation of Israel. But He will show Himself benevolent to you as well, if you will repent of your sin and turn to Him. "Return to me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord of Hosts..." (Malachi 3:7).

Nahum 1:15 shows another aspect of God's Love. It is His mercy. Because God deals with His elect according to their need and not according to their worth, He brings to their hearts the Gospel (good tidings) and victory over the world, the flesh and the devil ("the wicked...is utterly cut off"). Thank God for His tenderhearted, loving compassion for His people!

The final aspect of God's love which we will discuss is His grace. Let us never take for granted God's wonderful grace in our lives! It is because we have

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STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF PAUL - PART 21

by John R. Gilpin

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they never knew the meaning of death; and if sin hadn't entered into the human family, Adam and Eve would never have known one thing about death. In fact, if sin hadn't entered into the Garden of Eden there never would have been a funeral. Nobody would have died anywhere if it hadn't been that sin entered the human family. However, as a result of sin, death passed upon all men, for all have sinned. Paul tells us in our text that the wages of sin is death. There never would have been anybody die; there never would have been anybody get sick; there never would have been a funeral; there never would have been any physical death; and certainly there never would have been any spiritual death if sin hadn't become a reality in the Garden of Eden.

A few days ago when I was talking to two of my grandsons, about school, one jokingly said, "Don't use that word, that is a bad word." I guess along about the time of year that school begins the majority of boys and girls think that the word "school" is a bad word, and I am not sure but some of the teachers think the same thing. All seriously, beloved, there are some words that are bad words -- there are some ugly words, and the spiritual death that fell upon the human family as a result of the entrance of sin, has given rise to three exceedingly bad words, and I would like to call attention to these words today.

I. Depravity. The majority of people like to think themselves somewhat good. I am satisfied that the majority of folk are more or less offended when they are told that they are depraved human beings. I never shall forget a girl whom I hired to work for me a great number of years ago. The first day that she was in the office I asked her as to her spiritual estate, and somehow I referred to her as sinner. When I did so, I noticed that she colored unusually. Some six months passed, and of course in that length of time, in the taking of dictation, she had learned quite a bit by way of head knowledge as to the Word of God. One day she told me how I offended her the very first day that she came to work, in that I had referred to her as a sinner. She had always had in mind that a sinner was somebody who had gone down to the very depths of social immorality, yet I would remind you that every individual is a depraved sinner in the sight of Almighty God. Listen: "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are to-

gether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:9-12).

Paul, in summing up his contrast as to Jews and Gentiles, says that Jews and Gentiles all stand the same in God's sight. Neither could say that he is one whit better than the other because neither is righteous, neither understands, neither seeks after God. Instead, "...they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

If you would search through all the human family and were to call the roll of every Jew and every Gentile in all the world, it would seem that you would find somebody that did good. It would seem that you would find somebody in all the human family that could rise up and say that Paul was mistaken, and that he made an error when he said "...there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Yet such an individual is not to be found.

May I remind you that what Paul said two thousand years ago is just as true today -- that if you were to ask every Jew, of all the eighteen million Jews within the world, and if you were to ask all the millions of Gentiles within the world today, you would find that not one would be able to stand up and say that he was an individual that did good. Instead, when weighed by the Bible, and examined in the light of the statements of the Scriptures, all of us would be compelled to admit that there was none of that did good, no, not one.

Paul goes further to tell us of our depravity, for he says: "And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:17-19).

The Apostle Paul isn't leaving any loopholes for anyone. HE isn't leaving any opportunities for individuals to escape his condemnation and his accusations. Rather, he says that if every man were tried by the law, he would become guilty, and that the law stops every mouth, so that no individual is able to say that he is living a life that is at all pleasing to God.

Here is an individual who tells about how good he is. You read to him the Ten Commandments, and what do those Ten Commandments say to him? They say, "Shut your mouth; you stand guilty before God."

Suppose a fellow says that so far as he is concerned he has no other god but Jehovah, yet the individual lives for the things of this world, and he gives his home, or his wife, or his children first place so far as his life is concerned. Then, beloved, that man has violated the first commandment, for a god is whatever you think the most of. So when you read to him the first commandment, that commandment would say to him, "Shut your mouth; you stand guilty in God's sight."

Here is another individual who says, "I have lived a perfect life

all my life, and I have never violated the commands of God," yet the Bible says that if a man has ever violated the commandments in thought, he stands just as guilty as though he had violated them in actuality. Therefore, every time you read these Ten Commandments, they are saying to Jews and Gentiles -- to all alike, "Shut your mouth; you stand guilty in the sight of Almighty God."

Notice again what Paul says about our depravity: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Not an individual in this world has ever reached up to, or measured up to, the glory of God. We have all fallen short of God's glory. Every one of us, without an exception, have fallen short of giving God the glory that is due unto Him. Beloved, I say to you, you can't read these verses without the realization that there is an inherent depravity about you, and that you stand guilty of sin in the sight of God.

Listen again: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).

Beloved, your carnal mind, that is, your natural mind, the mind that you have to think with every day is at enmity against God. It can't be made subject unto the law of God. I say that your mind is definitely opposed to the principles of Almighty God.

Then read how Paul concludes by saying: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8).

I ask you, are you in the flesh? Of course you are. So far as we are concerned, we are all fleshly human beings. The Word of God says that they who are in the flesh cannot please God. How old are you? Twenty? Thirty? Thirty-five? Forty years old? Then will you believe me when I say that you have never pleased God one single day of your life. You have never pleased God one single moment of your life if you are outside of Jesus Christ, for they that are in the flesh cannot please God. As a proof text of this, I turn to the book of Hebrews, which says: "But without faith it is impossible to please him..." (Heb. 11:6).

Brother, sister, if you have never exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ -- if you have never believed on the Son of God with saving faith, then you have never pleased God one single time in your life.

Just think of the thousands of people who please their wives, or please their husbands, or please their friends, please their relatives, or please their acquaintances, but they have never yet pleased God one single time. A man came into our printing shop one day, and I was very much impressed with him as I talked with him for some period of time. He had a very pleasing personality, and I am satisfied that individual has many, many friends so far as his acquaintances go within this world. After he had gone out, and having asked him if he were a saved man, and learned that he was not, I thought of this fact, he came in and pleased me; he made a very pleasing impression so far as I

was concerned, and doubtlessly he would make a pleasing impression on every businessman that he would call on that day, yet not one time in forty years has he ever pleased God, for the Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God.

Talk about depravity, we have it in the Word of God, for over and over again, we are told how depraved we really are. The Apostle Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia and said: "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin..." (Gal. 3:22).

Sometimes when a preacher is preaching, he will say, "And finally," but it isn't finally. He will say, "In the end," but it isn't the end. He will say, "In conclusion," but it isn't the conclusion, and he will keep on. God, beloved, just makes one conclusion, and His conclusion is that all are under sin.

Just think of that little one that God has given you into your home. That little boy or girl stands in God's sight as a sinner. How many times I have looked down upon my own loved ones when they were children, or I have looked down into the crib of a grandchild and I have asked this question, "Why did God ever allow sin to become a reality?" I don't know, beloved. I can't answer that question, but I tell you, every one stands as a depraved sinner in God's sight.

Notice again: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

Every individual in this world is in the same state spiritually as a corpse is physically. Attend a funeral service and look down into the casket and see there the form of a loved one or a friend who has died. You realize that individual can't be called back to life. Although you might wish to bring that one back to life, and although you might try to do so, all your crying, all your tears, all your prayers could never avail to bring that one back to life again. Beloved, every person who has not received Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour stands spiritually in God's sight in exactly and precisely the same condition -- dead.

If you have not received the Son as your Saviour, you are as dead spiritually in the sight of God as a corpse is physically. You couldn't call a corpse back to life. It would take a miracle to bring such a one to life. Beloved, the same power that it takes to raise a dead body to life is the power that it takes to bring a dead soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore I say that we are just as dead spiritually, and as helpless spiritually, as a corpse is physically.

Yes, beloved, this word "depravity" is an ugly word, for it certainly does reveal to us what our spiritual estate is.

We read on within the Word of God and find other Scriptures which tell us about our spiritual condition. Notice: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15).

Haven't you heard people say that they were going to let their conscience be their guide?

Beloved, you have a mighty poor guide if you are going to let your conscience be your guide, for you can train your conscience to say "Amen" to any sin. So far as you are concerned, all you have to do is just keep sinning and your conscience will get so hard that it will say "Amen" to any sin that you wish to commit. Brother, sister, believe me when I tell you that your conscience is not a reliable guide, because your conscience and your mind is defiled in the sight of God. At best, we are a depraved lot.

Listen again: "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways" (Heb. 3:10).

Notice, Paul says that we do always err in our hearts. Unsaved man, unsaved woman, you do always err in your hearts, and furthermore, you have not known God's ways. The fact of the matter is, you can't know God's ways until God reveals Himself to you. I go back to the Old Testament for an illustration in this respect.

