

Time and words cannot be recalled.

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MISSIONARY PREMILLINIAL BIBLICAL BAPTISTIC

The Baptist Examiner

Baptist Is Our Middle Name

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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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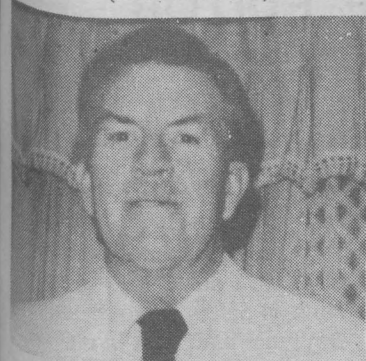
ASHLAND, KENTUCKY, APRIL 11, 1992

WHOLE NUMBER 2630

GOOD MARRIAGES, BAD MARRIAGES, AND REMARRIAGES

by Jack C. Whitt

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." (Prov. 18:22). How



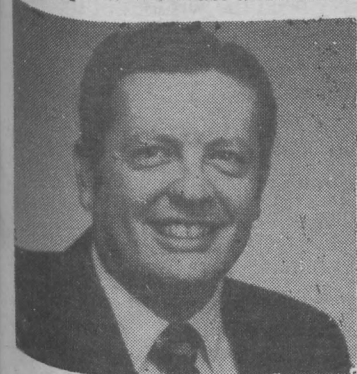
Jack Whitt

wonderful it would be if more people; especially the young, would be instructed from God's Word. No matter what we may venture into in this life, we would do well to first consider what God thinks about it. If one would be more interested in "obtaining favor of the Lord"

LAYING THE AXE TO HERESIES

by John M. Alber

Introduction. In our last two studies, we considered laying an axe to the foolish doctrines of men: the will of man and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We must understand



John Alber

that the doctrines of men are never in agreement with the doctrine of God. God's doctrine is established in His Word; the Word tells us everything that we need to know about God.

The doctrines of men say, "Whosoever will may come." They would use such verses as Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." We do not say that God does not give an invitation to sinners; for the Scriptures

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rather than favor of someone or even oftentimes our own selfish reasons, we would save ourselves much grief and heartache. But alas, man, uninspired of God will not seek God. He will play the fool and go headlong onto a path that leads to a dead-end.

Brother Joe Wilson has said if he were king of the world, he would make it mandatory that the book of Proverbs be taught in all schools and students would not receive a diploma until they had passed a test given from this book. I agree with him and if he ever runs for king of the world, he's got my vote.

Nowhere is it more evident today that man does not seek favor of God than in marriage. When one out of two marriages end up in the divorce court there is something very much lacking in decisions made first of all to unite together in marriage and secondly, what it takes to live

(Continued on Page 3, Col. 5)

THE SBC & ETERNAL SECURITY

by Ray Waugh

Part II

Assurance For Paul

We find a confirming word concerning this truth wondrously



Ray Waugh, Sr.

expressed. The Apostle Paul who dictated these words to Tertius, was under the inspiration of our great God. Nowhere in all of human literature has any man ever so mingled the past with the present or the present with the future. Never before has that which

(Continued on Page 8, Col. 4)

THE HEART OF A BAPTIST

by Bill Farmer

As a watcher of human events in these last days, one of the saddest deteriorations I have seen is the decline among Baptists, as to their doctrine, their name, their personal holiness, their preaching, and their lack of knowledge.

The name "Baptist" is a beautiful name. I agree...it is not as beautiful as the name "Jesus" or "the Lord Jesus Christ"...this name is the sweetest of all names, but the name "Baptist" is still a beautiful name, a clean name. The Baptist name, for

years has stood for solid doctrine; doctrine that was more than "Bible-based," but the Bible itself. We must pause to point out that mainstream "Baptists" have little use for such doctrine, and these have sewn lace to their shorts and painted yellow stripes on their backs and curled up in their denominational cocoons (where they should be). Congregations desiring to have their "itching ears" scratched would just as soon have an abnormal, crooked, immoral, lily-livered preacher than one that preaches

against sin. Someone said, "Some preachers are sent and some just went."

The Baptist name implies a distinct history unlike any other. Baptist was a God given name to John and later to the original New Testament churches. It is a name belonging to martyrs, persecuted novationists, Waldensians, Paulicians, Donatists, and Anabaptists. This knowledge would cause, some say, pride to form...No! This

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The Baptist Examiner Pulpit

A Sermon by Pastor Joseph M. Wilson

A BIBLE STUDY ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND RE-MARRIAGE

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

The following Scriptures should be studied for a full and clear understanding of this important subject. Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12;

Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16,27,28,39; 1 Timothy 3:2,12; Titus 1:6. These Scriptures will fully sustain the position set forth in this message.

In the early years of the Ashland, Kentucky, (Calvary Baptist Church) conferences, there was a young preacher in attendance who took a very decided stand against the possibility of Scriptural divorce and remarriage. I received his paper in which he set forth

his views on this subject. Then, one day, his wife left him and their children. Shortly after this, I received a copy of his paper, and he was setting forth reasons why one could remarry. I am glad that he came to see the truth on this subject, but it will be hard for him to convince others that he did not just take his present position because of his personal

(Continued on Page 2, Col. 1)

A CHARACTER STUDY OF KING SAUL

by James F. Boris

There is no more gloomy and tragic figure in all of Israel's history than that nation's first king, Saul. In many ways, Saul is reminiscent of Shakespeare's



James F. Boris

Macbeth. Herbert Lockyer points out that "...like Macbeth, Saul's career opened with a splendid victory and like him falls under hellish influences, and like him progresses through jealous fears, despair and murder." This is the essence of tragedy - a glorious beginning culminating in a ruinous end. The Old Testament book of First Samuel records the tragedy of King Saul, both his early years of promise and his later decline. By studying the events of Saul's life, it is possible to compile a character profile of Israel's first monarch.

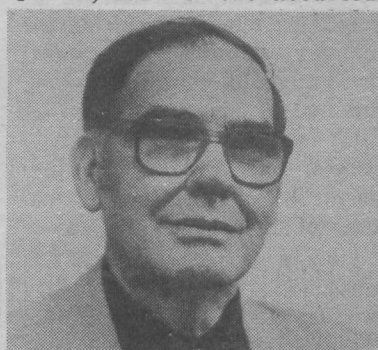
The following is such a character profile. Included are not (Continued on Page 11, Col. 2)

STUDIES IN JOSHUA

by C.T. Everman

7:1-18

"BUT the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accused thing, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed



C. T. Everman

thing; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel" (Josh. 7:1).

Chapter 6 ended with the words, "So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country". Israel, by faith, had won a great victory. They had faithfully followed the commands of the Lord, as a result the Lord had opened up the way across Jordan. He laid down the walls of Jericho. He caused the hearts of the men in the city to "melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man" (2:11). The wall fell down flat, Israel's army marched into the city and took it with the

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JOSEPH M. WILSON, EDITOR
Office Ph. 606-325-2012
Home Ph. 606-329-1758

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BIBLE

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situation. This is most emphatically not the case with me, and I would deeply resent anyone so accusing me. And I have been accused in this of adopting "situation ethics", and of holding this position because of my own personal situation. Such accusers will answer to God for their false accusations. This is one thing upon which I have never changed in all my ministry. I held this position and performed the wedding ceremony for two couples where divorce was involved, and helped ordain one divorced and remarried man into the ministry - before I ever dreamed that I might have problems along this line. I take the position set forth in this message because I believe - yea, I know - that it is taught in Scripture, and not because of any personal reasons.

I would ask every reader of this message, and especially every preacher, to give close attention, careful study, and prayerful consideration to what I say therein. This is a most important subject. It is especially important that preachers know and teach the truth on this subject. It is almost without doubt that they will have to deal with this matter in their ministry. Preachers may face it in the lives of loved ones. They will surely face it in the lives of some to whom they will minister. They will face it as it relates to the preachers with whom they fellowship, use in their services, and support in missionary work I do most earnestly entreat for a fair and

careful hearing on this matter. Preacher, you will face this issue. You will help or hurt others by the attitude you take and the counsel you give on this subject. You will answer to the Lord if you hurt others needlessly by your wrong attitude and counsel.

Now there are some super-sweet, super-humble, super-holy preachers who take a strong stand against a divorced and remarried preacher. One of them told me he would never let a divorced preacher in his pulpit. I reminded



Joe Wilson

him that he did not mind letting all kinds of heretics in his pulpit. I know that he did not want me in his pulpit. But I did not think that it was really my divorce. I think it was my strong preaching of doctrinal truth. Brethren, I have been stabbed in the back more by these super-sweet, humble, and holy people than any other kind. I even get suspicious of people who are sooo sweet and sooo humble and sooo holy - I mean in their outward show of such. Watch out for people like this. They will hug you and kiss you and betray you at the same time. Joab was not the only person to take one aside, speak quietly to him, and then smite him under the fifth rib (II Samuel 3:2). I have observed that it is not really the divorce men object to. It is the strong doctrines that some men forcibly proclaim and consistently practice.

When I left the church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina to go to Tulsa, I told the people that many people in Winston-Salem had said that they objected to Grace Baptist Church because of the attitude of Joseph M. Wilson; because of the language he used and because of his divorce. I told the church that they would now learn that this was not true, but that these folk objected to the strong doctrines I preached and the boldness and frequency with which I preached them. This has proven to be the truth.

1. Marriage ought to be one woman and one man for as long as they both shall live. This is clearly taught in Scripture and no one of us will deny this. "...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by law to her husband so long as he liveth..." (Rom. 7:2).

Now this is how marriage ought to be, and all of God's people should endeavor to see that marriage is set forth and encouraged as a life-long matter. But, my brethren, things are not always what they ought to be, and we must know what God teaches in such situations. I do most solemnly affirm that where a marriage is not for life, that sin is always involved on the part of one or both parties.

Since marriage should be for life, and since the marriage bond can only be dissolved prior to death by sin and disobedience to

God; one should give much thought, and if saved, much prayer to the matter of marriage. Wrong marriages are the major causes of divorce. I urge you to be most sure and certain that God is leading in your marriage. Let it be clearly understood, that in this message, I am not advocating divorce or seeking to justify or to increase the divorce rate. As much as any man, I insist that marriage should be between one woman and one man as long as they both shall live. But I do want to know and teach what God says about the possibility of Scriptural divorce and remarriage.

2. Are there any grounds for a Scriptural divorce? Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 are very clear on this point. They both declare clearly, and beyond honest controversy, that fornication is a ground for Scriptural divorce. "...saving for the cause of fornication..." in 5:32, and "...except it be for fornication..." in 19:9 make this very plain. Few would care to dispute the clearly taught truth that fornication gives grounds for a Bible divorce. The question may be asked as to what constitutes fornication. Some will run to an English dictionary, and say that fornication is sex between single people. Then they take the position that if you marry a person believing such to be sexually pure at that time, then learn that such a one had sex before marriage, then you can get a divorce. How utterly absurd and stupid is such a position! Webster's dictionary says of fornication: "in the Bible, any unlawful sexual intercourse including adultery." Funk & Wagnall's says about fornication: "In Scriptural use, adultery, incest, prostitution." The word "fornication" is used in I Corinthians 5:1 when certainly one of the parties was married.

Jude verse 7 refers to the sodomy of Sodom and Gomorrah as fornication. The Greek word which is translated "fornication" is used to refer to harlots. Surely, no one would say they are all harlots single, and only sin with single men. This Greek word is used for prostitution, and for a house of prostitution in Greek usage. The Scriptural usage of "fornication" and adultery gives us the following distinction. Fornication is the word used for sex sins of all sorts including incest, adultery, homosexuality, and so on. Adultery is the word used for the one sex sin of unlawful sex between married persons not married to one another. So, sex sin on the part of one party to a marriage is a ground for a Scriptural divorce.

3. Is there any other ground for a Scriptural divorce. "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases" (I Cor. 7:15). Here we learn that causeless, determined, continued desertion on the part of one party to a marriage breaks the marriage bond and is a ground for a Scriptural divorce. The words "not under bondage" make this very clear and are susceptible to no other interpretation. Marriage is a bond. It should last for life. But if one party deserts the other, then the deserted partner is no longer bound by this bond.

Marriage is a bond which gives certain privileges and involves certain responsibilities. When a party deserts the other, they rob them of the privileges of mar-

riage, they fail to fulfill the responsibilities of marriage, and God declares that the marriage bond is broken. It might be asked how this can be reconciled with the "except" of Matthew 19:9. Jesus gave only one ground for divorce. Paul adds another in I Corinthians 7:15. But really, it is not another. When a person just will not live with their married partner, it is almost without exception the case that there is sex sin with another taking place. Adultery has taken place, is taking place, or soon will take place. But since this would often be hard to prove about the deserter, God sets forth the act of desertion as a ground for divorce.

4. Can a Scripturally divorced person Scripturally remarry? "...Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery..." (Matt. 19:9). It is utterly stupid and ignorant be-

yond excuse to argue that a person can have a Bible divorce, but cannot remarry. If you can read English - if you can add 2 and 2 and get 4; you should be able to see that a Bible divorce entitles to a Bible remarriage. The word "divorce" in Greek and in English means "to break the bond." The Greek word means "to loose away from," "to set free." Now there are men so thoughtless on this subject as to say - one is set free from the bonds of marriage with a Scriptural divorce - but he cannot remarry. What "breaking of a bond," or what "freedom" is this, my brother? I well nigh lose patience with one who is so dull and dense in understanding as this. And frankly, I have completely lost patience with preachers who will not (I do not say cannot) see the truth on this subject as set forth in this message. The Bible is so very plain

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FROM THE EDITOR

"But speaking the truth in love..." (Eph.4:15). What searching Scripture is this!