Do you remember the time when Eli was the high priest? He had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were ungodly and immoral. Eli had put them into the ministry. God hadn't done so. The result was that they certainly weren't pleasing to God, nor to their father Eli, nor to Israel. They caused the people to sin. The Word of God tells us how the day came when the ark of the Lord was captured in battle, and Hophni and Phinehas were slain. When the servant ran home with a message as to the results of the battle, how that they had lost the battle to the Philistines and how Hophni and Phinehas were dead, the old priest Eli fell over in death. Then when the news was brought unto the wife of Phinehas, who was soon to give birth of a child, when she heard how the battle had gone against Israel, how the ark had been captured, that her husband was dead, that her brother-in-law was dead, and that her father-in-law had died when he heard the news of the battle, she gave birth prematurely to a child. She died but the child lived, and in her death she named that child Ichabod, which means, "the glory has departed."

Brother, sister, I go back to the Garden of Eden to the time when Adam sinned, and I write that name over every one of Adam's descendants from that time down to this -- Ichabod, "the glory has departed." We stand as a depraved people in the sight of God, for the glory has departed so far as we are concerned.

I remember one night years ago that a fellow was standing on the street corner trying to hold up a telephone pole that he thought surely was in the process of falling down. The strange thing about it was that he was the one that was in bad shape. I tried to pray with him, and I suggested that he get down on his knees right there by that telephone pole. I started to pray, and I said, "Lord, bless this drunken wretch." He jumped up and said, "Don't you dare tell the Lord that I am a drunken wretch." I got him down on his knees a second time and I said, "Lord, bless this man, for he is a sinner." He jumped up and said, "Don't you tell the Lord that I am a sinner." I got him down a third time and I

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said, "Lord save this man because he stands in need of salvation right now." He jumped up and said, "Don't you tell the Lord I need to be saved."

You know, beloved, I couldn't even pray with that man, for he wouldn't let me remind God of the fact that he was a sinner, a drunken wretch, in need of salvation, and was on the road to hell. Why was it? Simply because he was a depraved human being. Even though he was depraved, he didn't like that word "depravity." It was an ugly word to him to refer to him as a sinner, or a wretch, or one that was in need of salvation.

II. Judgment. We read: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31).

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16).

Notice, the secrets of men will be judged.

I ask you, do you have anything in your life that is purely a secret so far as you are concerned? Well, actually in the sight of God there is nothing secret, for God sees everything that you and I ever do. There is nothing that is held as a secret from Almighty God, and at the time of the judgment He is going to judge the secret things of our lives.

Listen: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Beloved, out yonder, maybe 50 or 60 years, or maybe even tonight, you are going to die. Do you know what the next thing is after that? It is the judgment. It is appointed unto you to die, and it is likewise appointed that you are going to be judged.

Now that is an ugly word. You don't like to be reminded of the fact that you are going to be judged. You don't like to be reminded of the fact that there is a judgment coming, yet it is true. Every man outside the Son of God as a Saviour is going to come before God in the judgment, to be judged for his sins.

The Apostle Paul goes further and says: "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all..." (Heb. 12:23).

Now I'll not discuss the general assembly or the church of the firstborn, but I want you to notice that this verse tells us every man is going to come before God, the Judge of all. When you come before a judge in this world, it is one human being standing before another. When Paul was tried before the various judges of his day, instead of it being Paul before each of them, it ended up that it was actually each of them before Paul, because Paul became the prosecutor. In every instance, that was true in the life of the Apostle Paul. To come before an earthly judge doesn't mean much, but one day

every man is going to stand in the presence of God, the Judge of all.

III. Hell. The Apostle Paul said: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:7-9).

Men sinned in the Garden of Eden, and as a result of their sin, they died physically, and they died spiritually. What is the ultimate result? There is a hell awaiting every man outside of Jesus Christ.

Nobody likes to think about hell. Nobody wants to think that he is going to hell. I dare say that if you were to walk out and speak to one hundred people, not one of them would tell you that he expected to go to hell, but somewhere along the way he plans that there shall be a change in his life, and he anticipates there is going to be a different life for him after while. No man in his right mind wants to go to hell, yet hell is out there before us, awaiting every man outside Jesus Christ.

That is a ugly word, isn't it, just to think of the fire and brimstone; just to think of the pain of consciousness in hell; just to think how "their worm dieth not"; just to think of the fires themselves that burn, but can never be put out; just to think of all the suffering that men shall undergo in hell. I tell you, beloved, it is a fearful word.

I held a revival years ago when I was a boy preacher, and twice during that revival meeting I preached on the subject of hell. Afterwards, one man said, "Well, I just didn't think much of Brother Gilpin's preaching, for he talked too much about hell." Well, beloved, I could understand why he felt that way; he just didn't want to know about his future home. He just didn't want to know where he was going, and what his condition was going to be. Naturally he didn't like to hear about hell.

I say to you, hell is an ugly word. It is a disturbing word to the carnal mind when a man realizes that he is depraved and that hell is awaiting him just around the corner.

If you will go back to the early chapters of Genesis, you will find that sin entered the human family, death came as a result of sin, and accordingly thus growing out of that experience of sin and death we have these three words depravity, judgment and hell - each of which have come down to us with an ugly connotation. They strike fear in the hearts of every man outside of Jesus Christ. Believe me, beloved, you are a depraved human being. There is a judgment day coming, and beyond the judgment there is a hell awaiting the man who is outside the Lord Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

In view of the fact that you are depraved, and in view of the fact that there is a judgment day coming and a hell awaiting beyond the judgment, you can easily understand why the last part of my text is the precious part of it. It says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift

of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Since we are dead; since we are depraved; since we are subjects of hell, and we are going to come before God at the judgment, we stand utterly helpless and impotent in God's sight. Therefore He had to deal with us in grace. No wonder Paul said: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15).

Beloved, it is unspeakable. Just to think that you who were dead and depraved, who had judgment and hell awaiting you, that God gave to you a revelation of Jesus Christ. One day the Son of God became real to you as your Saviour, and like Paul, those of you who are saved can say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." I say, beloved, God had to deal with us in grace. Otherwise, we would have all gone to a devil's hell.

Years ago, I was in an Ohio town and I visited a steel mill, and I was impressed most unusually. As I recall, the building was several blocks in length, and all the time the men were working, there was a crane overhead, that kept passing from one end of the building to the other, where they were working. It was a crane that carried an electric magnet. They called it the sweeper. As it would pass from one end of that building to the other, this sweeper with its electric magnet would pick up all those steel filings that otherwise would have been wasted and would carry them back to the end of the building. When this magnet was de-magnetized, these shavings would drop into the furnace where they were heated and where they would come forth as molten metal. When I passed through that building as a boy preacher, I was impressed as to how nothing was wasted because of the power of that electric magnet. As I walked out of the building I thought how our lives are broken and wasted, and as a result of sin and the death that came, we are depraved human beings, and are in danger of the judgment, and hell to follow. The only way that you and I could ever be saved is that the power of God come down, pick us up, remelt or remold us, and make us over, all to the praise of His grace. No wonder Paul said, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Beloved, there isn't anything you can do whereby you can change your life. Only God can change it. We can sing His praise today, and tomorrow, and through all the tomorrows to come, and through a never-ending eternity only because of what He has done for us in spite of our depravity, in spite of the fact that we are spiritually dead, in spite of the fact that we have a judgment and Hell awaiting. We'll sing His praise eternally because of what He has done in our behalf.

May God bless you!

ACTS

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while in Ephesus it was the goddess Diana. The temple of Diana was usually reckoned as one of the seven wonders of the world. The fact that this temple was one of the seven wonders of the world, shows how much the people in Ephesus were dedicated to the worship of Diana. It also shows the extent of the work

which was set before the apostle Paul.

Dr. Chanceler, in his "Travels in Asia Minor," says regarding the conditions of Ephesus in his day: "The inhabitants are a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility; the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness; some in substructions of the glorious edifices which they raised; some beneath the vaults of the stadium, once the crowded scene of their diversions; and some in the sepulchres which received their ashes" (Travels, P. 131, Oxford, 1775).

We have been informed by Josephus that the Jews were very numerous in Ephesus and that they enjoyed the privilege of Citizenship.

Paul, when arriving in Ephesus, did as the manner was to do (Acts 17:2), that is, enter into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and reason with the Jews. His reasoning, of course, related to how Jesus Christ of Nazareth had fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah. He, therefore advised them, on the basis of God's Word, to repent and believe.

"When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus" (Acts 18:20, 21).

Paul, in these Scriptures, appears to pull back from the front line of battle. He, of course, was in the will of God in his decision. It appears, in fact, that Paul's strong determination to go to Jerusalem and keep the feast related to the vow which he had made. It is likely that the hair he had shaved from his head was still in his possession. We, in fact, know from Numbers 6:1-21 that the hair shaved as the result of a Nazarite vow, was burned on the altar as an offering to God. This occurred after thirty days in which no meat was eaten or wine consumed. A vow of this nature, of course, would explain Paul's strong determination to go to Jerusalem. It would explain why he said, "I must by all means keep the feast that cometh in Jerusalem." The "all means" says to us that Paul would have crawled to Jerusalem if it had been necessary. We, however, are not to overlook the fact that God the Spirit was working in Paul so that he would return to Jerusalem for a special work.