How it can sometimes condemn some of our speaking and writing would be a great thing for all concerned (speaker, the one spoken of, and the one spoken to) and to the glory of God if we would always try to practice this Scripture. Let us look at it somewhat.

I often say that sometimes you don't have to tell the truth. You should never tell a lie. If you speak on a matter, you should always tell the truth. But still, there are times when you don't have to tell the truth. I was carrying mail one day in Winston-Salem. A young boy saw me coming and said to his mother, "Boy, that mail man is fat." Well, he told the truth; but he did not have to tell it. He could have just kept his mouth shut. Many times, we would be better off if we just kept our mouths shut and did not say anything. If you are going to say anything, be sure you tell the truth; but sometimes just keep quiet.

Somewhere, I picked up the following about telling things. We should ask three questions before telling anything: 1. Is it true? 2. Is it necessary to tell it? 3. It is kind to tell it? I might add the following: Is it glorifying to God to tell it? I might add another: Would I want someone to tell the same thing on me? Wow, it is getting rough, isn't it? Anyway, let us apply these things to what we say; and let us always be sure to tell the truth.

My text adds a very important point to this matter of speaking the truth. We are to do it in love. Might I say that sometimes love will keep us from speaking the truth - we will just be quiet. The old folk used to say (and they said it best), "If you can't say something good about a person, don't say anything." Now it is really getting rough. It may not totally go along with the old folk's saying (though it has much truth), but I will say that my text teaches that if you can't say it with and in love, don't say it. So many times what we say is promoted by anger, vindictiveness, etc., and not by love.

However, there are times when we should speak when many will accuse us of not speaking in love. We must be true to God. Note that in my text, "truth" before "love." Many will speak the truth without love. On the other hand, many will let a mistaken notion about love keep them from speaking the truth. We really need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to enable us to properly obey the Scripture referred to in this editorial.

Joseph spoke the truth about his brethren (Gen.37:2). Many would accuse him of tattling or of not speaking in love, but I am sure that he spoke in love. In such a case there could be conflicting emotions: love for his brethren, love for his father, and love for right. Sometimes there is a conflict between different "loves," and we need divine wisdom in order to rightly settle that conflict.

Love does not mean that we will never rebuke sin. It does not mean that we will never come down hard on false doctrines and unscriptural practices. Often, real love means that we will do these things. I don't know who coined the expression "tough love," but it is a very good one. If love does not sometimes get tough, it degenerates into a sickly and foolish sentimentality that is the furthestest thing from real love. Love for a threatened child could cause one to come down hard on a threatening rattle snake. Love for a sick child could cause us to subject that one to the surgeon's knife. So, we must sometimes use common sense in order to act in true love. More often, we will need wisdom from above to do such.

Oh, I examine myself by this Scripture. I find that I need such examination. I find that it seems to be easier for me to speak the truth than it is to speak it in love. Oh, I pray that I will seek more and more to order my speaking, my preaching, and my writing by this Scripture. I pray that the Holy Spirit will help me in this.

In doing this, as I have already intimated, we must choose between "loves." We must learn to put our "loves" in proper priority. There is love to God, love for His Word, love for His work, love for the church, love for the unsaved, love for our loved ones. Sometimes these will conflict. One will urge us to speak the truth, while the other will urge silence. The more I meditate on this verse, the more I realize that I need divine wisdom and divine strength to obey it. It is not as simple and uncomplicated as it first seemed to be. Still, I would say that obedience to it is possible, is demanded, and will be well rewarded. Let me seek to apply this test to all I say and write - God help me to do so.

Many grumble because roses have thorns instead of being thankful that thorns have roses.

BIBLE

(Continued from Page 2)

and clear that it is absolutely without excuse for a preacher to be in error on this subject. I challenge you, my brother, to use the common sense God gave you. How on earth can one have the marriage bond broken, be set free from that bond, and yet cannot marry again? Do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible? Well, quit rebelling against God's inspired Word in this matter. The words "divorce" and "not under bondage" are inspired of God. You are in direct rebellion against God when you deny the plain and the only possible meaning of these words. Come on now. Face the facts. God gives a divorce. God sets free. Yet some of you, in your hard-headed ignorance, teach that a man is still bound by that marriage and cannot marry again. Brother, does death break the marriage bond? Can one then remarry? Well, God says that fornication and desertion break the bond. Yet you say that such cannot remarry. Is this the freedom God gives? Free, yet still held fast by the bond? How can such things be?

Someone will say that Jesus gave the right to divorce, but not to remarry. Read Matthew 19:9 again. Did not Jesus say "and marry another"? Did not Jesus give in the verse here the right to put a wife away and to marry another on the ground of fornication? Can't you read? It is spelled out in this verse as clearly as it could possibly be. The person who reads Matthew 19:9 and says that one can put away his wife, but cannot marry another is unable to read, unable to understand the truth of the Bible, or just determined to rebel against the clear teaching of the Bible. Brother, I warn you against your refusal to receive what is so clearly written in God's Word.

Someone will then say that Mark 10:11; Luke 16:8; and Romans 7:2 do not give the right to remarry. It is true that this is not mentioned in these verses. It is also true that the right to divorce is not mentioned in these Scriptures. Search and see. Yet men will admit that Matthew 19:9 gives the right to divorce when these other verses do not. But they refuse to see that Matthew 19:9 also gives the right to remarry. Furthermore, when we study a subject in the Bible, we must use the rule of harmony in our understanding thereof. If one denies the right to remarry, he cannot possibly harmonize Matthew 19:9 and Luke 16:18. Try it and see. Let me know how you come out. But the harmonizing of these Scriptures teach us that the general rule is that marriage is for life, but that there are two exceptions to this rule. Now, by this interpretation, I believe both verses. But if you say that one cannot remarry, you do not believe Matthew 19:9. Show me how you can.

5. Can a man who is divorced and remarried hold the office of pastor or deacon? Or can he even be a preacher? "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober..." "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife..." (1 Tim. 3:2,12). "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children..."

(Titus 1:6). These verses are perverted and abused, and then used to do great harm to some of God's called men. One man taught that a person could have a Scriptural divorce and could Scripturally remarry, but went on to say that it might be best for him to stay in the background in the church, and not to hold office, or do much work in the church. Away with such rubbish! If they have a God-given right to divorce and remarriage, they have a God-given right, yea, a God-given command, to serve the Lord in His church. Will we rob men of what God gave them and encourage them to disobey the Lord? One might say that folk would look down on the church for using divorced persons. Well, let preachers learn and teach the truth on this subject and that would be taken care of. And let the churches obey the Bible in this matter. It is no honor to a pastor and church that they take an unscriptural stand on this matter. It is a dishonor to them. They are rebelling against their Lord and His Word.

But men will say that the pastor and deacons are to be the husband of one wife. Well, so what! Tell me if it is all right for the rest of the members to have two or a dozen wives. There is no double standard in the Bible as to the life of the pastor or the deacon and the lives of other members of the church. There are not some things that the pastor and deacon should not do - but it is all right for other members to do them. Show me differently if you can. The pastor ought not to have two wives. Neither should any other man in the church. One of these hard-headed, ignorant preachers recently told me that a church member who had a Scriptural divorce and was remarried only had one wife, but went on to say that a pastor who had a Scriptural divorce and was remarried had two wives. Can you believe such hard-headed stupidity just to hold on to a pre-conceived position?

Furthermore, if we are going to believe the Bible instead of the traditions of men; if a man has a Scriptural divorce from a woman, she is no longer his wife. Now chew on that a spell. Tell me how God gives a man a right to put away his wife, but some ignorant preacher says she is still his wife. If one has a Scriptural divorce and marries again, he is the husband of one - and only one - wife.

It is strange how men make so much of this one thing and ignore others. Titus 1:6 says an elder should have faithful children. Will these men who fight divorced preachers say that a man cannot be an elder unless his children are saved? Why won't they? Titus 1:6 says, "The husband of one wife, having faithful children." Who gave you the right to tear this verse apart, and put men out of the ministry who do not meet your mis-interpretation of one part of it, but you never open your big mouth about the other part? Come on now. Let's do some studying. Let's be consistent. Can a man preach if he is not married? Can he preach if his wife is dead, and he has not remarried? Can he preach if he does not have children? Can he preach if his children are not saved? You will say yes, yes, yes. Then tell me how it is, and why it is that you pick out one thing, raise the very devil about

that, and ignore the rest of the same verse. A man can have been a murderer, a criminal of any sort, yet he can become a preacher. But if he is ever married and divorced and remarried, he can never be a preacher. What god is this you serve? This god that forgives every sin of deepest hue, and allows men to go on and serve him, but this one sin (you call it sin, but God does not) God never forgives and forgets it to the point He does other sins.

A man in Winston-Salem murdered his wife and is now in prison. He can get out, be saved and be a preacher. But if he had divorced her instead of murdering her, then he could never be a preacher. Do you - can you believe such absurd rubbish as this?

Men have been greatly hurt by preachers not knowing what they were talking about in this matter. Men and women, who have the God-given right to seek another companion, and have a good home, and a happy, God-honoring home, have had this stolen from them by some ignorant and hard-headed preacher. Look out, my brother, lest God bring your sin against others upon your own head or the head of your loved ones. God says it is not good for man to be alone, and this applies as much to the person with the God-given right to remarry, as it does to those not yet married.

How many preachers have suffered over this. Many of God's called preachers have been maligned, and fought against over this. God has called them. God has used them. Yet ignorant, hard-headed preachers, who will not study, and will not admit their error, have sought to keep these men from the work to which God has called them. I add that the preacher who does not see this subject as set forth in this message has not yet studied to the point of coming to the truth on the subject. I praise God that our sovereign God is greater in power than these ignorant preachers. He has opened doors, sent His men through those doors, blessed their efforts in spite of all the combined efforts of ignorant preachers. Oh, my brother, beware, lest you be found fighting against God. I beg you, do not join with the devil in trying to close doors for God-called men. Do not seek to hurt the influence of God-called men. But I tell you this, that your ignorance will not defeat the purposes of a sovereign God. I know preachers who are preaching, being blessed of God, being used by God, in spite of the fact that some preachers have tried with all their might to defeat this. Praise God! Praise God! Preacher, please study this matter. The truth is very clear. Only your refusal to honestly face the issue and honestly study the matter, and to admit your errors will keep you from seeing the truth on this subject. Please do not seek to rob men and women of a God-given privilege. Please do not fight against God-called men, and seek to hurt their ministry. It is a very serious matter. The Bible is very clear. You will answer to God for this part of your ministry. Be sure that it is in harmony with God's Word.

6. Can the guilty party ever remarry? I realize that serious questions could be raised at this point, yet I feel that the Bible is clear as to this also. The guilty party will have to answer to God for his sin, unless repented of and

forgiven. But still the marriage bond is broken. A Scriptural divorce is a Scriptural breaking of the marriage bond. And this bond is as much broken for one party as for the other. How could it be otherwise? It seems clear to me that the guilty party can also remarry.

Shall this one sin be held against a person for life? Are all sins forgiven except this? Let the guilty party repent. Let him believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. If he was saved and yet guilty of this sin, let him confess his sin and receive God's wonderful forgiveness. Then let him go forward in living for and serving God. Let him have another marriage and seek to make it what God would have it to be. Just as anyone might get right with God as to any sin, let this one do likewise. Then praise God for His mercy and grace, and go on, dear brother or sister, and serve God in His church.

Surely no one would advocate the breaking up of a second marriage, or seek to return to the first marriage. How absurd that would be and what problems such would cause. If you are the innocent party - or if you are the guilty, but repentant party - go on and have a happy marriage and a God-glorifying home.

Recently I was refused the privilege of sitting on an ordination council because of my divorce. I was told that a divorced man does not have the right to preach. Recently some invited preachers refused to sit on a council in our church because we were ordaining a man who was married to a divorced woman. Well brethren, I have an answer to this problem. Tell me what you think of it. If a man is married, and is having trouble with his wife - say she is being unfaithful - what shall he do? Well, why not just kill the wife. Then later on he can be a preacher and sit on councils and preach in conferences, etc. But let him not divorce her, for that would ruin him for life. Or how about this. A young man thinks he is in love with a woman, but does not know for sure that they will be able to make it in marriage. Well, just let him shack up with her and not get married. Then later, he can leave her and marry someone else. Then he will be able maybe someday to be a preacher. But woe to him if he married the first woman. What do you preachers think of this? Oh, you say that is awful. Yes it is, but it does fit in with what you preach, doesn't it?