"And when he had landed at Cesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch" (Acts 18:22).

The City of Cesarea is about sixty two miles northwest of Jerusalem. It was built by Herod the Great, and named Cesarea in honor of Augustus Caesar. The city, in fact, was dedicated to Caesar and called Sebaste, the Greek word for Augustus. Cesarea was built so that even the houses honored Caesar. The houses, I'm informed, were splendid. There was even a temple built in honor of Caesar and dedicated to him. His statue was placed within the temple. We know from Acts 23:33 that Cesarea was the seat of the Roman governor while Judea was a Roman province (compare Acts

25:6, 13). We also know from Acts 21:8, 9, that Philip lived in Cesarea. Paul, in fact, according to Acts 21:8, spent some time at the home of Philip. I understand that Cesarea today is a place of utter destruction. It was once the most celebrated city in Syria, but now it is gone, along with its gorgeous palaces, temples and works of art which were in the palaces and temples.

Our text informs us that Paul, after leaving Ephesus, "landed at Cesarea." He then proceeded to travel the additional sixty-two miles to Jerusalem where he "saluted the church." It is important to note that Paul did not salute Peter or John as individuals, but the church as a whole. It was the church, the "pillar and ground of the truth" which he chose to honor and respect by a salute. It was the church, the body of our Lord, the chaste virgin, that Paul saluted. The church, of course, is made up of people, so that Paul, when saluting the church, saluted the people in the church. One, by reading the following Scriptures, can determine, in part, how Paul saluted the church at Jerusalem.

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of the Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1: 2, 3).

Paul, after saluting the church at Jerusalem, "went down to Antioch." Antioch, which was the capitol of Syria for many years, had many gates and fine fountains. The drawback to the city was that it was subjected to numerous earthquakes. Sixty thousand people, in fact, died as the result of an earthquake that occurred in A.D. 588. The city was especially a good place for Christians to reside, since they were allowed to worship God without the interference of the state. It was in Antioch, you may recall, that we were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

Antioch, due to its being the "gate to the East," was an excellent place to preach the Gospel. Antioch, by way of her harbor of Seleucia, was in communication with all the trade of the Mediterranean. The city was also easily approached by caravans from Mesopotamia and Arabia. This route was by way of the open country behind Lebanon.

The church at Jerusalem, according to Acts 11:22, had sent Barnabas to Antioch to preach the Word. Later, Barnabas went to Tarsus and returned to Antioch with the Apostle Paul. The Holy Spirit proceeded to use both men in a mighty way in the city of Antioch.

"And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23).

General MacArthur, when returning to the Philippines, was a great encouragement to the people there. Paul in a greater way, was a great encouragement to the

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PAGE SEVEN

DOES PRAYER CHANGE THINGS?

by Joseph Wilson

"...I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;..." (Ezek. 36:36,37).

I suppose that nearly all of us have seen the popular wall plaque with the motto "Prayer Changes Things." Many of us may have owned one of these in the past. Of course, ninety percent or more of the religious world would answer the question which forms my subject by saying, "yes." My answer to this question is, "No." I think that I can prove to you that this is the Scriptural answer. In prayer, as in everything else today, too much is made of man and too little of God. All we are ever taught about prayer is the human side. What we must do, and what we can get by prayer, is the theme of modern religion on this subject. Beloved, there is a Divine side to the subject and this too, needs proclaiming to this proud and self-confident generation. I tell you that God will not give, in the privilege of prayer, that which robs Him of His glory and deprives Him of His rights.

It has been said by a modern religionist that, "God has ordained that human destinies may be changed by the will of man...that the purposes of God can be changed by prayer." Now this is nothing short of blasphemy. Modern religion has placed our Saviour at the disposal of man, and makes God to be a Santa Claus that gives us whatever we want, regardless of His will and purpose. The teaching that "prayer changes things" is highly dishonoring to God, and an insult to His Sovereign Majesty.

"But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13). "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Psa. 115:3). "Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, and all deep places" (Psa. 135:6). "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand...For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isa. 14:24,27). "...he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35). "...him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

I. The doctrine of predestination, as taught in the above Scriptures, along with a host of other verses, proves that prayer does not change things. The Bible is clear that God has a will and purpose concerning all

things, and that His providence and power will bring all things to pass according to that will and purpose. The man who cannot see this in the Bible just cannot see at all. God has His will in all things, and works all things after the counsel of His will. This is beyond dispute, if we bow to the authority of the Bible.

It is most certainly true that, if God has predestinated whatsoever comes to pass, and He has then prayer cannot change things. Things come to pass, not according to our poor, weak, ill-formed prayers, but according to God's eternal predestination. God cannot have a purpose, and then have that purpose subject to the changing effects of men's prayers.

I, for one, am glad that this is so. I feel like Solomon, when God asked him what his request was, and Solomon replied that he was a little child who did not know how to go out and come in. Now, beloved, is it better that the affairs of time be under the control of, and in harmony with, the eternal will of God, or that they be controlled by the prayers of creatures who must confess again and again that they know not what to pray for? The man who teaches that "prayer changes things" must have a mighty high opinion of the wisdom of man, and a mighty low opinion of God Almighty. How can we believe--why would we desire--that the events of the universe should be controlled by the will of man in his praying when man is the foolish and depraved creature that he is?

No man can believe in the glorious, Biblical doctrine of absolute predestination, and believe that prayer changes things. The two are incompatible. They do not go together. If one is true, the other is false. Since predestination is true, it follows, as night follows day, that prayer does not change things.

II. The doctrine of foreknowledge proves that prayer does not change things. Actually, the Biblical usage of this word, and the usual doctrine meant thereby are two different things. The Bible uses the word "foreknow" to speak of God's attitude toward, rather than His knowledge of. Romans 8:29 tells us not, of "what God foreknew," but of "whom He foreknew." Here, the verse tells of those whom God knew in the relationship of love, and that He knew them as His loved ones from all eternity. Then the verse tells us of His purpose for his fore-loved ones, and then of His bringing that purpose to pass. So, the Biblical usage of the word "foreknow", takes the word "know" in the sense of intimate love and adds the word "fore" to it.

"Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Here is the Biblical doctrine that shall always be true. The truth of this matter is that God foreknows what will come to pass because He has predestinated what is to come to pass, and He is able to bring it to pass. But even where men deny predestination, they nearly always admit foreknowledge. I would point out that foreknowledge shows the certainty of future events as well as predestination. Surely, we will all agree that God foreknows everything that is going to come to pass.

Now to the point at hand. God foreknows what will be. What God foreknows will be, must surely come to pass. Prayer cannot change the thing that God already foreknows will be. Does God have to wait to see what man's prayer will be before He foreknows what is going to be? Do you not see that, even on the basis of foreknowledge, prayer could not change things? Beloved, a man cannot believe in much of a god at all without believing that God foreknows what will be; and a man cannot believe that, and believe that prayer changes things.

Now, notice the absurdity of saying that prayer changes things. God is not at man's beck and call to do whatever man asks of Him. This theory that prayer changes things is highly dishonoring to God. Look at it a minute. Here is a farmer who prays for rain for the garden. Here is a painter who prays that it won't rain until he gets the house painted. Poor God is really in a spot, isn't He? Which prayer shall He answer? What shall He do? How will the "prayer changes thing" crowd deal with this? Two ball teams are on the sidelines. They huddle for prayer before going on the field. Both teams pray for victory. How is God going to solve this dilemma? Two armies are engaged in battle. Friends of both sides pray for victory. What will God do about this problem? Can you not see that the teaching that prayer changes things, leads to the utmost absurdity? Man does not know what is best. Would it not be an awful and terrifying thing to put this world under the absolute control of man's prayers?

Please note this statement: Prayer is not getting God to change His will, but our getting into harmony with, and asking according to His will. This one statement properly understood and believed would go far toward settling this question about prayer. When the Arminian, with his "prayer changes things" doctrine, prays and does not get what he prayed for, he falls back on the statement, "it was not God's will." How many times have we heard the Arminian explain the failure of his prayer in this way? Well, why not start out with prayer in submission to the will of God, instead of using this as a crutch to fall back upon when the Arminian philosophy fails?

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:14,15).

Here we have the Biblical approach to prayer. God has an eternal purpose concerning all things that will ever come to pass. This is called "His will." If we ask anything that is in harmony with that will and purpose, God will hear us, and we will have the thing for which we ask. If we ask for that which is contrary to "His will," God will not change that eternal purpose, and we will not get that for which we ask. Now this is very plain and simple: and it is very authoritative.

"Likewise the Spirit also

helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27).