Now, preacher, a word with you please. You say a person can never remarry even with a Scriptural divorce. You say that such are living in adultery. Then, be consistent and put them out of your churches. Not just out of office, but out of the church itself, for if they are living in adultery, they should not be members of the Lord's churches. But maybe you are more interested in numbers in your church and the money these give than in being consistent with your so-called convictions. Preacher brother, you tell me that you have convictions on the subject. If your convictions are not based on the Word of God, they are of no worth at all. I have no more sympathy with the preacher conviction that he cannot help ordain a divorced man than I do with the Catholic's conviction that he should go to mass. I beg every preacher read-

ing this to study the matter thoroughly and carefully and prayerfully. You will face this matter. You will be a hurt or a help to others in this matter. So please receive the truth on this matter and follow it. May God bless you all. Comments welcomed, even challenged. •

GOOD

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compatible in a marriage once entered into. In a world where divorce is big business, it is refreshing to hear about the aged man and wife who have shared their lives for fifty, sixty, or seventy years. There are many such folks left in our country. Yet one cannot but wonder if such long marriages as these will fade away and be a thing of the past. I hope not.

Proverbs speaks of a marriage as a good thing. This Bible view of marriage, however, is much different from that of the worldly view. It is a narrow view. A marriage is truly a good thing when the man and wife have found favor of the Lord. Thus the marriage has a good foundation and is blessed of the Lord. This is the only good assurance of a successful and happy marriage.

What is it that causes the enormous amount of marriages to fail? I do not claim to be a marriage counselor, but it doesn't take a professional to see through the more common problems in marital relationships of our day. One of the more common problems, I believe, is often differences of opinions between man and wife that existed during courtship. Those differences could not be settled but instead of postponing marriage until they were, they went ahead, hoping that the problem would simply disappear. Too often, however, the problem grows and becomes more difficult to deal with after marriage. Of course the most common root source of all marital problems lies in the fact that one or both partners is unwilling to give up their rights. It comes down to the old "I, me, mine, and myself" syndrome. This attitude will doom a marriage before it gets started. If Brother Wilson ever does become king of the world, I will suggest he make another law mandatory: that all young prospective brides and grooms listen to a lecture conducted by a couple who have been married for seventy years. Too often young people entering into marriage have no inkling of their responsibility to one another. Sometimes it is the blame of both, but other times it is one or the other who is mainly responsible for disharmony in the home. It is often times (and I have seen this) that the woman thinks her husband is a butler and is waiting only to serve her demands (or answer the door). On the other hand, many men think of their wives only as one who is to keep their clothes clean, prepare their meals, take care of the kids, and not to fuss at him when he goes out with the boys for a night on the town. In both of these cases, selfishness is the culprit. Both of these cases describe many marriages that have

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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

Should a Christian be a Conscientious Objector when our country is trying to protect, defend, or liberate people from an evil aggressor?

JOHN
PRUITT

Rt. 1 Box 452B
Williamson, GA
30292
PASTOR:
West Griffin
Baptist Church
Griffin, GA



I realize that this is a very troubling issue for many folks. In past years and in recent times, it has not only been a moral question, but a political one as well. There are some who will take a political position, but ignore the moral side. There are others who look at the matter from a moral standpoint. Also, in many cases, prejudices enter in.

We must also consider that there are many good arguments on both the political and moral side. While some may sight the fact that the children of Israel were a warring people, others may argue that the New Testament shows no evidence of early Christians being involved in civil warfare.

Another factor to consider is motive. There may be different motives behind an objection to participate in war. Some may say that all war is evil and no one should ever fight. That would be an excellent idea if everyone in the world agreed with you. The trouble is, many do not agree. Some believe in taking what they want, and stepping on anyone who gets in their way. Therefore, it becomes necessary to defend yourself against the aggressor. Then there are those who believe that it would be a gross sin to kill a brother or sister in Christ who might be fighting on the other side. Still others feel that in order to achieve peace, you must show yourself peaceful by throwing down all your weapons before your enemy. And when the enemy sees that you are not going to fight, he will somehow want to be peaceful also. A beautiful scenario, but it simply is not reality. Let the Christian lay down his spiritual weapons before old Satan and see what happens. Notwithstanding, either morality, prejudice, or politics are the three basic factors which determine a person's position on the issue.

What should determine the issue for the child of God? I do not wish to be misunderstood here, but I do not think that any of the above should be the deciding factor for the believer. For example, if I am called upon by my government to go to war, I am ready and willing to obey the law and fight for my country. Fortunately I love the country in which I live. As a matter of fact,

I believe that America is the greatest country on earth. But what if I lived in a country in which I did not agree with the politics or the form of government of that country. Would I be justified in objecting to participate in a war against say, the United States? I say, it makes no difference what country you may be a citizen of. I say that the believer's position cannot be based on either morality, (that is, according to the so-called peace advocates), prejudice, or politics, but on thus saith the Lord. Therefore, the matter of "objection" cannot be based on the reason for which one is called to war, unless in doing so one is forced to compromise the gospel and deny the Lord Jesus Christ. I will give you a list of Scripture that you should study, and pray about. Romans 13:1; I Timothy 2:2,3; Titus 3:1; and I Peter 2:13,14. Please study these within their context before deciding whether I am right or wrong. What are these Scriptures telling us? They are telling the believer that he or she is under the authority of the civil government; that the powers that be have been ordered of God. They are telling us that civil disobedience is not proper for the Christian. If we are to be persecuted, let it be for righteousness sake. Let it be for the gospel of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God.

My answer to the question is that God's people cannot be conscientious objectors according to the Word of God unless it is directly in defense of the cause of Christ. The higher powers of world government that God's people serve must answer to the judge of all men at the Great White Throne as to the right or wrong of war. Thank you for your question.

JOHN LENEGAR
126 N.
Washington St.
No. 5

Delaware, OH
43015

PASTOR:
Walnut Creek
Missionary Baptist
Church
Delaware, OH.



Please read Romans 13:1-7. This portion of Scripture speaks of the authority of government and our duty to it as its citizens. Let us remember as well, that we are to render to Caesar the things due Caesar and to God the things that are God's.

A brief study of Christianity from its beginning until the present will show that there have been, and are, extremes practised as to this question. I cannot settle the question, but I can give you my opinion.

It is my firm belief that the

example of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, is that there are times when war is necessary, and it is a part of life on this planet and will not stop until Christ returns and puts an end to it. I am not saying that all war is righteous, or just, but there have been times when God sent His people in the form of an army to do His will. In some instances the army did not have to physically fight, but they were there ready to do so. The battle, as always, was the Lord's battle. Jehoshaphat and Joshua are examples of that. God's people have fought "just" wars, not of aggression, but of defence, of liberation and of protection. War is of the devil, while the United States and other "Christian" nation are for peace. Sometimes at the request of the weak for one, or all of the three reasons that I just mentioned, war has been waged. Our country has been kept free and its freedoms of religion and all the other freedoms have been preserved, because its patriotic citizens, including Christians, have been willing to assume their responsibility that goes along with freedom which is defending and preserving it.

I believe that Christians who are citizens of this country should be willing to assume their duty of defending it and helping others (thereby ourselves) to know freedom from aggression. I believe in a civic responsibility, as well as a spiritual responsibility. If we become the aggressors, or fight to force Christianity, or our personal beliefs, then that is another situation.

The Bible tells us to submit ourselves to the duties of a citizen (I Peter 2:13,14), Hebrews 11:32,33 mention some of God's warriors and their accomplishments. Unfortunately, there are some who claim to be conscientious objectors for dubious reasons. I'm a citizen of heaven, but also a citizen of the greatest free nation on earth. I believe that God tells me I have civic duties to it that are in harmony with His Word. I believe that includes serving it in war, as well as peace so long as God's principles concerning war are not violated.

CLYDE T.
EVERMAN
108 Burdsall Ave.
Ft. Mitchell, Ky
41017
DEACON
Calvary
Baptist Church
Ashland, KY



"LET every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, re-

sisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:1, 2).

I must confess that, being a navy veteran of World War II, my answer to this question may be some what biased, but I believe I can show that there is no Scriptural basis for a Christian being a conscientious objector.

In Romans 13:1-8 the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is telling us it is our duty to obey our government. This includes all which the government demands of us, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (v. 7). As the authority which a government has is given by God, to resist that authority is to resist God, and one can expect judgment not only from his government but from God. (v. 2). These verses apply to every demand made by the government. This includes military service, if the government so demands.

When Joshua was preparing to cross Jordan into the promised land, he conscripted the men of the two and one-half tribes, who were to get their land on the other side of Jordan, to lead the way, armed and prepared for war (Josh. 4:12, 13). What was to be done with one who said, "I do not believe in fighting, I am a conscientious objector?" Was he to be excused from the armed forces who were going into the land to help their brethren to gain possession of the land which God had given them? It is said concerning such a one, "Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death" (Josh. 1:18). I doubt that Joshua had to deal with very many "Conscientious Objectors." The one who is a conscientious objector should be thankful that he is living under the American government instead of the Israelite government of Joshua's day.

GOOD

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failed.

I frankly feel that many of the marriages today are ill-conceived. (To be more accurate about fifty percent of them). Many of today's marriages are simply based on convenience to the physical need or financial and material gain. It will last till the glamour grows dim or the money's all gone. Most of such marriages will not stand the struggle of hard times.

It would be well to define what a marriage really is or at least what it ought to be. It is much more than dwelling together under one roof. A house does not make a home. It is what goes on inside that really counts. A really good marriage will have a God-fearing man as the head of the home who loves, respects and takes care of his wife, and a God-fearing woman who loves it that way. A good marriage just doesn't happen by accident. It is something that two people working together, in harmony make it that way. I do not say that a marriage will be free from difficult times, that conflicts will

not arise between man and wife even in the more ideal marital environment. But I am saying that the decision in choosing a mate to share your life with is the biggest decision one will ever make (apart from choosing to live for God). Therefore it should be made only after much thought as to whether a commitment can be made and a conforming to certain rules of any marriage that would make it a success. Love, of course, for the person is a must. An unselfish attitude and a desire to make your spouse feel happy and at ease around you is another must.

I see five things that would greatly improve the marriage-divorce ratio today: (1) that more serious thought be given to the question: "Am I ready for marriage, and willing to be unselfish in wanting to make the man or woman whom I have chosen happy even if I must sacrifice some of my own desires?" (2) When difficulties arise (after marriage) a willingness to communicate about the matter with a sincere desire to settle it as quickly as possible; (3) That either one be willing to admit their liability for blame; (4) That sincere admittance for liability be worthy of forgiveness; (5) That the old-fashioned "kiss and makeup" is still a good habit that has proved its worth.

When we talk about blessings of a good marriage, we naturally think of the Christian marriage as it should be in accordance with God's divine will and purpose. But, we must realize there are those, though unsaved, who have a good marriage. They have respect for each other; not love for each other only; but respect which is a different feeling altogether. Unfortunately, however for those who are unsaved their happiness in marriage will not gain them eternal happiness in heaven. Yes, good people with good marriages are sinners who need to be saved like everyone else.

Now we must turn our attention toward the sad but true fact that divorce does happen. While I believe every effort should be made to maintain a marriage, I do not believe that divorce is absolutely never to take place. Even as I write this I am aware of the very controversial nature of this statement. I know there are those who take issue with what I am about to say further on this subject. I know there are pastors and churches who disagree with me on this issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Most who know me, know that I am personally involved in this matter. Some may say that I am only trying to justify my own self. But let that be as it may, I stand to answer to God and Him only as to my deeds. I have long since settled the matter in my heart and with God, and can truthfully say that reproach by some shown to me bears no weight upon me.

Let me say or reiterate my belief that every effort should be made to keep a marriage together. There are far too many divorces that could and should be prevented. Divorce results because of some of the things I have mentioned already. Divorce is the product of a sinful nature manifesting a failure on the part of one or both (but not always on the part of both mates). Murder, rape, thievery, alcohol and drugs

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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

Could it ever be all right for a person to be romantically involved with a person who was separated from his/her mate, but not yet divorced?

DAVID S. WEST
2829 South
Live Oak Drive
Moncks
Corner, SC
29461
PASTOR:
Landmark
Missionary
Baptist Church
N. Charleston, SC.



romantically involved with the other person even though there has not been a divorce from the one to which they are married.

If we look at this situation from the accepted, current lifestyles in our country, the majority of people would probably say that there is nothing wrong with such a situation. The married one simply needs to get a divorce and continue on with the current relationship. There are also some that feel it would not even be necessary to obtain a divorce, just continue on as they are. These are the views of secular humanism. **"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes"** (Judges 21:25).

If we look at this situation from a Biblical point of view, then it can never be all right for two people to be romantically involved where one, or both of them are separated, but not divorced from their marriage partners. If a divorce is inevitable, then it must be settled before the involvement begins. For this involvement to continue without benefit of a settlement is to cause both people to constantly commit sin. That sin is first of all against God and His law, and if they are members of the church, they have sinned against it. The marriage partner has also been wronged. Much suffering and many problems arise from a situation of this type.

DAN PHILLIPS
865 Bethel Drive
Bristol, TN.
37620

PASTOR:
New Testament
Baptist Church
Bristol, TN



Separation from one's mate does not give them a right to be romantically involved with anyone else. Separation is not divorce, and the marriage bond has not been broken, therefore the separated persons are still married.

Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says, "Divorce or Divorcement means to let loose from, let go free from, to put away." In other words if one is Scripturally divorced he/she is as free as if he/she had never been married.