Here is a truly great passage on our subject. "We know not what we should pray for." Surely then, we would not want the events of life controlled by a being with such infirmities. Why would people want things to be changed by the prayers of one who does not know what he should pray for, instead of being controlled by the all-wise God? We learn here that the Holy Spirit makes intercession for (or in and through) the saints, that God searches the heart of the praying one; that God the Father approves (knows) what the mind of the Spirit is in this prayer, and that this is according to the eternal will of God. Of course, the Holy Spirit knows what that eternal will is because He was there when it was determined. So the Holy Spirit has no difficulty interceding according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit knows what to pray for, even though we do not. And the prayer that is of the Holy Spirit is always an answered prayer. Now if you will study I John 5:14,15 and Romans 8:26,27 together, you will learn many precious truths in regards to prayer. When we are definitely led by the Holy Spirit in our prayer life, we will pray according to God's will, and we will have the things that we pray for. So the proper attitude for the child of God is--not to be trying to run the universe--but to walk, live and pray in the Holy Spirit.

"And I will add unto thy days fifteen years;..." (II Kings 20:6). In II Kings 20:1-6 we have the story of Hezekiah's sickness, prayer and recovery. This is often used to prove that prayer changes things. Did God foreknow when Hezekiah would die? Certainly He did. Then Hezekiah's prayer did not change the time that he would die. God sent the prophet to Hezekiah to stir him up in prayer. God had before determined the number of days that Hezekiah would live. Job 14:5 tells us that man's days are determined, his months are numbered, and God has set bounds to every human life beyond which it cannot pass. God used Hezekiah's prayer in accomplishing God's purpose as to the length of his life. Notice that God did not add fifteen years to the days Hezekiah would have lived had he not prayed but to the days that Hezekiah had already lived.

The case of the Ninevites is often used to prove that prayer changes things. If God had determined to destroy them in forty days, there would have been no purpose in sending them a message through Jonah. God determined before the world to spare Nineveh at this time. God sent them a warning and used that warning to stir them to an outward repentance, and then spared them through that repentance that He had worked with His Word. God did not change His mind. It is highly dishonoring to God to even suggest that He could ever change His mind about anything. If God could change, it would be

for better or for worse. If for worse, He could no longer be God. If for better, He was not God before the change. Let the Arminian choose which horn of this dilemma he prefers. Either one is highly dishonoring, and a gross insult to the God of the Bible.

I Samuel 15:29 informs us that: "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent."

We had better stand by this and other Scriptures that declare the immutability of God, and not try to make Him a changeable being, moved this way and that by the prayers of His creatures.

Now, when we declare that the God of the Bible is unchangeable and that prayer does not, and cannot change anything, we are immediately confronted by our adversaries with the question, "Why should we pray at all?" Now this is a good question and it deserves fair and honest treatment. I might just say here that the Arminian, with his big man and little god who cannot do anything except man let him, will have a harder time answering the above question than will believers in the absolute predestination of a sovereign God.

We should pray because God commands it. Luke 18:1 tells us that "men ought always to pray," and I Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to, "pray without ceasing." Now we ought to obey God's commands whether we can see any personal benefit to be derived therefrom or not. Oh, beloved, it behoves everyone to obey God. It is not ours to question why, it is but ours to do even if we die doing it. How often have I told one of the children, when they asked why they had to do something, "Because I said so." If God has commanded us to pray (and He has), then we should pray even if we never derived any benefit whatsoever from it. Here is the very root and heart of much trouble in the world, especially the religious world today. Man is interested only in his selfish desires and in what benefit accrues to himself, and not at all interested in the glory that is due to God.

Next, we should pray because there is personal benefit to be derived from prayer apart from anything we receive in specific answer to prayer. What! Can I come into the presence of my Heavenly Father, and spend time in communion with Him, and not be immeasurably blessed thereby? Beloved, is not this the chief of all the benefits of prayer? To have sweet and blessed fellowship with the Lord. Are not answers to prayers just added benefits to this one chief benefit of true prayer? Is prayer no more than a child's letter to Satan Claus? (Excuse the misspelling). Those hours which our Lord spent in prayer, think you that they were spent entirely in "gimme, gimme, gimme"?

Were they not mainly hours of blessed communion from whence our Lord drew strength for His daily task? Yes, beloved, our lives will be enriched, blessed and strengthened by prayer, apart from any answers to prayer that we receive. Of course, if we are a praying people, we will often receive answers to our prayers. When we are enabled to ask for anything in the Spirit of God,

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PRAYER

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our prayers will always be answered because they will be according to the will of God. But apart from this important part of prayer, we will still receive many blessings by and in the act of communion with God.

We should pray because prayer is one of the appointed means of bringing about the purposes of God. God predestinates all things that shall ever be. He predestinates the means as well as the ends. One of the means is that of the prayers of His children. In I Kings 18:1, God told Elijah that He was going to send rain upon the earth. Yet in verses 42 through 45 of the same chapter, we find Elijah praying earnestly and repeatedly that it might rain. God heard and answered this prayer, because it was according to the will of God. Now God's telling Elijah that it was going to rain, did not cause Elijah to say there was no use to pray. But this promise of God was used to stir up Elijah to pray, and continue praying even when he saw no evidence of rain. Here, the matter of prayer is clearly set forth if we will but study it.

In Daniel 9, we see Daniel studying the book of Jeremiah. From that book he learns that God is going to restore the Israelites to their own land after seventy years of captivity, which he knows are about over. Does Daniel use this to excuse his neglect of prayer? Does Daniel say that because it is predestined, and revealed that this is sure to be, that he need not pray? Of course not. Daniel uses the promise of God to encourage him in his prayer life. He pleads the promise of God. He knows that he shall have this request because he knows that it is according to the will of God.

In Jeremiah 29:10-14, God tells Israel of His plans to visit them and perform His good Word toward them after the captivity, and that He will cause them to return to their land. Then God says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you" (Jere. 29:12). In Ezekiel 36:26-38, God tells Israel what He is going to do for them, and that He will surely do it for His glory. Then He says a most instructive word relative to our subject. "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them..." Beloved, the doctrine of predestination--the doctrine that proves that prayer does not change things--is a mighty incentive to a life of prayer. If God does not control things, why waste our time in prayer? But since He controls all things, we have incentive and encouragement in our prayers.

We must never so exalt man, and so insult God, as to think our prayers could change His eternal purposes. We must not use this as an excuse to quit praying. We must pray because God commands it, because we will be greatly blessed thereby, and because it is an appointed means in the bringing to pass of God's purposes. We should seek to so live, walk and pray in the Spirit as that our praying will be according to the will of God.

Paul is a great example of what prayer ought to be in II

Corinthians 12:7-10. He prays that a thorn in the flesh might be removed. Though it is not mentioned here, we are sure that he prays in subjection to the will of God. It was not God's will to remove the thorn, but to give Paul sufficient grace to bear it. Paul rejoices in this as an answer to his prayer. Our Lord in Gethsemane prays that the cup might be removed from Him, but He prays in subjection to the will of God and was heard and strengthened by an angel of God to drink that bitter cup.

John 11:3 is a good example of what our prayer ought often to be. Lazarus was sick. His sisters did not know if it was God's will to heal Lazarus or not. They did not try to change things by their prayers. They simply sent word to Jesus telling Him that Lazarus, who was loved by Jesus, was sick. They left the matter in the hands of the Lord. This is what we must learn to do in our prayers. Leave things in the hands of the Lord. After all where could we better leave them? Oh! What a glorious answer the sisters received. But often, God's saints have gone to the Lord about sick loved ones, and they have died and not been raised. Beloved, we must learn to rest in the sovereignty of God. We must learn this in respect to our prayer life. Then we will know more joy, and more deep settled peace, and our prayer life will be more what it ought to be a blessing, unspeakable, to us, and giving glory to God. May God bless you in the study of this import subject.

ACTS

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believers in Galatia and Phrygia. You may recall that at an earlier date Paul had hazarded his life for the believers in these areas. His return was a great source of "strengthening" to all of the disciples which God the Spirit, through Paul, had made in those areas.

"And a certain Jew named Apollos, born of Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus" (Acts 18:24).

God had sent and empowered Paul to tear down the strongholds of evil. Multitudes, in fact, had repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. There was now a need for someone to follow after Paul and preach the "all things." One of these men that God raised up was Apollos. He, in fact, according to I Corinthians 3:6, would "water" that which Paul had planted. This particular Scripture states:

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

We are informed that Apollos was from Alexandria, Egypt. This fact is important in that Alexandria had about one million Jews living there. Alexandria was a city of scholars, scholars who were very well versed in the Old Testament. They, in fact, believed that not only did the Old Testament record history, but that there was an inner meaning - the inner meaning being that the Old Testament pointed to the coming of the Messiah. This fact explains why Apollos was so well trained in the Old Testament. Our text, in fact, states that he was

We are to see that God raised up Apollos from his youth to the very work to which he was called. God, when He has planned a work, has also planned for the person or persons to perform that work.

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

The work which our Lord planned for Apollos related to our Lord's churches which were to be established in Ephesus and other areas. There would be plenty of work for Apollos in Ephesus, since it was a heathen city which was dedicated to the worship of the goddess Diana. Apollos, however, being "mighty in the Scriptures" and having the power of God the Spirit, was well equipped for that which lay before him.