Our Lord Jesus gave grounds for divorce in Matthew nineteen and verse nine. So fornication which is adultery is grounds for divorce. Paul, in I Corinthians 10-16 said that desertion or separation is grounds for divorce. Man is married by a contract of law, and he/she must be divorced by law. God ordained government, and in order to be legally married or divorced you

must abide by the rules, and spiritually speaking, God will hold you to obey these laws.

So if one is separated and gets romantically involved with someone else they are breaking the law and their marriage vows, and committing sin in the sight of Almighty God and in the eyes of honest Christian people.

GOOD

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are the products of a sinful nature. Man is prone to sin. What then must we do when we sin? If we are Christians we are to follow God's instructions in I John 1:9, **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**

Divorce and remarriage of course is much more common among the unsaved as understandably it would be. Sometimes though it happens in the Christian family. It is very sad; it should never have had to happen. It hurts in so many ways. But one or both have lost sight of God. I must confess I do not know why a true Christian marriage should ever end in divorce.

Perhaps it would be well at this point for me to make clear my whole purpose for writing this article in the first place. First, it is not to try to convince the die-harder to come over to my way of thinking. Frankly, I doubt if the Apostle Paul could persuade them. No, my main purpose for writing this article is in hopes that some of you who read this and have had the misfortune to go through a divorce as I have, and may be questioning your standing before God, may in some way benefit from what is said.

I speak now to the divorced or to the divorced and remarried not to those who are separated or having family problems. I am speaking to those whose marriages are irretrievable. To this group I say it is just as possible for you to be in service to God as anyone else. Yes, any man or woman divorced and/or remarried can serve God in whatever capacity or office is given in the Scriptures. Of course the key word here is "possible". It is possible for any Christian to be a powerful worker for the Lord (would that we had more). I do not say everyone who has been divorced and remarried should aspire to be a preacher, a pastor, or a Sunday School teacher. On the other hand I'm not saying you should quench the calling to any of the aforementioned if, in fact, there be a true calling of God. There are many ways to prove and exhibit God's power in our lives. Apart from holding an office or title, there is work for all

to do. But we must not be hindered by those who would put a stumbling block before us and limit our service to God. May God help and convict the pastor who puts this stumbling block before one of his members.

How many of our Baptist churches make the divorce-remarriage issue a test of fellowship? This one issue is a major cause in alienating Baptist churches from what would be good fellowship. I would like to see fellowship with some of these churches restored. But I will be quick to say the fault lies with those who are too hard-hearted (they won't like this) to concede to the common sense truth of God's Word and God's plan for poor sinners; saved but prone to sin. But how sweet it is to know **"...THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"** (Rom. 8:1a) and how reassuring it is to hear Jesus say to the woman at the well, **"...neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more"** (John 8:11).

Let me say that there are those who teach that the divorced and remarried cannot preach or teach (some are divided on this). Some say you can teach but cannot preach. Some say you can preach but can't be ordained. Some say you can only be a church member (which means you can tithe). But sorry, we can't call on you to pray. One pastor told me that I could not be a member of his church. One thing I will say of the latter, he at least was more consistent with his belief. Since they believe that a remarried person whose former spouse is still living, is living in a state of continual adultery, then obviously they could not condone sin to come into their church. Others will twist around the Scriptures to make it suit which ever situation fits best. A case of puny man telling his brother he cannot be called into the ministry.

If I may be blunt about this matter (and I guess I can since it's my article) we have among many of our very fine upstanding pastors and churches a bunch of Pharisees who hold themselves in great reputation to keep the outward appearance clean. Which reminds me of Jesus' admonition in Matthew 23:27-28, **"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."**

Allow me to make this simple observation with regard to all areas of human life. If men would seek and keep favor of God he would not have problems he could not resolve in a right and proper way. He could live a quiet and peaceable life. It is such with a marriage. If the prospective bride or groom sought God's will prior to marriage as to whether they are suited to each other it would save a lot of heartache. But I believe mainly if any man and wife will put God first in their marriage, no matter what difficulties have existed in the past or present, they could and would be resolved. There are far too many hasty marriages today and likewise too many hasty divorces. A marriage becomes a

good marriage when the man and wife put God first, and they respect and love each other. This is true whether it be a first marriage, second, or third. I might add that my marriage is a good marriage for the above reasons. I also know of other preachers who have remarried after divorce and have good ministries and are fruitful in the work of the Lord. It is impossible to be a good Christian without being a good husband or a good wife (assuming you are married). You cannot please God and fail your husband or wife (read Ephesians chapter 5) and (I Pet. 3:1-7).

It is an easy matter to point the finger at someone who has been divorced and say you should have remained married. Perhaps this is true, perhaps it is not. It is not for us to judge. But whatever happened to cause divorce, be it justified or not, it is not the unpardonable sin. And as such, it is forgivable, and possible for the victims of a broken marriage to be restored to complete fellowship with God and should likewise be thought of by their church and pastor.

Many of the opponents to divorce and remarriage will say that the testimony of such a one has been destroyed. May I say this is only true because of man's narrow and shallow understanding of God's mercy and forgiveness. God will forgive and forget but man (some) will not.

Both sides of this issue of divorce and remarriage will admit that the only marriages that have legitimacy are those which have a legal document or marriage license. It is submission to the law of the land. Why then is it not true that marriages may be dissolved by a legal document: a bill of divorcement?

Now allow me to give my conclusive remarks. I have not given Scripture for every point on this matter of divorce and remarriage. I believe however, there is ample reason for us to draw from God's Word the fact that a truly saved child of God may attain to any position of servitude, be it a pastor, preacher, deacon, Sunday School teacher or any other kind of spiritual work. And that his aspiring to these positions should be judged by his life as it is today, not what it was in the past, not because he or she has been divorced or remarried or was a thief or a murderer.

One thing we all should agree to and that is, that there are "souls to rescue and there are souls to save." And we ought to be more occupied being busy "about the Father's business" than judging one another. **"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"** (Rom. 14:13).

LAYING

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are full of such invitations; however, the Arminian would teach us that man has the ability and willingness to choose or reject the Christ. Such a wicked position as stated by the Arminian has been received and proclaimed by many, but Baptists have for years objected to this doctrine.

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THE BAPTIST EXAMINER
APRIL 11, 1992
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JAMES O. WILMOTH
1747 Fullington Rd.
Toledo, OH 43614
TEACHER:
Grace
Baptist Church
Toledo, OH



From the wording of the question, it would seem that one person is married and one is not. The question also indicates that the person that is married is now separated from his/her mate and is

STUDIES IN DANIEL CHAPTER 5

by John R. Gilpin

This chapter tells us about the fall of Babylon. Let me remind you that the city of Babylon itself was one of the most beautiful, and one of the most renowned of all the cities of the ancient world. I doubt seriously if there ever were a city of the ancient world the equal in beauty and renown of the city of Babylon.

First of all, it was a large city. Herodotus, the historian, says that the walls about that city were fourteen miles on each side and that the city was laid out in a square, which would mean the city had walls fifty-six miles in length around it. Furthermore, the historian says that its walls were 311 feet in height and that they were, likewise, 87 feet in width. They were wide enough that they held chariot races on the top of these walls that circled around the city.

The city itself was divided into two sections with a river flowing through the center of the city. Around the city, so the historian says, the walls of that city had a number of gates, fully 150 gates into the city of Babylon, and those gates were made of solid brass.

I think, in the light of the statements of the historian, that you can see at once that the city of Babylon was an unusual city for the day in which it existed.

One of the wonders of this city of Babylon were the famed and famous hanging gardens. The hanging gardens within the city of Babylon were recognized as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. They were built by Nebuchadnezzar in an unusual way. He had a queen by the name of Amytis. She was a Midian girl who had come from the land of Midia, which was a mountainous country. The land of Babylon was a flat, level land of plains and plateaus. This mountain girl, Amytis, who became queen of Babylon, longed for the mountains of her home, and in order to satisfy her, he built the famed hanging gardens of Babylon, which covered four acres, which rose to a height of 400 feet and which had at the top of it, a reservoir that watered the gardens and the flowers that grew in this man-made mountain of the hanging gardens of Babylon.

Inside that mammoth man-made structure of hanging gardens, were all kinds of rooms that were given over to revelry, eating, feasting and gluttony. The Word of God does not tell, but I have always imagined that this banquet or feast of the 5th chapter of Daniel, doubtlessly, took place in the hanging gardens of Babylon.

It is rather interesting to read this story as to what happened and how God took part and how God showed His hand and His power.

I. THE FEAST ITSELF. If you and I had been back there in that day and had taken a little peep at what went on in this banquet room, at the banquet that was given by Belshazzar for a thousand of his lords and nobles, we would have seen, among other

things, that there was drink as well as food, that there was idolatry, that there was adultery, that there was blasphemy which characterized this great banquet which was given by Belshazzar.

Notice, if you will, in the first verse it says: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." It is a commentary upon human nature that men do not think they can have a good time apart from wine. It was true then. It is true today. I judge it will always be true until our Lord makes over this world at the time of His return and the rapture of His redeemed out of it. I imagine it will always be true that men, when they want to engage in sin, will first of all want wine to deaden the conscience so that sin will not pain the conscience, and they can go on in their sin, without one bit of compunction on the part of their conscience.

So it was at this banquet. The very first thing we see is drink. The king, his one thousand guests, his wives, his nobles and all those who were present, stupefied their conscience, first of all, with wine.

Then the Word of God tells us that idolatry formed a big part of this feast, for we read in the 4th verse: "They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

It isn't hard for a man, when his conscience is stupefied with wine, and when he himself has come to the place that his mind does not function properly -- it isn't hard for him then to have a false conception of God. Therefore, as their drink began to have a more stupefying influence upon them, it wasn't hard for these people to praise gods that do not exist, and so they praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone.

Ordinarily, when we go to a feast, or when we have a banquet, and, certainly, at our meals every day, we should first of all bow our heads and thank the Giver of every good and perfect gift. These folks of Babylon, if they thanked anyone, it was a god of gold, silver, brass, wood or stone.

Notice -- drunkenness, idolatry and then, beloved, the Word of God indicates that adultery had a big place in this feast. Listen to the third verse: "Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them."

As I read that passage of Scripture, I am reminded that what took place here certainly is an indication as to what we can expect in the last days before the return of the Lord Jesus Christ back to this world. Listen: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall

also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37-39).

Back there they were drinking, they were idolatrous, they were adulterous, they went on with their feast, forgetful of God, thinking only of themselves and were not aware of the danger that was impending all around them.

Our Lord says that in the hours before His return back to this world, there will be marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking, and that men will be so consumed and so taken up with these things of the flesh, they will have no time to think about God. They will be careless, unconcerned and dismiss God from their minds and will not even realize the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ until He has come.

The Word of God goes further in describing this feast, for it tells us of the blasphemy. Listen to verses 2 and 3: "Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines drank in them."

I can see on that night so long ago, as Belshazzar, the toastmaster of the evening, hit upon an ingenious plan, as it seemed to him, to enliven the party of the hour. He called his chief steward to him, whispered a mandate in his ear, and he and a host of retainers disappear, but soon return, each of them carrying great armfuls of golden and silver vessels. Where had they gotten them? How had they been procured so quickly? The Word of God doesn't leave us in any doubt.

Years before, Nebuchadnezzar had sacked the city of Jerusalem and had carried away the golden and silver vessels that were used in the service of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem. Those vessels had been wholly dedicated unto the Lord. They had been used for the worship service in the temple of God at Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar, who had carried them away, had stored them in the city of Babylon. Now his grandson, Belshazzar, in order to stimulate the party and give it a little extra life, has these vessels that were dedicated to the Lord, brought in that he and his drunken friends might drink thereof, and they drank out of the very vessels that were dedicated to God's service, and praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and stone.

Notice the blasphemy that went along with this drunken feast on the part of Belshazzar. Do you realize that the Word of God tells us that one of the characteristics of the last days before Jesus comes again is that of blasphemy? Listen: "THIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady,

highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:1-4).

One of the characteristics that is thus laid down for the last days -- the perilous days before Jesus comes, is that of blasphemy. Surely, we are living in just such a day, for on every tongue you can hear men and women blaspheme the name of God.

There is a blasphemy though, that to me is far greater and worse than the blasphemy wherein men take the name of God in vain, and that is the blasphemy that emanates from the pulpit that is saturated with modernism. When a preacher stands before a congregation and tells them that the Bible is not the Word of God -- when a preacher stands up and says the old Book is nothing more than a compilation of folk lore, myth and stories of the people of the past, he is speaking blasphemy that is worse than the vilest oaths ever spoken. When a preacher stands up and tells a congregation that the Lord Jesus Christ was not God's Son, that He was not born of a virgin, that He was not God in the flesh, that He did not die for sinners and that He did not rise from the dead, that man is speaking blasphemy that is ten thousand times worse than the vilest oaths that ever came from the lips of a vile sinner. When an individual stands before a congregation and tells them that the Son of God is still in the grave and that He did not come forth out of the grave, that man is blaspheming the very Word of God. When that individual dares to tell you the Bible was written by man and came as a result of human intelligence, and did not come by the inspiration of God, when he tells you that every word in the Book was not spoken of the Lord, he is speaking blasphemy against the God of the Bible -- a blasphemy that is even greater than the blasphemy that comes from man's lips as he would take God's name in vain.

Go back to that feast and look in upon it. Can't you see these days in which we live, mirrored in the feast of Belshazzar? Look again: drink, idolatry, adultery, blasphemy -- these were the things that characterized the feast of Belshazzar, and these are the things that characterize the days in which we live.

II. God's Rebuke. We read in the 5th verse: "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote."

Can you see that forefinger and thumb as it moves silently and yet, speedily and visibly along the plaster of the wall of the king's palace? You can't see the rest of the hand, you can't see the arm, you can't see the body; but if you will look, you can see that thumb and forefinger as it speedily writes a message upon the plaster in plain sight for Belshazzar and his companions to read. That is God accepting the challenge of Belshazzar. Belshazzar has been praising the gods that cannot speak, that cannot hear, that cannot act, and now God who sees, a God who hears and a God who acts, accepts the challenge.

Belshazzar has been profaning the very vessels that were dedicated to the service of the living God, and now God accepts his challenge and writes a message of

doom on the plaster of the king's own palace wall. Let me tell you, beloved, a man may persist in sin, a woman may go on for a time in sin, but mark it down, eventually God will rebuke the sinner. If you do not believe it, listen to God's Word: "And Adoni-bezek fled; and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me..." (Judges 1:6, 7).

For a long time, Adoni-bezek did as he pleased. He would capture a king and to humiliate him, he would cut off his thumbs and big toes and make him gather his food from under his table as a dog might receive some crumbs from under his table. God let him go on until one day He said, "It's enough" and you find Adoni-bezek with his thumbs and big toes cut off, gathering food from under the table, just like seventy kings had gathered food from under his table.

Let me read you again: "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:8).

God may let sin go on for a while but, beloved, there comes a time when God ultimately rebukes the sinner. You mark it down, no sin that was ever committed, paid. God will rebuke the sinner because of it. He allowed Belshazzar to go on for a while, but eventually God rebuked him. Listen again: "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity..." (Prov. 22:8). "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind..." (Hosea 8:7).

You can mark it down, beloved, God may allow sin to go on unchallenged for a while, but ultimately, He is going to rebuke the sinner. When you see that thumb and index finger moving along the wall writing those mysterious words, that king knew that it was a rebuke from Almighty God. Look at him, beloved, as his countenance is changed. Ashen white becomes his face. Palor strikes his body. The joints of his loins are loosed. His knees smite one against the other as he stands there to lower a cup from his lips with an unfinished toast dying away. I tell you, beloved, it was God Almighty's rebuke and His answer to the challenge of Belshazzar who had drunk wine from the vessels that were dedicated to God, and who had praised gods that did not exist.

III. THE GLOOM. Read that 6th verse: "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

Hear him as he calls for the Chaldeans, the astrologers, the soothsayers, the wise men of the kingdom -- the brain trust of the land -- and asks them to tell him the meaning of those words written mysteriously upon the plaster of the wall. Look at the gloom that settles down on this sinner, that cursed king. When you see the gloom that settled down upon him, you are seeing that which

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characterizes every individual who deals in sin.

Take the man who drinks, consider him. Why, beloved, there never was a man who drank who did not have the same experience as this man Belshazzar. Gloom settles down upon him. Listen: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine: they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder" (Prov. 23:29-32).

There is gloom for you, beloved. I could not begin to tell you the number of individuals whom I have seen who have experienced this Scripture literally. The sin of drink goes on for a while, but by and by, God rebukes the sinner and gloom settles upon him.

I can remember when I was pastor in Cincinnati, before I came here, being called one day down to one of the hospitals within the city. A man handed me a little piece of poetry which they had taken off the personal effects of a woman who had died there within that hospital. She was a woman of scarlet character. She was a woman who had made her living by the merchandising of her womanhood. She was 22 years of age. What was the poem?

"Once I was pure as the snow, but I fell;
Fell like a snowflake from Heaven to Hell;

Fell to be trampled as filth in the street,

Fell to be scoffed at, to be spit on and beat;

Pleading, cursing, dreading to die --

Selling my soul to whoever would buy

Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread,

Hating the living, fearing the dead.

Merciful God, have I fallen so low,

And yet I was once like the beautiful snow."

Don't tell me that sin doesn't bring gloom. Don't tell me that the experience of Belshazzar was an unusual experience. There is nothing extraordinary about it -- it was merely the course of human events of a life given over to sin. It doesn't make any difference what the sin is, gloom settles down at the end.

Belshazzar's gloom was increased all the more when he called his wise men and they could not read that mystic writing. They looked at it, they threw up their hands, they backed off, they said, "It isn't in us -- it is impossible for us to read it." It was bad enough when the writing came, but his gloom is increased now because his wise men have failed him. Why did they fail him? It was God's writing and the devil's children can't read God's writing and understand it. You have to have a heart for God if you read God's Word. You might understand the history, the geography and the literature of it, but you can't understand the spiritual

meaning of God's Word unless you have God within your heart.

IV. FIRST, THE FEAST; THEN, THE REBUKE; THIRD, THE GLOOM; AND NOW, THE END.

Daniel interpreted that writing by saying, "...God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it... Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting... Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." He knew those honors were empty honors because God had given him a revelation as to the meaning of this message.

There isn't one indication that King Belshazzar ceased in his sin, there isn't one indication that the revelry, the drunkenness, the bacchanalian feast paused nor halted for a moment. I imagine they went right on just the same as they had, but God had said, "It is the end."

What happened? History tells us something the Word of God doesn't tell. Darius, the Median general, had been building a ditch outside the city, a ditch for the diverting of the river, that river that flowed through the center of the city. Now at this particular time, he turned the channel of that river into a new channel and marched his army in by way of the old channel, and the Word of God even tells us that in their revelry, they failed to fasten the brass gates. Through those brass gates, Darius led his army for the destruction of the city. Look at it beloved: their drinking, their carousing, their forgetting God and worshipping gods who can't see, hear, nor bless. One by one they fall asleep, one by one this revelry knocks them out, and when they are soaked with liquor and steeped in sin and can't defend themselves, Darius' army marches into the city and they become an easy prey to his army. The poet describes it like this:

"That night they slew him on his father's throne,

He died unnoticed and by the hand unknown,

Crownless and scepterless Belshazzar lay,

A robe of purple round a form of clay."

That's the end. Where did it start? With sin. What's the end? Death. Beloved, listen, sin always brings death.

I said a moment ago that the Scriptures even say that in their drunkenness they left the city unguarded and the gates of the city were not shut. Maybe you might wonder where I got that. It isn't found in the book of Daniel, but it is found in prophecy. Listen: "Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwelling places; her bars are broken. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end. And that the passages are stopped,

and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted" (Jer. 51:28-32).

That was prophecy which was given one hundred years before it came to pass. Listen to another: "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:1-6).

What does it mean? 144 years before Cyrus marched against the city of Babylon and destroyed it, God gave a prophecy and called Cyrus by name. That was 144 years before the destruction of Babylon. God said, "I will call you Cyrus, and I'm going to use you as my servant, and I'll break in pieces the gates of brass and cut asunder the bars of iron. I'll do this for you because I want Israel, mine elect, to be blessed of you." Listen, beloved, what God said took place, every word of it.

This passage of Scripture, beloved, means a lot to me. When I see what happened back here, I look down to these days in which we are living, and I say, "Oh God, will there be a repetition?" My God answers back and says, "Babylon must be destroyed." Read Revelation 17 and 18 and you will find this civilization of ours is compared to Babylon. Babylon was destroyed back there and God says that what happened back there is merely a type of what we can expect. As Babylon was destroyed then, so this civilization -- ecclesiastically, religiously and materially -- shall be destroyed again.

Listen, beloved, there is just one safe place for any man and that's Calvary. As surely as there is a God in heaven -- there is just one place of safety and that place is Calvary. Destruction fell upon that sin-cursed king and that sin-cursed city, and so, some day, beloved, destruction shall fall upon a sin-cursed civilization that has ignored God and left God out of their plans. The only safe place for any individual is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I ask you: Are you saved? Are you God's child? If not, may you become a child of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

May God bless you!

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It is true, that whosoever will may come, but it is equally true that man can not respond to that invitation. The depravity of man has made it impossible for man to respond to that invitation. Thus man is not only depraved but deprived of all good with which he can please God. They are helpless and hopeless in all of their efforts. They have absolutely no desire for the true God.

Someone is going to accuse us of being Calvinistic; and to that accusation we would be forced to plead not guilty. Calvin may have taught some truth, but he also brought with him some false doctrines from Rome. The Arminian would deny the absolute total depravity of man, and hence, they would foster that evil doctrine of free-will. This doctrine of free-will and whosoever may come is a direct attack on the efficacious grace of God. They do not believe, even for a brief moment, that God's Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and misery, and thus, renewing our will, that He doth persuade and then enables us to receive the Lord as Saviour. Brother Loraine Boettner writes, "The teaching of the Scriptures is such that we must say that man in his natural state is radically corrupt, and that he can never become holy and happy through any power of his own. He is spiritually dead, and must be saved by Christ, if at all. Common reason tells us that if a man is so fallen as to be at enmity with God, that enmity must be removed before he can have any desire to do God's will. If a sinner is to desire redemption through Christ, he must receive a new disposition. He must be born again, and from above (John 3:3)" (P. 162, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination).

But the Arminian would say that man has the strength and the will power to become sons of God. They not only reject the depravity of man, but most vehemently reject the effectual call of God. Frank Beck writes, "For the elect ones Jesus Christ came into the world and died (Rom. 5:8), for their sins (I Cor. 15:3), as their Substitute (I Pet. 2:24). Christ took all of their sins and gives them His righteousness (II Cor. 5:21)" (P. 37, The Five Points of Calvinism). Therefore, it is only reasonable to conclude that Christ would by His Spirit effectually bring to salvation all of those that He died for; hence, the Spirit of God moves in such a way that man does not know how and when He works (John 3:3-8).

Beloved, if the Lord spoke to us about building a tower, (Luke 14:18) counting the cost thereof, and then, after doing that finds that he can not finish the project, is mocked (Luke 14:29); would not our Lord be mocked if He could not effectually bring the dead sinner to life that He had purchased with His own blood? Why would the God of heaven charge against the proud sinner with election and foreordination and the blood stained cross of Calvary, only to realize that man would reject the Christ of God.

We believe in the irresistible grace of God; whereby, we mean, that God's Holy Spirit will work on the elect sinner, bringing him to a knowledge of saving grace. Would you note what our Lord said about the work of the Spirit

to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Oh beloved, if a man is dead in his sin as the Scriptures say, then we must conclude that absolutely nothing short of this very supernatural life-giving power of God's Holy Spirit will ever make a man to do that which is spiritually good.

You see beloved, when a person is saved by God's Spirit, that involves a change of man's character. That change can only be made by God. Thus the child of God passes from the state of unbelief and condemnation to that of saving faith whereby he has been forgiven and pardoned of all his sins. The Word of God would indicate that the very pre-requisite for one to enter into heaven is that he must have a radical transformation that can only take place when the Spirit of God so works in his heart.

Paul said the power of the gospel was to the saving of lost souls (Romans 1:16); therefore, we are told that nothing can stop that power. Perhaps that is why Paul placed such a curse upon preaching another gospel when he wrote to the churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:9,10); for he knew that man's natural heart would gravitate towards a religion that made man something else other than what he was, a sinner.

When we read in the New Testament that one may plant, another water, we read also that it is God that gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:6,7). How many claim today, "I have won so many" or "I had so many respond to the invitation?" But in reality, if the Scriptures be the Word of God, these men would have to stop and say, (1) "those responding to the message did so because of God's Spirit working in their life; bringing them to salvation" or (2) "those responding were my disciples; therefore, they are in danger of God's wrath because they became man's catch, and not God's."

"Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple" (Psa. 65:4). Would you note that verse again, and see that it was God who chose man and caused him to respond to the Lord. One may object and say, "God just does not work that way." That may sound good; it may provide a point in a debate and if the judge is inclined to think your way, give you that little edge that you need; however, it is one thing to make a statement as such, and it is quite another to back it up with proof. The tenor to the Scriptures it just the total opposite. Luke wrote, "...as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me..." (John 6:37).

How many times have you heard some preacher say, "the sinner receives the Lord by his

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own volition - will." But what does the Word of God say about this? **"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:12-13). Dr. Charles Ryrie writes in his Study Bible, "The new birth is supernatural and therefore completely distinct from natural birth. It is not of blood, contains no human element; nor does it lie within the scope of human achievement it is not of the will of the flesh or man" (P. 1494, Ryrie Study Bible). Paul wrote, **"So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy"** (Rom. 9:16). From what we have just read in the Bible, we must conclude that the work of redemption is God's workmanship entirely and alone. James wrote, **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights..."** (James 1:17).

THREE POSSIBILITIES

First, that this redemption that is in Christ Jesus comes by natural power. Second, that the new creature in Christ Jesus must be wrought by a divine power, that being, the Holy Ghost. Third, that this new birth experience of which we have been talking about is the result of both the natural and the divine power of God. We could find sufficient proof from the writing of various men to support our position; however, if what men have had to say does not agree with the Book, then it does not really matter what they think.