"This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25).

The baptism of John, which Apollos knew, was not administered until the person being baptized, believed "on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4).

Apollos knew that John fulfilled that which is spoken of in Malachi 4:5,6. Apollos also knew that John was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. He therefore was a disciple of John, having been baptized by John. (We will note, when we come to Acts 19:1-7, that it was probably Apollos who baptized these people. He, however, as we shall see, was in error).

"And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26).

Apollos was an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures," but he needed some fine tuning. He did not, as we are prone to say, have all of his ducks in line. God, however, had assigned Aquilla and Priscilla to help him rightly divide the Word. We find that Apollos, being the wise man that he was, was very receptive to instruction. We are to see, then, that Apollos was not only a mighty man in the Scriptures, but he was meek and humble too, or, in other words, he was teachable.

"And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27).

We have noted before that Achaia, in its largest sense, was all of Greece. Achaia proper, on the other hand, was a province of which Corinth was the capitol. We know from I Corinthians 1:12, and 3:3,4, that Apollos spent much time in Corinth. He, as we have already noted, watered that which Paul had planted. God used Apollos to build up that which Paul had planted. He, in fact, as is stated in the Scripture which is before us, "helped them much which had believed through grace." Apollos "helped them much" by opening up the Scriptures to

them. He, after all, was "mighty in the scriptures," and an eloquent speaker. He, in other words, knew what to say and how to say it. He was a great communicator for our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

"For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:28).

Apollos, for example, showed them from the fifty third chapter of Isaiah, that Jesus was the Messiah. He was so mighty or knowledgeable of the Old Testament, that he could open up the Old Testament Scriptures and prove to the Jews that they pointed to Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

NAHUM

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been chosen, saved, sanctified and delivered! It is by grace that we live and will some day be glorified! God's gracious gift of forgiveness is offered to sincere, repentant hearts. If Nineveh had repented at the preaching of Nahum as they had 160 years earlier under Jonah, God would have forgiven them (see Jonah 3:5-10). Will you repent? If you already have, have you shared God's wonderful love and grace with others?

The Judge, as described in chapter 1, is not only morally pure and living. He is omnipotent. Verse 3 tells us that He is "great in power." The Hebrew word used here suggests the ability to endure or the capacity to produce. The point is that God is able to deal with any and all situations. You cannot throw God a "curve ball." After all, He is the God who controls all of nature. This is the clear message of Nahum 1:3 5: "...the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein." If God can control nature itself, certainly He can and will cope with Nineveh. And certainly He can and will cope with your sin.

The judgment of God is coming on all those who refuse to repent. It will come on unbelievers today as surely as it came on Nineveh of old. Dear reader, you ought to ensure that you escape the judgment of God. Remember that the character of the judgment is awful, and the character of the judged is depraved and worthy of such judgment, but the character of the Judge is holy (He cannot stand sin) and powerful (He is able to judge sin), and yet He is also loving and forgiving to those who repent.

Won't you repent of your sin and turn to Christ today? If you are already a believer, you still have some responsibilities. We began this message with a quote of Luke 12:48: "...For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." You have been given the great grace of election and salvation. Surely

you will not go "scott-free" if you continue to displease God! What is your response to God's Word today?

REDEMPTION

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and that difference is in the motive prompting the deed, and that motive affects, moulds the character of the one who performs the deed.

No deed is right in the sight of God that is not performed from the motive of love (I Cor. 13:1-3); hence, no character can be right in the sight of God if the deeds that formed that character were not prompted by the motive of love. All deeds performed from simply the motive of duty, or from the desire to be saved (to go to heaven after this life) or from fear of hell, are, in the sight of God, unworthy deeds, and the characters formed by such deeds are unworthy characters. And the Saviour defines clearly what love is: "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged" (Luke 7:41-43).

And John likewise defines love: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10).

This explains why God says: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8).

Their motive is wrong and they cannot have the right motive, because they have not been "forgiven most." Hence all characters are wrong in the sight of God that were formed by deeds whose prompting motive was a simple sense of duty, a desire to be saved, to go to heaven, or from fear of hell. And all who have such a character are lost, have never been redeemed, are not real Christians.

Second, God develops character in the redeemed, His real children, by chastisements. Our earthly fathers "...verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:10,11).

Third, God moulds the character of the redeemed by afflictions, burdens, sorrows, etc. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17).

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye

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REDEMPTION

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may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4).

The shallow conception of God's plan with men that makes it His ultimate purpose simply to save men, leaves the life of the redeemed man here on earth an unsolved riddle, often an inexplicable tragedy. The heartaches, the disasters, the burdens, the afflictions the sorrows--what of all these, when God assures us that **"...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"** (Rom. 8:28), if the ultimate purpose is simply salvation? **"And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver..."** The silver has been mined, digged from the earth, but there is dross in it. The redeemed have been **"...redeemed us from the curse of the law..."** (Gal. 3:13), have had the spirit sent into their hearts **"...because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"** (Galatians 4:6); but there are defects from heredity, and environment. The purifying process, the development of character, comes, not in order to be saved, but after we are saved, because we are saved.

With God as the Father of the redeemed, many of the afflictions, and sorrows of real Christians can be accounted for as chastisements; many of the severe, heavy afflictions in the lives of real Christians can be accounted for in this way. **"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"** (Heb. 12:5,6). Scourging is severe, yet God says it is for every son.

But there are many, many trials, afflictions, burdens, and sorrows, which cannot be explained by chastisements; for chastisements are for willful sins of God's children: **"If his children forsake my law...Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes"** (Psa. 89:30,32).

In the lives of many of the redeemed who are living obedient lives there are some of the most severe trials and afflictions. If God is their Father and loves them, what can these severe trials and afflictions mean?

"One adequate support For the calamities of mortal life

Exists, one only,--an assured belief

That the procession of our fate, however

Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a being

Of infinite benevolence and power,

Whose everlasting purposes embrace

All accidents, converting them into good."

Wordsworth.

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God Himself hath said, **"...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"** (Rom. 8:28).

Had God said, "some things," what confusion would have come to many of God's children. What enigmas would many things in the lives of many of the redeemed have been! But when God said **"all things."** He placed a key in the hands of every redeemed man, every real child of His, with which to unlock the door of every mystery; that every trial, every disaster, every accident, every burden, every humiliation, every disappointment, every affliction, every sorrow, **"...That the trial your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"** (I Peter 1:7).

Muscles are developed by trials; minds are developed by trials; God's redeemed people are developed by trials. To murmur against one's trials after being redeemed, means to murmur against being developed for one's eternal destiny. To give the muscles no trials, means for the body never to be developed; to give the mind no trials, means for the mind never to be developed; to give the redeemed man no trials, means for his character never to be developed. Two children are born into the world. The father and mother of one decide that he shall never be required to do any unpleasant things; that he shall never have any hardships. The father and mother of the other decide to give their child every unpleasant thing to do, every hardship and burden to bear, that will best develop him in body and mind. Often the redeemed plead with their Father in heaven to give them only pleasant things, and He, the All-wise, All-powerful, in love gives them--trials.

The trials of life for the redeemed are so various. If the muscles have only one trial, the body will never be fully developed. The muscles need various trials. If the mind has only one trial, it will never be fully developed. If the mind studies only one thing, it will never be trained, developed, educated. If the soul has only one kind of trial, it will never be developed. **"...count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations"** (James 1:2).

But the redeemed, the children of God, often complain that their trials are so hard. Easy trials do not develop. The one who takes only light exercises for his muscles will never be fully developed physically. The boy who works the easy examples and skips the hard ones, will never be an educated man; he will be only a "hewer of wood and drawer of water." It takes hard trials to develop the body properly. It takes hard trials of the mind to develop it properly. It takes hard trials to develop the soul properly; **"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire..."**

He who asks for only easy trials of his muscles, asks to remain undeveloped physically; he who asks for easy trials of his mind, asks to remain undeveloped mentally; he who asks, yearns, to

have no hard trials spiritually, yearns to remain undeveloped in real character, in his spiritual nature. The hard trials are the ones that develop. And the more one's muscles have been developed, the harder should be the trials for those muscles; the more one's mind is developed, the harder should be the trials for the mind; the more the redeemed man's spiritual nature is developed, the harder his trials will be.

That would be an unwise educator who, after training the pupil's mind up through geometry, would then put him back to studying the simple branches of mathematics, instead of taking him on into higher mathematics. Likewise the heavenly Father does not, after partly developing the redeemed, His children, by hard trials, return them to lives of easy trials, but He leads them into yet harder trials. Take Elijah as an example (see F.B. Meyer's "Elijah"). He is sent to pronounce God's sentence against Ahab (I Kings 17:1); he is then sent in obscurity (17:2,3), he is left dependent on the ravens for food (17:4-6); he sees the brook dry up, his only hope for water, for life (17:7); he is submitted to the humiliation of being supported by a poor widow (17:8,9); God delays answering his prayer (17:17-22); God requires him to expose himself to danger by showing himself to Ahab (18:1); he is led to face popular religious error, and in doing so is left to stand alone (18:19-38); God delays answer to his prayer till he prays seven times (18:42-45); he suffers the further humiliation of Elisha being anointed prophet in his room (19:15,16); he is taken up by a whirlwind to heaven (II Kings 2:11).