First, let us consider the idea of this redemption being wrought by a natural power; and we will note immediately why it can not be that way. (1) It is said that man's redemption is a new creation; hence, of all the work of God this one, man's redemption, is the noblest and the most excellent of all. How can a natural man, lost in sin, give unto himself new life when it is said that he is dead? (2) How can man that is totally depraved and bankrupt, afford what he does not have? Man is in darkness, and because of that, possesses an habitual aversion to the God that could help him. Listen, the Word of God says, **"That which is born of the flesh is flesh..."** (John 3:6). **"...neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit"** (Matt. 7:18). (3) Thus, the natural man is not only void of all virtues, but the Scriptures tell us that man is opposite to these virtues. **"...the carnal mind is enmity against God..."** (Rom. 8:7). **"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight..."** (Psa. 10:4). (4) The one that is saved cannot be the by-product of natural powers because every

thing is received according to the nature of that which receives it. Please note, corn will produce corn, squash will produce squash, fish will produce fish, animals will produce after their own kind; hence, sinners can only produce more sinners; and since the sinner is born dead in his sins, it is impossible for man to give himself life in that he is already dead.

Second, let us consider the possibility of both God and man working together to bring about this new position. Man in partnership with God; helping poor old God to reconcile himself to a holy and just God! (1) The Holy Spirit of God needs not such assistance in His divine office work. Why should the Holy Spirit of God call in another to help Him unless He is deficient in His ability! (2) If that Holy Spirit of God is deficient in His ability, then man is in dire straights, for the flesh is extremely weak and unable to assist. The natural man is said to be **"without strength"** (Rom. 5:6). Surely, if God is all powerful and is unable to save, what does man expect to attribute when man is far from being strong. (3) If man could provide such, then that which is evil and that which is good is working together to provide salvation for man; but that can not be in light of II Corinthians 6:15, **"...what concord hath Christ with Belial?..."** Oh beloved, such a mixture would be an abomination to Almighty God, a direct violation of God's moral law, and we know that God will not work in vain. This is at best salvation by grace plus something -- man's ability. Now reason with me if you would. If Adam under the covenant of God in the Garden could not please God by his works; how much more then, when with a lost depraved nature could Adam's children not help themselves? Oh beloved, one of the greatest short-comings of the Arminian has been his failure to recognize and see the necessity for the supernatural work of God's Holy Spirit within the heart of man.

HEART

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should, rather, cause the greatest humility. How humbling it is to know that our God has shown us gracious kindness in allowing sinners to know such truth hidden to so many.

The name "Baptist" presses those who espouse it to goodness and personal piety and purity. In times past, as well as the present time, individual purity marked true believers and separated them from the world in a definitive way. It seems that the death of many churches can be attributed to unsaved, unseparated, unsettled church members.

"Baptist" means God-called, Spirit-filled, fearless, lively Bible preaching! Real preaching should not be dry, boring, and dead, or with "a form of godliness." Grace is not boring, nor Church Truth, nor the Second Coming, nor Atonement, nor any Bible doctrine! Since the doctrine is alive, the preacher must be alive as well. Modern preaching would have us believe in "sweet little Jesus" and a "great big wonderful God." Those preachers are sort of like glorified Captain Kangaroos that are sweet-sweet, nice-nice,

kissy-kissy! They must preach God's nature, God's grace, and all of God's Book! This, of course, will show man's depravity, demoralization, and destination.

"Baptist" means many great things. The length of this article will not permit discussion, but a few are: "Baptist" means....missions....church order and local congregational government....ordinances Scripturally carried out by the local church....anti-feminism (this will make enemies faster than you could say "Lottie Moon")....freedom from denominationalism, boards, associational missionaries, from Bible-rejecting colleges and seminaries....Holy Spirit unction for God's preachers and His servants....a desire to please and personally commune with God Himself....truth, and truth does not change.

May God help us stand by the stuff! Many have tried to combine the name "Baptist" with other adjectives such as "American," "Southern," "General," "Freewill," "Associational," "Seventh Day," "Reformed," "National," none of which combine very well with "Baptist" and even pervert that noble name. Such titles are an attempt to destroy the truth that Baptists have always stood for. They disguise the real message of their group and these messages involve liberalism, modernism, race-mixing, legalism, amillennialism, feminism, covenant theology, greed, backbiting, clannishness, and Bible rejection.

"Baptist" has only one real adjective...the title "Independent." Independent Baptists are not independent of God as their critics like to say. They call us "Off-brand" and the mentally void, call us "arrogant isolationists." Independent Baptists have no hierarchy, no headquarters in Nashville, Fort Worth, Texarkana, Springfield, or Rome!

The heart of an independent Baptist is the heart that craves freedom from denominational politicians, freedom from the "assasinational" missionary, freedom from the WMU, freedom from the "quarterly," freedom from the "let's all get together" attitude, freedom from women deacons. How about that? How about such freedoms as these? Where do we find them? The DBC...the NBC...the ABA...the NABA...the NBA...NFL? No! These freedoms and so many more are the sole property of Independent Baptists!

The Independent Baptist has a heart for God's Word. God's Word is the sole authority for "faith and practice" of Baptists. However, Independents desire to really hear from God, not through visions, dreams, transcendental experiences, Ouija boards, or mediums (the last "medium" I met looked more like and "extra-large"). The only way to know you are really hearing from God is to read the Book He wrote! One thing that still amazes me is that people love to hear from Teddy Kennedy, Jesse Jackson, Dan Rather, and other such godless men, but have no desire to hear from God.

The heart of an Independent Baptist is a heart that cries to and for God Himself, not the "gifts" of "tongues" or "healing" or "the word of knowledge" (no knowledge here)! No! It is Him we desire. We long for what only He can do for us, but more than this, we desire Him. We desire

Him because He is our possession...."My God shall supply...." "My Shepherd...." "My Lord and my God...." I do belong to Him, but He belongs to me as well.

Further, the heart of an Independent Baptist is the heart of compassion for the lost. It is genuine concern that helps us to be a witness of the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

An Independent Baptist's heart desires great preaching...such a rare thing in this age of milque toast, wimpy little clowns!

The Independent Baptist's heart is a heart that is real, sincere, faithful. It is also thankful, grateful, holy, prayerful, alive, fearful of God. It is a heart that "loves His appearing."

May God help this writer to have such a heart!

SBC

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is so earthly ever been combined so beautifully with that which is heavenly. Yet, right here in two verses of Scripture the Apostle Paul does just that, **"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified"** (Rom. 8:29-30).

Here our God is declaring that He is sovereign! Some men might like to suppose that they are having a part in running the earthly show. Our God, thankfully, in these two verses of Scripture, explains absolutely that He is in control! It is no marvel, then, that men use the best of their rationalizing to discredit these words. Therefore, all who have the mind and the heart and the Spirit to understand the Word of God should be cognizant that our past is under His watchful eye, that our present is under His watchful eye, and that our future is likewise under His watchful eye. His words are absolute! It is He who is God, and it is He who is sovereign. God assures us that all who have been foreknown will be saved in time and eternally glorified! What more glorious truth could any saved mortal ever desire?

In these two verses, God is declaring, God is demonstrating, and God is assuring us that He has been in control, that He is in control, and that He will be in control. Unbelieving men may have their ideas and their opinions. God, however, is hereby informing all past generations, all present generations, and all future generations that it is He, alone, who has been making all the ultimate decisions. For a time in the minds of some, it may seem that men are making the plans and determining the conclusions. In finality, however, God shows us most clearly and most dramatically that the ultimate limits of all human planning are within His sovereign control.

It was no happenstance that in a distant day a very mortal man by the name of Nebuchadnezzar was heard to declare rather positively, **"...at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto**

heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation" (Dan. 4:34). Sometime later, a man by the name of Darius would confirm these truths with his words, **"...the God of Daniel... is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end."** (Dan. 6:26).

The prophet of old, Isaiah, grasped something of the supremacy of our sovereign God when he gave us the Word of God, **"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, said the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"** (Isa. 55:8-9). The Apostle Paul followed a few centuries later to say essentially the same thing with his word, **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"** (Rom. 11:33-34).

There is a climactic word to all of this against which no mortal being and no immortal being can raise an effectual voice. Hear the initiation of that eternal assurance of salvation for all who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their saviour, **"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? ...Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who even is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"** (Rom. 8:31, 33, 34). It is wonderfully understandable that one who could exult in such a manner concerning the eternal security of the believer would have earlier proclaimed, **"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus..."** (Rom. 8:1).

Of whom is the apostle speaking when he provides us these words of assurance? Is he dealing with us on the strength of some hypothesis that he has drawn from the blue? Is he providing us some hearsay evidence that some highly religious soul has vouchsafed? Just what or who is the source of the Apostle Paul's word of assurance concerning his understanding of the past? What or who is the source of his comprehension of the present, and his insight into the details of the future? Has he somehow been in an illusion or delusion and decided to share some of his fantasies with us? I think not! Rather, he is giving us God's Word!

This man whom we have come to know as the Apostle Paul has a thrice-holy proof that this Jesus who does the saving on an eternal scale is God, and that He is at the

by Willard Willis

by Willard Willis

"And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus" (Acts 25:13).

The dynasty of which King Agrippa, or Herod Agrippa was affiliated, began during the time that our Lord was upon the earth. The record shows that Herod Antipater was the founder of the family fortune. His son, Antipater, was favored by Julius Caesar. Julius Caesar, in fact, made him the virtual ruler of all of Palestine-Palestine being the historic region on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean between Syria and Egypt. This area of the world was called "Canaan" prior to the invasion by Joshua and his forces. It was after the reign of Solomon that Palestine was divided into two states. The area of Palestine, during the time that our Lord was on the earth, was ruled by Rome through puppet kings who were known as Herods. The Herods, however, never succeeded in reconciling the Jews and the Romans. The Jews, in fact, revolted against the Romans in 66 A.D. This action resulted in the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D. and the expulsion of the Jews from Judea.

One of the Roman puppet kings which ruled Palestine was Herod the Great. It was he who gave the family the name of Herod. The record shows that he was a friend of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra. He was the same Herod who ordered the killing of the many children in an effort to kill the Lord Jesus Christ. This particular Herod had ten wives.

The Roman puppet king, to which our text makes reference, was Herod Agrippa II. He ruled over the northern part of the kingdom of his great grand-father Herod.

King Agrippa and Bernice (both Jews), according to our text, went to Caesarea to welcome Festus, since he had just been made the Roman governor of the area.

Bernice was the sister of Drusilla, the beautiful Jewish wife of Felix. She was also the sister of Agrippa and lived with him. This relationship resulted in a scandal to the point that Josephus charged her with incest.

"And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix" (Acts 25:14).

Festus, knowing that Agrippa had an intimate knowledge of Jewish faith and practice, decided to discuss Paul's case with him. One of the results was, as the Lord had informed Paul, that he would witness to leaders of nations. God, in fact, planned it so that Paul's two years in Herod's Judgment Hall would result in his witnessing to the various people to whom he witnessed.

The purpose of Agrippa and Bernice, when visiting Festus, was simply to salute him, that is, welcome him to his new office. They had no idea that the high-light of their visit would be the exchange which they were to have with Paul. We may say that God had set the stage for Paul and various people were performing their various functions on that stage.

"About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief

priests and elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him" (Acts 25:15).

The fact that Paul was in prison was not enough judgment for the Jews. They, in fact, when conversing with Festus, desired to have "judgment against him", that is, their own judgment against him. They made it appear that they wanted to try him for certain crimes, when, in fact, they had already judged him and found him guilty. They had already decided that he must die and they were trying every trick in the book to carry out his execution. We, of course, are missing the big picture if we do not see Satan working through the Sanhedrin in an effort to destroy the ministry of the apostle Paul.

"To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him" (Acts 25:16).

There are many historians who agree with Festus, that is, that the Roman law required that a person be proven guilty before being put to death. Pilate, however, ignored this law when giving his approval for the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:18-25).

"Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth" (Acts 25:17).

It appeared by the action taken by Felix that Paul's case had been placed on the back burner and al-

lowed to simmer for a long period of time. Festus, however, pointed out to Agrippa that he, in essence, had placed the case on the front burner in that he had acted quickly in regard to the charges which had been made against Paul. He, in fact, had hoped to please the Jews by giving their request an immediate response.

"Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed" (Acts 25:18).

We know from Acts 25:16 that Festus was aware that the Jews wanted Paul to receive the death penalty. He, therefore, "supposed" that their charges would have been such that the death penalty would have been merited. He, however, found after inquiry, that **"...they brought none accusation of such things..."** as he "supposed" they would. We can also be sure, that after the inquiry, Festus wondered why Paul had been confined for two years. Paul, in fact, in Acts 25:10, had said to Festus, **"...to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest."**

"But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts 25:19).

I'm informed that the Romans and the Greeks used the word "superstition" when speaking of their religion. This, no doubt, is the manner in which Festus used the same word. He, after all, was speaking to Agrippa, a Jew, and would not have referred to the religion of Agrippa in the manner in which we think of when we

use the word "superstition". Festus, then, in essence, said to Agrippa that the entire controversy relating to Paul was a matter having to do with a difference of opinion regarding religion. The main difference which Festus had detected, centered around a dispute regarding the resurrection **"...of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."** The Jews, in a sense of speaking, had buried Jesus deep and were contending that He was still buried deep. Paul, on the other hand, said that His grave was empty—that He had risen from the dead. Festus knew of no Roman law relating to this particular controversy. He, therefore, was in no position to pass judgment upon Paul.

"And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters" (Acts 25:20).

Festus, when saying that he "doubted of such manner of questions" was saying that, as far as he was concerned, the case was not a clear cut one. He "doubted", or could not make an intelligent judgment on the matter. He, therefore, sought to transfer the trial to Jerusalem where more input could be obtained for the case.

"But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar" (Acts 25:21).

Paul had made his appeal to Caesar. Festus, however, informed Agrippa that Paul had appealed to Augustus. Both, of course, have reference to the same person. The name Augustus properly denotes that which is honorable, or worthy of honor even to the point of reverence. The title "Augustus" originally applied to Caesar Octavianus—the Roman emperor who was in power when our Lord was born. He is the one who is usually referred to as Augustus Caesar. This title, however, continued to be used by those who followed after Octavianus. The emperor, in fact, to whom Festus made reference, was Nero.

"Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him" (Acts 25:22).

We, in the Scripture which is before us, have a discussion between a governor and a king. We, however, by looking above these two men, will observe as God makes an appointment for the king to hear a spirit wrought

message from His apostle. We can be sure that this meeting was appointed just as much as it was appointed for Philip to meet the Eunuch. God opened a door so that Paul could preach to Agrippa and God the Spirit enabled Paul to defend Jesus Christ in a manner that has never been excelled.

"And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth" (Acts 25:23).

We know from Proverbs 21:1 that God turns the hearts of kings **"whithersoever he will"**. God, in fact, in the text which is before us, arranged for a king and

many other people of renown to be seated before a stage on which His appointed preacher would preach Jesus to them. Paul, before this great opportunity arose or before this door was opened, had been confined for two years. I think that I would be willing to be confined for two years if such were a means toward a similar opportunity, that is, an opportunity to speak to the leaders of my nation. God's message, through me, would be delivered through the power of God the Spirit after they had arrived with great pomp. "And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer" (Acts 25:24).

Our Lord had come to this earth, suffered, died, and risen from the dead. He had been spit on, whipped, and nailed to the tree. God, by way of His apostle, was not about to let people forget that which His Son had done. We, too, must not allow people to forget all that has been done and is being done by Jesus Christ our Lord. We, in fact, have been commanded to go into all the world and tell His story. We will find as we proceed, that Paul made the most of the opportunity which was given to him. Festus, however, before Paul was given the floor to speak, gave the audience a brief history of Paul. One wonders what was going through the mind of Paul as he sat there and looked out over such a mag-

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Father's right hand in the realms of glory! First, in that distant day, he was known as Saul, the persecutor. He experienced the witness of Stephen, **"...Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God"** (Acts 7:56). Second, there was that moment when this man, Saul, was enshrouded with a light from Heaven -- perhaps like that which bathed The Mount of Transfiguration a few years earlier -- brighter than the sun, wherein he heard the words, **"...Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"** (Acts 9:4). There was that response of Saul, **"Who art thou, Lord?"** Then, Saul heard those eternal words, **"...I am Jesus whom thou persecutest..."** (Acts 9:5).

Third, then, toward the end of his ministry, this man Saul whom we reference usually as the Apostle Paul, had some wonderful words about his experience with this Jesus. He tells us, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man... How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities" (II Cor. 12:2-5). Then, he climaxes his wisdom in this regard with the truth that his message and his ministry were not of men, but that he was taught of Christ.

nificent crowd. He might have looked up to heaven and said, "How great thou art"!

"But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa; that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal signify the crimes laid against him" (Acts 25:25-27).

Agrippa, Bernice, the chief captains, principal men of the city and Festus all gathered, as Festus said, to examine Paul and then give their advice regarding what information should be submitted to Nero. This fact meant that each person there would be required to listen very carefully so as to try to help Festus in making a report to Nero. Each person there, in a sense of speaking, was to have been given a test regarding every word that had fallen from the mouth of the great apostle. We, of course, are totally blind if we do not see God's sovereign hand in this entire matter. We, today, serve the same God that Paul served. This fact means that He is still opening doors of opportunity for His people. May we watch for them and make the most of them by relying upon God the Spirit to speak through us.

Hopefully, by now, we can hear his words with understanding, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ... when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither when I up to Jerusalem to them who were apostles before me... Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days... Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:11-12, 15-18). We should be able to say then, that if we are reading the Apostle Paul with even a measure of spiritual understanding and hearing him accurately, he is telling us that his wisdom is not of men.

He is telling us that the Jesus with whom He has dealt personally since his Damascus Road experience is wholly God. He knows Him to be the resurrected Jesus for he has conversed with Him. He is telling us that whatever wisdom he has concerning spiritual things or truth is wholly as a result of his having been personally instructed by Jesus. In

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is because of this relationship with Jesus that the Apostle Paul can provide us with assurance concerning our eternal security as the children of God. Yet, the message that he provides is in agreement with the message of every other inspired writer of the Word of God.

So, when we read what the Apostle Paul has written, we must conclude that the salvation that our Savior provides for those who believe is eternal in nature and everlasting in scope. We might presume that we can understand what this means, still the truth really is beyond our comprehension. Each one of us who has come to live upon this earth is in a body that is in effect dying regularly every day. We must know that there will come a time when we shall lay down the fleshly body so it might return to the dust. Initially, the Scriptures declare, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). A little later, we learn that because of Adam's sin, we shall have a fateful earthly conclusion; namely, "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

Really, then, that salvation of which we read and of which we may speak subsequent to our reading is a reality that truly is beyond our human or mortal intellectual grasp. So, when we reference the salvation of which God speaks in His holy Word, we are dealing with a reality that we can never experience in our fleshly lives. Therefore, when we reference our salvation, we are dealing with something that we have to take on faith. Since faith is essential if we are to believe in the possibility of salvation -- that is, being saved from our sins and saved to a new life that is now beyond our comprehension -- then we have no alternative but to accept the nature of that salvation on faith, as well.

Knowing that we are dust, it really is no marvel that some have difficulty understanding the reality of salvation, and that others have difficulty understanding the nature of that salvation. The struggle that some have in coming to an understanding is the issue of their lack of faith. If we are going to have any understanding, then, our intellectual and spiritual grasp must at least be comprehensively of faith. The true extent of that comprehension must depend in part, if not wholly, on the overall reality of our faith.

At one moment of time and at one level of understanding, we may understand the reality of salvation in a measure, but we may not yet have understood the nature of that salvation. In another circumstance, we may have a dim view of the nature of that salvation. In another circumstance, we may have a dim view of the nature of salvation without ever having a grasp of its reality. It is most important, then, that we realize that our being wise in the ways of the world or learned in the wisdom of the world is not

the crucial or determinative detail. Rather, if we are to have true understanding, it is essential that we have faith in the Words of those who have provided us with the inspired Words of the Lord of glory.

Occasionally there may be those who will suppose that they can reason themselves into a measure of understanding. Those who may choose to go it alone, on the strength of their reasoning ability, will really be walking in spiritual darkness. They will have to face the Scriptural and spiritual wisdom of those who wrote under inspiration, and their intellectual and spiritual plight will be hopeless. We learn this by these words, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God... We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory... But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God..." (1 Cor. 2:4-5, 7, 10-11).

When we turn to the words of the Apostle Paul, then, we turn to them in faith. He has provided each one of us who will truly believe or have faith a word of understanding concerning salvation. Second, He has provided us some words concerning the nature of that salvation of which he speaks. As we have shown, he references salvation as an eternal or an everlasting salvation. When we accept both salvation and the nature of that salvation on faith, then it is that we have that comprehensive knowledge or wisdom that the Spirit of God provides, and by faith in the Word of God we can abound in the fullness of God's provision.

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Jesus has done everything that He can do, that God has done everything that He can do, the Holy Spirit has done everything that He can do and in spite of every bit of it, there is a little bit left that you have to do yourself. They tell us beloved, that God has brought man to the very brink, there is just a line between him and salvation, but He can't get him over that line, that man has to do that himself. How many evangelists have you heard stand in the pulpit and say, "Sinner, God has done everything He can do, Christ has done everything He can do, the Holy Spirit is striving with you. The rest of it is up to you. You either cross that line and be saved or you stay back there and be eternally lost." Now that is what the religionists of the world tell us about God's plan of salvation. Beloved, I'm so thankful that that isn't true. I'm so thankful that it's not the teachings of the Word of God. If it were true no man would be saved. All mankind, all humanity would be in hell today.

The religionists today, tell us that man is just lying dormant. He's neither alive nor dead, but just in a dormant state, like he is asleep. Something must happen to revive him and wake him up and get him over that line. But notice in Genesis 3:3, "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." It didn't say lest ye pass out or lest ye become in a dormant state, it says lest ye die. And, beloved, when they partook of the fruit, they died spiritually. Now, if God has brought man up to that line and tells him to cross over the line, how is he going to cross that line if he is dead? Now where in the world are we? Is there salvation for anyone? Brother Jonah in Jonah 2:9 said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Salvation is of the Lord, it is not of man. Man has nothing to do whatsoever with his salvation. Man is dead in trespasses and sin. (Ephesians 2:1) "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" Dead men can do nothing, but salvation is of the Lord. (John 5:40). "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." This is Jesus talking. How in the world is a sinner going to make a decision for Christ when he is dead and when Jesus said ye will not come to me that ye might have life. If man has a choice he chooses the opposite direction every time. Contrary to public opinion, the lost of this world are not clamoring to get through the doors of the church. They are not wanting to be saved. They are just as happy as they can be to drink, to connive around, to murder, to kidnap, to break all the laws. They are happy in their sins. It is their nature to sin and they love it. And beloved, so did you love it before the Lord saved you. Now, we find that man is in bad shape.

He's lost, he's on his road to hell, he's dead spiritually, he's dying physically and there is nothing he can do about it. Something has to be done. We hear many times that you must choose to come to Christ. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." (John 15:16). We did not choose Jesus Christ, He chose us. Dead men can do nothing. I think this proves from the Word of God that the modernistic idea of man being saved will save no one. They are dead and cannot cross that line. It would be against their nature to cross it even if they could.

There are three things that are absolutely necessary for a person to be saved and they are performed by the Godhead. Remember Jonah said "Salvation is of the Lord." It is not of me and you, it is of the Lord. It is necessary that you be chosen by God the Father to salvation. The Lord said "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." Beloved, there had to be a choice made. Man was not able to choose, he was lost, he was dead, and he could do nothing, so if anyone was going to be saved God had to do the choosing. Now beloved, when was this choice made? This choice was made before the foundation of the world, not at the time the Lord spoke peace to our hearts. It was not done on Calvary's cross. It was done before the Lord ever made a world. "According as he

hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4). Way back in eternity past God said mankind is lost, they are on their road to hell, every last one of them. The Scripture says all were under sin. Every one of us was on our road to hell, every one of us was helpless to do anything about it, every one of us was dead, but God said I'm going to save some. I thank God that He did. If He hadn't chosen to save some, all mankind would have gone to hell. Every last one of us. The Lord chose a people to save. These people in the Word of God are called sheep, they are called the chosen, the faithful, the few, the elect, but beloved, nowhere is it even hinted that it is everyone without exception. (Rom. 8:28) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." All things do not work together for the good of everyone. God always works with a purpose in mind. Always from a plan. God chose a people to be saved. He selected, elected, He chose a number of people. He chose by name. Your name, if you are a child of God, was written in the Lambs Book of Life before the foundation of the world. He chose by name and beloved, this is what makes it so precious. He loves you, He doesn't love the world. He loves you because you are His child. (1 Peter 1:2) "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." You were elected or selected before the foundation of the world to be a recipient of the grace of Almighty God. Someone always asks "Why didn't God save everyone?" Beloved, why should He? We were His enemies. It's not a mystery to me why He didn't save everyone, the mystery is why did He save anyone? We were His enemies. We cursed Him, we trampled His mercies under our feet, we did everything against Him. Why would He save any of us? Beloved, it's a miracle of the grace of Almighty God that any of us can stand on our feet and say I'm a child of God. It's all of God, none of mankind. Salvation is of the Lord, our brother Jonah said, and it took him three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish to learn that. Some men go all their life and never learn it. If you weren't chosen of God before the foundation of the world then there is just no salvation for you. It has to be, it is the only way it will work. Investigate it, study it, research it, look at it with an open mind and an open heart. It is the only way the plan of salvation will work. If Christ died for everyone without exception, He is a colossal failure, because then everyone would be saved. Every grave of every lost person would stand as a monument against His failure. Beloved, He died for a select group of people that He Himself selected. He didn't select them because they were rich, poor, good or bad. The only reason is He chose to do so. If you are a child of God, just be thankful that He chose you. The next necessary thing is that Christ died for our sins. Did Christ die for all

men without exception? The modernistic and the religionist say yes, the Bible says no. He said He died for the sins of many, not everyone. He died for a select group, the sheep, the faithful, the believers, but He did not die for everyone. If He did He failed. We know of at least one man in hell: the rich man.

"In hell he lifted up his eyes." Did Christ die for that man? Whom He died for is God's choice. He died for a group of people. He did not die for everyone without exception, but without distinction, no matter what nationality or race you are. (Hebrews 2:13) "And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me." It tells us here that God makes a distinction. That there is a worldly people and also that God has a people. There was a select people that God gave to Christ. Why did He give them beloved? He gave them as a reward for His suffering on the cross. Peter tells us in his writing, "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."