A study of these trials will show that they were all hard trials, and that they increased in severity. God tells us that Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are (James 5:17); but by trials, hardships, burdens, God developed him into one of the noblest characters of all ages. God's redeemed people may expect, then, trials through their lives, and that the trials shall be increasingly severe, as they advance in the Christian life.

Often God's children are discouraged because they cannot see any purpose in their trials. But God assures us that there is a purpose. The child cannot understand the purpose of the lessons at school, but the father has the purpose. Elijah, possibly filled with apprehension, sitting by the drying brook Cherith, did not see any purpose, but God, who makes all things work together for good to His people, had the purpose and accomplished it in the development of Elijah's character; and so, as F. B. Meyer has so aptly put it, the redeemed, sitting by the drying brook of health, of property, of reputation, of family happiness, may not see the purpose, but the Heavenly Father will work, in His plan for each, every trial into the warp or woof of each life. The Saviour said to Peter, **"...What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter"** (John 13:7).

"Behind our life the Weaver stands

And works His wondrous will:

We leave it all in His wise hands

And trust His perfect skill.

Should mystery enshroud His plan,

And our short sight be dim,
We will not try the whole to scan,

But leave each thread to Him."

Who knows the defects, the weaknesses, of each character? Only God. Who knows what each character ought to be? Only God. Who knows how to develop each character properly? Only God. Who is able to so shape the circumstances of each life as to properly develop each character? Only God. And He has promised that He will. **"...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"** (Rom. 8:28); **"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"** (I Peter 1:7). This is the only explanation of the many harassments of life.

God has revealed that the standard by which character is measured is patience or endurance. **"...let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"** (James 1:4).

If there were no harassments, no afflictions, no burdens, no sorrows, no disappointments, no sufferings, there could be no patience, no endurance; and if there were no patience, no endurance, there could be no maturity and completeness of character. As to what trials are needed, and are best in each case, only God can decide. In our dim-sightedness we think that many things are mistakes in God's plans, and that He cannot bring good out of them; but He will.

A boy was born with a badly deformed foot. When he was eight years of age his father had two surgeons to operate and try to straighten the foot, but they failed. After a second operation the foot was placed in a brace which was worn for months. But the foot remained as badly deformed as ever. The surgeons then informed the father that the foot could never be straightened. The father studied the deformed foot for many days, and then had a strange looking box made with screws, felt taps and iron rods in different parts of it. He had the surgeons to operate again on the boy's foot, cutting the muscles and tendons in different places. The foot was then placed in the strange box; a screw was turned till the felt tap pressed against the foot at one place, almost breaking the bones; then another screw and felt tap were brought to bear on another deformed part of the foot, straightening the foot and almost breaking the bones in that part of the foot; then the iron rod was used to straighten another part. For months the boy's foot was kept in that box. The suffering, day and night for months, was indescribable. The child would weep for hours, the pain being all but unbearable; and when the father would come home the child would beg piteously for the box to be taken off and to be left a cripple. The father, mingling his tears with the tears of the suffering child, would turn the screws tighter than before, and the child would shriek in fearful agony. During those weeks and months of suffering he looked upon his father

as being harsh and cruel and without love for him.

Finally the father loosened all the screws and said, "Son, stand up," and for the first time in his life the boy stood erect. Often has that son, now a gray-haired man, stood over the grave of that father, long since dead, and bedewed the grave with his tears, and thanked God that he had a father who was true enough to continue the suffering until the terrible deformity was corrected. The father may have turned the screws one thread too much, but the Father in heaven makes no mistakes, and far beyond the grave many of the redeemed will praise Him, when they understand, for the sufferings and afflictions and burdens they were led to endure here.

"Choose for us, Lord, nor let our weak preferring

Cheat us of good Thou hast for us designed.

Choose for us, Lord; Thy wisdom is unerring,

And we are fools and blind."

With the reader this may seem mere theory; he may feel that it cannot explain all the seemingly unfathomable mystery of suffering in the lives of many of the redeemed, the real children of God. Let the reader consider two things: first, that as a juror, he would not form a judgment till all the evidence had been placed before the jury. God's purpose in each case, and what God actually accomplishes in each case, in the development of character,--these have not yet been placed before the jury; but, backed up by many fulfilled prophecies, by the character of Jesus Christ, by His resurrection, by what He has accomplished in the world, we have God's solemn assurance that He will yet place this evidence before the jury.

Second, let the reader remember that with God character counts more than comfort. What father would prefer his son to be a brutal, ignorant pugilist, enjoying food and drink, physical life--to a useful, noble, highly educated, refined, learned son who could "listen in the orange groves of Verona to the sweet vows of Juliet, or to the blind bard's harp as he strikes the chords but seldom struck harmonious with the morning stars, or to the music of the spheres as they hymn His praises around their Creator's throne"? Far more than the earthly father would choose the latter for his son, does the Heavenly Father value the soul and its development above that of the body.

Could God's redeemed people only learn that perfection of character comes only through suffering, that as certain as God is true, a blessing will come from every sorrow, every burden, every affliction, every pang, every heartache!

"The ills we see--

The mystery of sorrow deep and long,

The dark enigmas of permitted wrong,

Have all one key--

This strange, sad world is but our Father's school;

All chance and change His love shall grandly overrule."

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REASONS

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The majority of such manuscripts have been proved to be substantially in agreement with the Authorized Version, and the general reliability of the text used for this version has been confirmed.

From the 18th century onwards, scholars have made increasing use of a few very old Greek manuscripts which contain a different form of text. The two best known such manuscripts are the "codex Vaticanus," found in the papal library in Rome, and "codex Sinaiticus," discovered at a monastery on Mount Sinai. Most modern Bible translations leave out or alter many verses to make them agree with these 4th century manuscript copies. The assumption behind this change of text is that "the oldest manuscripts must be the best." However, the age of a manuscript is not at all a proof of its quality. The early copies which have survived reflect a form of text which was used in Egypt during the 3rd and 4th centuries, and there is a grave danger that the text suffered from local influences. By following this form of text, the modern versions have revived ancient errors. Hundreds of words in the New Testament have been omitted, as well as two lengthy passages (Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11) and dozens of complete verses.

The mass of later manuscripts, on the other hand, are undoubtedly faithful copies of the form of text which was handed down over hundreds of years in the many areas where Greek was spoken. This is known as the "majority text," or "traditional text." The Authorized Version is largely based on this form of text, which is safest and most trustworthy.

2. The Authorized Version is a More Accurate Translation. Because of their reverent regard for the Bible as the inspired Word of God, the translators felt that they should very carefully set down in English all that was written by the inspired writers. They were conscious of the strict commands in Deuteronomy 4:2, that God's people should not add to His Word or take anything away from it. Modern versions quite often commit both of these errors, and the reader loses as a result. For instance, in John 1:17 John wrote, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Authorized Version puts this in simple English, with nothing added and nothing taken away. Compare this with the LIVING BIBLE: "Moses only gave us the law, with its rigid demands and merciless justice. Jesus gives us loving forgiveness as well." Here something is added about "rigid demands and merciless justice." John did not write these words, and they are not in any New Testament manuscript. The Law of Moses says that God shows mercy to thousands of them that love Him (Exodus 20:6), so the LIVING Bible makes John contradict Moses. Notice also that Moses did not only give us the Law -- here the LIVING BIBLE takes away something. John wrote, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," but the Living Bible omits all reference to the "truth," though all the manuscripts have this word in this place. In this example the

modern version is neither accurate nor true.

3. The Authorized Version is in More Appropriate English. The Holy Bible is the Word of a Holy God, and a translation should be in language appropriate to the Divine Author. The Bible was written by holy men of God who "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21). Thus a translation should use language and style appropriate to the Inspired Writers. The Bible speaks of many important and solemn matters such as eternal life, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, of sin and salvation, of lost sinners and their Divine Saviour, and the Eternal Son of the Eternal God. A translation should therefore be in language and style appropriate to the subject matter.

As the Bible is the Word of God, it should be read both in public and in private, and it should be remembered. A translation therefore, needs to be in a form of English suitable for public and private reading -- and easy to learn by heart. The rhythm of the Authorized Version, its reverent and dignified style, and the very high proportion of simple short words of Anglo-Saxon origin which have continued to provide the "basic" vocabulary of our language in every-day use, all combine to make this version the most suitable in all these respects. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost... He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." These great statements are given to us in simple words of one syllable, and much of the Authorized Version is in this simple timeless English that a child can read, learn and understand.

4. The Authorized Version Bears A Stronger Testimony to the Godhead of Christ than found in modern versions. Some of the old manuscripts favored by modern scholars leave out or alter some of the most important passages which declare that our Redeemer is equal and co-eternal with God, and that He is Himself "God manifest in the flesh." This great testimony in I Timothy 3:16 is weakened or lost in nearly every modern version. Also in Mark 1:1 where in the Authorized Version we read "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," (See also John 6:69 and 9:35). In Hebrews 1:8, God the Father addresses the Son as God: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." In many modern versions this testimony is weakened or lost. In the Old Testament the Authorized Version says in Isaiah 9:6 that the coming Saviour's name shall be called "Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Many modern versions change this passage so that the Messiah is not called "The MIGHTY GOD." Moffatt calls Him no more than "a Divine Hero." In Romans 9:5, the Authorized Version says that Christ is "over all, God blessed for ever," while modern versions tend to change this so completely that only God is said to be "over all" and "blessed for ever," and Christ is not said to be God.

Other altered passages concerning the Person of Christ are found in Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23, where modern versions sometimes put "young woman" instead of "virgin," thus obscur-

ing the doctrine that Christ was born of a virgin. Many versions also omit the word "firstborn" in Matthew 1:25, where the Authorized Version bears a clear testimony that Jesus was Mary's first-born son. The virgin birth is further called into question in Luke 2:33, where modern versions refer to Joseph as the "father" of Jesus. In the book of Micah (5:2), the prophet speaks of the coming birth of a Ruler at Bethlehem, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," clearly referring to the eternal nature of the Son of God. In the New International Version this becomes: "Whose origins are from old, from ancient times," which could easily give the reader the impression that Christ was a created being. The same error occurs in the Revised Standard Version and other modern versions.

5. The Authorized Version has served as a standard English translation throughout the English-speaking world as the source and foundation of effective gospel preaching, and as the highest authority in all matters of controversy. No other version has taken its place in this respect. The greatest evangelist and expositors of the last 350 years have used this version for their ministry. By means of it God has blessed millions of people with the light and the truth of the Gospel of Christ.

There are hundreds of thousands of Christian people in Africa, India, the Far East and the West Indies, who use this version and want no other. During recent years the Trinitarian Bible Society sent hundreds of thousand of copies of the Authorized Version into Africa, where it is read by Africans whose language is English. It is the Bible they know and love, and from which the Gospel is preached to them. In their resistance to less reliable modern versions, these people show more discernment than many in our own country who have too readily adopted one of the modern versions far inferior to the Authorized Version.

There are more than one hundred modern English versions. No doubt in every one of them some passages may be found well translated and perhaps some difficult passages are made clear, but any such advantage gained is far outweighed by the shortcomings and losses which have been mentioned. It is right to keep the Authorized Version, not because it is older, but because it is better than the versions offered in its place. This Bible is a precious gift of God for which we should be thankful. Its excellence, its faithfulness, its power and fruitfulness, have been well tried in the experience of millions. It must not be surrendered in exchange for an inferior version.

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JONAH

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hope left for us? They thought to themselves, from the king to the least, if we turn to God in prayer, just maybe, He will relent. And behold, what Jonah the prophet had never hoped would take place, what was directly contrary to his own wishes and desires, what he had actually feared (Jonah 4:1), now happened!

These people, the wicked Gentiles of Nineveh, "believed God" (Jonah 3:5). Oh beloved, this is

the same word (believed) that Moses, the Law giver, used to describe Abraham's saving faith in the book of Genesis. "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). Paul, in the New Testament, refers to this incident as he writes to the church at Rome, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). Again, Moses uses the same word to describe the belief of Israel: "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses" (Ex. 14:31). Jehoshaphat, King of Judah stood before his people and said, "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (II Chron. 20:20). You see, this is a term used in the Word of God that denotes saying yea and amen to God's Word as it was revealed to them by the prophets in days gone by. Paul tells us, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:1-4).

THE MIGHTY CRY OF THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH

The people of the East are given to expressions of feeling in anger, sorrow, or devotion. But as the King of Nineveh speaks, his cry denotes the following. (1) Intense Earnestness. This is not merely the asking or seeking for mercy, but a cry for God's sure mercy. It is agony, as one is found in deep distress because of sin. (2) Deep Fervour. It was not just a cry, but rather, it was a mighty cry unto the only One that would help them in their plight. In other words, this was a cry because of a deep contrition for sin and a strong desire looking for the pardon that only God can give. (3) Great Confidence. These people, the wicked people of Nineveh, believed that God could and would pardon them. Thus, in turning to God, they turn away from idols. When one by faith believes in Almighty God, there is that abandoning of the former life style. The proof of their sincerity is noticed by their actions; that is, they turned from their wickedness and proclaimed a fast and wore sackcloth. These people humbled themselves before God. Yes, even the king of Nineveh (V.6) descended from his throne in humble submission to the God of Jonah, exchanged his own royal robes for a coarse, ugly sackcloth and sat in ashes.

Beloved, this is an ancient

custom that we know little about today in our land. Nevertheless, when the nation of Israel was at stake in the days of Queen Esther, Esther called for a fast. "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish." (Esther 4:16). When the Lord permitted Satan to touch Job, we find him in like manner: "And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes" Then, when the Lord revealed unto Job his real problem, Job said: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Again, when Daniel was asking the Lord what would happen to Israel, we find that "Man of God" fasting. "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (Dan. 9:3).

THEY ALL BELIEVED

Critics have said this is not possible for one reason or another. Whoever heard of a whole city repenting and God saving them? And yes, there is no historical record of this event, but Jonah's word. But beloved, that fact does not depend on a historical record to be true. Man has often challenged the Word of God and the statements that it makes. But a challenge does not make the statement unreliable or untrustworthy. Man would say, there is no proof of your statement! But then do we have to have such proof. Can not the child of God take God's Word at face value and believe it whether the world does or does not?

For many years the critics argue that Isaiah 20:1 was wrong when it made reference to Sargon the King of Assyria; saying, he never existed. Oh yes, for many centuries the only known reference to Sargon was found in the Bible, and yet, though his memory had been completely wiped out by the history books, that did not make him unreal. But let me ask a question, must we always use the history books of today to confirm a fact or statement made in the Bible? On the other hand, let me ask the question in a different light, has any historical statement that is found in the Word of God ever been taken and disproved? Just the opposite is true, for every time, and that without number have been corroborated, and that in a marvelous way. Jesus said, "The scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Dr. Merrill Unger writes, "Old Testament archaeology has rediscovered whole nations, resurrected important peoples, and in a most astonishing manner filled in historical gaps, adding immeasurable to the knowledge of biblical backgrounds."

But beloved, it does not matter what the critics say. What does the Word of God say? We have already shown from the Word of God that it says, they "believed God." Are you going to argue with that? But one would argue,

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JONAH

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psychology does not know of such a mass conversion. True, but then, we are not talking about psychology, but the power of God's Holy Spirit to save lost souls, whether it be one or an entire city. If Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost could convert 3,000 Jews, many of whom had only cried fifty days before, "Crucify Him!" why should you and I limit the one and only omnipotent God because of some modern unbelief? Oh beloved, this is not the psychology of mere mortal man, but the working power of the Lord of lords, with whom the Word of God tells us nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37); thus, the conversion of an entire city as little as the conversion of a single human being that is dead in his trespasses and sins is not impossible. Are you more interested in what man thinks or says than the Word of God? Here we find that these people believed God's Word and will sit in judgment of the Jew of Jesus' day, and that because the Jew had refused to believe the God of heaven, even when He was with them.

Some have argued that this repentance was not real and sincere, but that is not our job to determine. The Word of God tells us that the Lord of Heaven heard their cry and because of their repentance, saved them from certain doom. It is not our job to argue with God, but to believe what the Word of God has to say. Do you not think that God knew their hearts far better than mortal man? There ought to be no doubt therefore that the faith and contrition of these people were sincere and that they were very serious.

ASSEMBLY

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Second. The usage of our Lord himself compels us to believe that He meant local assembly when He said: "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ used the word *ecclesia*, so far as the record tells us, just 22 times. We will set aside, for the sake of argument, this passage, Matthew 16:18, as doubtful, and look at the 21 other passages, to determine our Lord's usage of the word. Whatever that usage is, must be applied to this passage. In Matthew 18:17, Jesus says: "...tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church..." This is the local assembly. In Revelation 1-3 Christ uses the word *ecclesia* 18 times, e.g., "...the seven churches..."; "Unto the angel of the church at Ephesus..." etc., and in every one of these cases there can be no sort of question that He means the local assembly. It is Christ that says this, because the one who told John to write what is here recorded, says of Himself: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." Again, in Revelation 22:16, we read: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to

testify unto you these things in the churches..." Certainly here *ecclesia* means the local assembly.

Thus in every one of the 21 instances in which Christ uses the word *ecclesia*, there can be no question that He meant the local assembly. The probabilities, therefore, are twenty-one to nothing that He meant local assembly in Matthew 16:18- the passage which, for the sake of the argument, we set aside as doubtful. A probability of twenty-one to nothing is a certainty. Hence, it is certain that Christ meant the local assembly when He said, "...upon this rock I will build my church..."

Third. Christ, in Matthew 16:18, promised to build His church, which certainly was very dear to His heart. He did not promise to build but the one. If He meant anything else than the local assembly, then we have this result, viz: He promised to build His church and then never made the slightest reference to it afterwards; but in speaking on the subject of church twenty-one times, He in every case, referred to something entirely different from what He promised to build. That He should speak twenty-one times about the church He did not promise to build and never make the slightest allusion to the church He did promise to build, is simply incredible. Can there be a reasonable doubt that the church Christ spoke of twenty-one times, and the only one He did speak of, is the church He promised to build?

These are three of our reasons, each one of which, by itself, we think is decisive. We have four others we will not now give. "...a threefold cord is not easily broken."

GRACE

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sponsible.

This concept is apparently foreign to Arminian thought, and Free-will Baptists are Arminian in theology. Our minds are so divorced in concept that I must be cautious about assuming we can conceive of the "same" God. The Arminian seems to have a God who'll accept only people who are capable of mustering up a portion of free-will (natural) faith, and it seems it must be enough to allow him to "accept" Christ as his saviour. I didn't capitalize saviour, in this instance because I'm not certain a saviour that responds to a free-will choice (only) is the Messiah! It has been my understanding that He (Christ) brings those who cannot come.

I have a concept which feels that it is quite true that God does not rejoice in the fate of the wicked, but which also feels He will certainly judge the rebellion of the non-elect with eternal damnation. I bring to mind that Christ wept over Jerusalem and I believe this illustrated compassion for those who are (nevertheless) condemned. I have an assumed understanding of this: I do not attempt to prove it. It is my projection only. I feel that divine judgment was made necessary when Adam and Eve disobeyed in the Garden of Eden. I feel further that God had made man as a free will creature and that it was this fact that determined mankind would become disobedient. I feel human free-will can bring nothing good.

I feel, too, that only God knew a workable solution to saving

men after the original transgression. I understand this can be done only through fear. Proverbs 1:7 informs us that fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and this does reconcile rather nicely with my concept, although I do not say this will prove it. I feel damnation for multitudes is essential to effect God's plan. God is not uncaring. God cares so much that He has devised a method of reaching the free-will creatures who would necessarily be doomed otherwise.

Some wonder, even many of us who should know better, why our life has so much trial. It is because God is entirely sovereign. God has determined a path for each of us. We all (each and every one of us) deserve eternal hell. God owes us no better, you see, No trials we will go through are any worse than an eternal damnation. The more proper question is: "Why do we not suffer worse than we do?" If our suffering precedes salvation, we're none the less well blessed. If it predates damnation, it is no worse than that final destiny in the lake of fire and (as a matter of fact) would be at least some small bit milder. In this latter case, it would compare to a probationary period, for a person on probation does not suffer the same punishment he would during imprisonment although he would be required to behave and would need report according to prescribed rules. Trials during our life times are much the same, for we must also respond to certain rules imposed upon us although we are not undergoing the ultimate punishment.

The Arminian thinking seems to go in an entirely different direction than does mine, for I perceive that God created man with a will comparable to the Divine will. I also conclude that this will was, by the very capabilities it had, bound to rebel; because it was certain to attempt to satisfy its desires as it couldn't avoid a basic greed. This would appear to be the automatic result of any free will creature with ability to reason. Only God could conceive of a plan to cause such a being to be loyal. This is the key, I believe, to understanding the overall plan of God in salvation.

The ultimate test, by my perception, is how far we will trust God. The true sovereign grace person will believe that God is so sovereign and just that His choice over each individual is infinitely superior to the choice and the desires of (even) that very person concerned. Can it be otherwise? If God truly does have infinite control, it must indeed be infinite. Our desires must be under His control and His will. It must be better in all aspects. This cannot be discounted when the eternal destiny of the individual becomes the subject of the matter.

Wait, now! I'm not saying God won't accept a genuine profession. He will! I'm saying He must make the person come to the point of a true profession and He must even cause it! Why? It is because the will of man became so degenerate as a result of the entry of sin (as recorded in Genesis 3) that he cannot make that genuine dedication, therefore God must save him (first) then he will be capable; but this means we're saved before we make a commitment. The commitment is truly only a profession then. We can't win salvation by any act we do, even a profession of faith, but we testify to our redemption: This is what I believe to be true

and consistent. Again, it appears this concept transcends basic Arminian thinking.

This is why my question remains: Do I have the same God an Arminian has? If his trust doesn't allow that God has better judgment, absolute power, and total authority over him and this even to the point of deciding his eternal destiny; can I say we have the same God? I'm not certain I can. I neither question God nor feel man should have more power over his own destiny than God has. I'm too busy being thankful that I'm one of His chosen.

The New Hampshire Declaration of Faith is the traditional historic doctrinal statement for most Regular Baptist organizations of our age. Regular Baptists should be understood to encompass the American Baptist Churches (Northern), the SBC, and many others. This statement of faith has been printed by Judson Press which (I believe) has an affiliation with the American Baptists. It is quite commonly accepted as an illustration of traditional Regular Baptist doctrine. Note that I use Regular Baptist as a term, to distinguish from General (Free-Will) Baptists. Article VII of the declaration declares that we are saved by being regenerated (or born again). It then clarifies this statement in saying this rebirth is effected by the Holy Spirit in a manner above our comprehension. In harmony with this, Article IX says basically the same thing. It affirms election to be God's purpose whereby He "graciously" regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. This is then a reliable view of the position of those who were the traditional Regular Baptists of the past.

Those who are inclined to the Arminian view can hardly tolerate such a perspective. They find it expedient to interject some small portion of human effort into the divine plan of salvation. Some are willing to make it so extremely small as to be merely human "acceptance of Christ." They will (yet) claim salvation is free and will declare it is a gift which we must "accept" to have. The trouble is (however) this does make ultimate salvation depend on a human prerequisite, and to a true Regular Baptist this simply cannot be. This is the basic difference. A sovereign grace person is happy with being saved (totally) by a sovereign God. A free-will person must have some measure of human effort to complete the divine transaction.

Let us consider, right off, that The New Hampshire Declarations are not in General and Free Will Baptist history. They don't look to this affirmation as a precedent for doctrine. I can hardly consider any movement to bring a unification "of Baptists" about, with them in mind. Now, I don't have this problem with Primitive Baptists, although I'm not of their persuasion. Do I have the same God as does an Arminian? I doubt it, if I'm to assume that he totally understands the issue as the condition to my reply.

I rejoice that I've been included although I do not deserve it. Would God have authority over the less trivial matters, while men decide the most significant? Why should God not determine salvation, unless it is too trivial a manner, assuming God does have authority of the major issues? Isn't it self-centered to reserve this option to the human will? I do not resent the

sovereignty of God, as it appears the Arminian must.

The final thing, I'd like all readers to consider, is that sovereign grace is much more positive than the Arminian perspective. Both, according to most of the adherents, believe a genuine dedication (I usually call this a pledge of allegiance to Christ) is the true mark of salvation. The difference is that a Sovereign Gracer will realize that this allegiance is the evidence that he (the person) has salvation. This is much more certain than seeing it as the means. While some who are Arminian in concept will say they do believe that a person cannot (or will not) lose salvation, their belief lacks teeth, being inconsistent with logic. An allegiance can be withdrawn. Our free-will can change as we wish. If God determined our allegiance, our free-will makes no difference in our salvation and it is truly a matter of whether we were God's choice. We all admit that God has foreknowledge. God, with absolute foreknowledge, would hardly accept a person who would later turn against Him, but then why should He wait anyway when (with foreknowledge) He would know who was going to come to Him? If God knew a person would come and knew he would, or wouldn't stay, why would He wait for that person to come before saving Him? Why would God not save the person first? If God acts first, even though based upon the person's foreknowledge, it can be said the person did not bring it about himself and therefore did nothing to deserve salvation. Some do say we are predestined based on foreknown faith, however, I don't believe any of these people will acknowledge that God saves in advance of that "act of faith" which is defined (by them) as accepting Christ as their Saviour. No matter how we shake it out, they simply must insist some human act will initiate salvation.

Ephesians 1:4-5, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

We can find no reason to deviate from the obvious meaning of this passage, and have a great deal of trouble understanding how anyone can refute this without citing other Scripture which could logically place these verses in some other context. To the best of my knowledge, the Arminian cannot do this. He can only say what he feels (within himself) that this passage must mean. This is hardly acceptable and causes many of us to wonder where this person is coming from. Has the Spirit effected him? I cannot answer with certainty, but I simply must have a great deal of doubt.

The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Cortland, Ohio will hold its annual Fellowship meeting Sat., June 22, 1991 beginning at 9:30 a.m. Scheduled speakers are Bro. Ken Boswell, Elder Danny Stepp, Elder Leroy Pack, Elder Mike Channell, and Elder Mark Minney.

The church will supply the noon meal. All are invited. For more information Call Pastor Chester Powell (216) 772-6323, or Bro. Arvel Waddell (216) 856-4945.