Beloved, chosen of God the Heavenly Father. Christ, His only son died for our sin. How we ought to walk with our head held high and say, "Praise the Lord, I'm a child of the King." We have nothing to be ashamed of, we have a God of Gods, a King of kings, a Lord of lords and He is ours and we're His. Why? Because He chose us and gave us to Christ to die for. Notice, I and the children which God hath given me. Beloved, He didn't give Him all of them, but He gave Him a group. He gave Him a people. Now, who is this people? I know who they are when they profess to be saved, but before they are saved, I don't know. That is the reason why God said "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Beloved, that is God's business, not mine. My business is to do what God said, and that is to preach the gospel unto every creature.

In all of these Scriptures there is not even a hint that it applies to every man without exception, but it plainly and truly says that it is for a select group of people. (John 17:2) "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him." Who is He going to give eternal life to? All men without exception? No more and no less than as many as thou has given Him. Beloved, who then will be saved? All God's children. Every sheep of the Lord's pasture will be saved. Every one that the Lord Jesus Christ died for will be saved. It is a plan that will not fail. (John 17:12) "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." That son of perdition was Judas Iscariot. If you will study the Scripture, you will find out that Judas Iscariot filled the role of the son of Satan just the same as Jesus did the Son of God. I'm not saying that Satan was actually his father, but he filled the role as the son of Satan. In other words, he was here to do

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WHO

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the will of his father Satan. Now notice beloved, He said all that thou givest me I have kept. None of them is lost.

You will find in the Scriptures that Judas Iscariot was not one of the chosen, but he was numbered with them. He was never a saved man. He's suffering in hell just like all those that reject the Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, all that Christ died for can and will be saved.

It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to quicken you, make you alive and draw you to Christ. These necessary things are all three of the God-head. The Father chose, the Son died for the people and the Holy Spirit draws them to repentance and gives them eternal life. It's a gift from God. (Ephesians 2:1-3) "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

Notice that word nature. When the Lord saved us He gave us a new nature. That is what made the difference. We still have the old nature but it is not the ruling nature or we would be out here doing the things we did before we were saved. We have two natures, but thank God the spiritual nature is the ruling one in our life. Life is a gift from God. (Romans 6:23) "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life". (Isaiah 42:5) "Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it, he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:"

The giver of life is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit comes a knocking and He always gets His man. When the effectual call of the Holy Spirit comes, a man will move. He always gets His man. We're ready to answer the question, Who then can be saved? (John 6:37) "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Who's coming, beloved? "All that the Father giveth me". No more, no less. He will in no wise cast out any. The Father and the Son work in perfect harmony and when the Father sends one to Him certainly He is not going to cast him out. He died for that person's sin or the Lord would not have sent him to begin with.

Repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are necessary. They are gifts of Almighty God. A person will not repent and believe until the Lord gives him the power to do so. He will fight it until the very bitter end. (Acts 11:18) "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles

granted repentance unto life." There was not a Gentile saved until God granted repentance unto life. It's a gift from God. He gives us repentance. (II Tim. 2:25) "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;" Repentance is a gift of God. We cannot muster it up on our own. A person cannot repent until God gives him the gift to do it with. (John 5:24) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Beloved, that is the part of repenting and believing and you cannot do it until God gives you the gift to do it with. (John 6:47) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." But, beloved, that believing is a gift from Almighty God. (Acts 8:36,37) "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Beloved, it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ was God's only Son. (Romans 10:9, 10) "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Beloved, it is a gift from God. He cannot do it until God grants him the power to do it with. I preach this to God's people. When I'm out there amongst lost people I preach repent and believe the gospel. The only way salvation will work is God chose a people, the Lord Jesus Christ died for that people, and the Holy Spirit calls that people to repentance. And beloved, it is effectual, it is wonderful, it is ours. Praise God it belongs to us.

STUDY

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only the negative personal qualities which led to Saul's downfall, but also a number of very noble qualities which he possessed; for truly tragic characters are not always evil through and through. It is their very possession of positive qualities which make their end so tragic. The life of King Ahab, for example, is not tragic, but a case of just deserts. Saul's life, on the other hand, is tragic. Learn from his example, pastors, and do not become a modern example of tragedy.

Learn from his example, Christians, and do not become an example of a pitiful "might-have-been" like Saul. The son of an insignificant, though wealthy, Benjamite family (I Sam. 9:1,21), Saul was selected and anointed as the first monarch of God's people. The early days of his reign were characterized by military and political successes.

His most significant political success involved bringing Philistine hegemony to an end. Fleming James says of Saul, "if he could not reduce the Philistines to powerlessness he taught Israel to stand up to them." It was during his reign that the secret of iron-smelting was wrested from the Philistines. The great armies built up under the reigns of David and Solomon may not have been, had Saul not required this Philistine technology.

These early victories of Saul are not surprising. He possessed many fine personal qualities which allowed him to achieve success. While it is certainly true that all of our success as Christians is due to God's work in us, it is also a fact that we are more apt to be useable if we allow God to cultivate within us certain positive qualities. These qualities are present in the person of Saul.

The first of these qualities is meekness. Saul showed himself to be a humble man. Upon his first meeting with Saul, Samuel announced to him that he would be king. Saul's response shows his great humility: "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?" (I Sam. 9:21). Saul's humility is again shown during the national assembly at Mizpeh. When the lots had been cast and Saul had been chosen as king, he was nowhere to be found. His inherent meekness had caused him to hide away (I Sam. 10:21-22).

Many pastors and Christian leaders can learn much from the meekness of Saul. Instead of looking at ourselves as the focal points of our churches; and ministries, pastors need to see themselves as servants of the church, and to place the focus on Christ. Could it be that some of the lack of spiritual success in our churches; our lack of effectiveness in meeting needs and preaching the gospel; is due to proud pastors who seek to exalt self before Christ? Let us remember that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Pt. 5:5-6).

The second of Saul's positive personal qualities was discretion. He had the ability to be prudently self-restrained in his speech. After having been anointed by Samuel, Saul returned home. There his uncle asked him, "Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not" (I Sam. 10:15-16). Rather than brag on his kingship, Saul remains quiet.

When the "children of Belial" make disparaging remarks regarding Saul's ability to serve as king, Saul again shows his discretion. Rather than punish them in any way, as it was undoubtedly within the king's power to do, he simply "held his peace" (I Sam. 10:27).

The Bible tells us that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccl.

3:7). May Christians and pastors learn to keep silence when it is appropriate. Preachers, we spend a lot of time talking. A major part of our ministry is verbal. But let's be careful not to think that we need to comment about everything. Let's be careful not to let everybody hear every careless thought that comes into our minds. Good men of God have been greatly hurt by lies. Ministries have been hampered by stories that are patently untrue and should never have been spoken in the first place. Let's learn discretion!

Another of Saul's personal qualities was love. I Samuel 16:21 says, "And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly." One of the great ironies of Saul's life involved his ability to love and hate at once. He loved Samuel, he loved Jonathan and; in spite of his hatred, he loved David.

God is love. The first fruit of the Spirit is love. Christians need to allow the spirit to cultivate this fruit in their lives. It is not easy to be a fundamental, premillennial, missionary, biblicist baptist these days. It is very difficult. The world hates us, and many other Christians are less than fond of us. The doctrines of grace are impugned. All this makes us want to fight back and attack our opponent, and we tend to it in a most unloving way. A key verse in this regard might be Ephesians 4:15: "Speaking the truth in love." There is no question that we must speak the truth. We do not water down the truth to make it more palatable to the unsaved or the unspiritual. But in all of this, let us remember to be loving. God wants us to defend His truth, but in the right way. We can defend the truth, speak the truth and preach the truth in a loving way.

Another positive quality of Saul was that he hated evil. Though he often lapsed in this regard, for example in the case of the witch of Endor, he at one time felt strongly enough to "put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land" (I Sam. 28:3).

We live in a wicked, evil society. Attitudes, actions, and activities which cause our parents and grandparents to blush are openly proclaimed in our world. And yet when these perversions and lifestyles and words are mentioned, many Christians are not shocked! We allow these evils into our society, and sometimes into our lives and churches with nary a word against it. Consider something as all-pervasive as the T.V. Most Christians have one and watch it daily. And yet it is filled with the grossest perversions, the filthiest language, and the most anti-Christian philosophy around. I refuse to judge those who watch T.V. Until very recently I myself watched it (just for the sports!) until the beer commercials and other ads became so suggestive that it was affecting my thought life. We have allowed T.V. and the culture around us to remove our hatred of evil and thus hinder our effectiveness. II Peter 2:7-8 speaks of "...just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their un-

lawful deeds)" I'm afraid that too many Christians are allowing their souls to be vexed by seeing and hearing the unrighteous deeds of the world on T.V. and in other places. And we have learned to tolerate it. Let's allow God to rekindle holiness and hatred of evil in our hearts.

Another positive quality of Saul was that he was a family man. He was a good father. His son, Jonathan, is portrayed in Scripture as a paragon of virtue. His bravery and faith in God are depicted in I Samuel 14, and his love for David is well-known.

Additional evidence that Jonathan was raised properly comes from the fact that Jonathan, in turn, brought up his son right. Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled son, remained loyal to David throughout his life (II Sam. 19:27).

Of Saul's other sons it can be said that they were loyal to their father. Abinadab and Malchishua died alongside their father and brother Jonathan on Mt. Gilboa. Ish-bosheth, the last of Saul's sons, continued to lead Israel against David after his father's death. This was probably motivated by loyalty to his father rather than disloyalty to David, for David himself calls Ish-bosheth "a righteous person" (II Sam. 4:11).

Saul was a good family man with sons he could be proud of. While this may sound ironic, it is nonetheless true that Saul did a better job of raising his sons than either of his great contemporaries, Samuel and David!

Proper parenting is essential for all believers, but it is required of pastors. I Timothy 3:5 tells us that if a pastor can't even rule his own house, he can't possibly rule the household of God. Pastors, have you allowed your ministry to take the place of your family? The ministry is very difficult and time-consuming, but it must never take time away from the family. It is a sin to neglect our families even if it is for the ministry. The Bible tells us that if a man doesn't provide for his own household (and that provision includes money, time, leadership, love, etc.) then he is worse than an unbeliever (I Tim. 5:8). Let's become the parents that God expects us to be.

All of Saul's positive qualities led to a promising beginning as Israel's king. This soon led to a tragic decline, however, as negative qualities began to surface.

Many times a pastor or a Christian layman has a good start in his ministry, but he refuses to take seriously the admonition of Paul in I Corinthians 10:12 -- "...let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let us weed out the following negative qualities from our lives, lest we, like Saul, have a tragic end.

Saul had several notable qualities among which were, making hasty judgments (I Sam. 14:24), jealousy of subordinates (I Sam. 18:8-9), and seeking counsel from God's enemies (I Sam. 28:7). These qualities can all be found in many Christian ministries today. We tend to jump into decisions without prayerful and careful thought. Pastors become jealous of a popular youth leader or deacon and allow friction to divide the church. Pastors seek

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the help of secular psychologists for counseling or rely on the latest marketing techniques to build the church. These, and many other similar practices are wrong.

Saul's primary shortcoming, and the one which led to the loss of his kingdom, was disobedience. The primary example of Saul's disobedience is found in 1 Samuel 15. God, through Samuel, issues a direct order to Saul: "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Sam. 15:3). Saul, apparently deciding that he had a better idea than God, defeats the Amalekites, but preserves the best of the livestock as well as Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Samuel confronts Saul about this event which Scofield calls an "incomplete obedience," but which is, in fact a complete disobedience! Final judgment is passed on Saul as Samuel declares, "the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel" (1 Sam. 15:26).

The tragedy of King Saul finally ends with his suicide on Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam. 31). His life truly was tragic, because, far from being totally evil, he had many positive qualities which, if surrendered to God, could have caused his life to be other than tragic.

Do not disobey God, Christian! Do not disobey God, Pastors! It can only lead to tragedy. God must judge sin, even in believers. While the penalty for our sin was completely paid by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, there nevertheless remains discipline for those children of God who insist on walking disobediently. This includes the pastor who allows sin in his life, or who compromises the Word of God for popularity, or who utilizes worldly methods in his ministry. Determine today to allow yourself to be led by God, or suffer the consequences. Do not allow your life to be a tragedy, as Saul did.

May God bless you.

JOSHUA

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greatest of ease

But what a contrast between the ending of chapter 6 and the beginning of chapter 7! The little word "but" begins the chapter, "BUT the children of Israel committed a trespass--". One man let his greed get the best of him. Achan took of the accursed thing which they had been told belonged to the Lord and they were not to keep for themselves. In taking that which was "consecrated unto the Lord" (6:19), Achan stole that which belonged to God. It is a sin to steal from our fellow man but to steal from God is a far greater sin.

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (Mal. 3:8,9).

While this was said of Israel, it equally applies to Christians today, for God's portion is still at least the tenth of our income. God has always demanded of His children that they give Him the "firstfruits" of their income. The Christian who fails to do this is robbing God just as much as did Achan when he took of the "accursed thing".

"BUT the children of Israel committed a trespass--". It was one man who took of the "accursed thing", yet it was against the whole nation which the anger of the Lord was kindled. We find this to be just as true today in the Lord's churches. The apostle Paul warned the Church at Corinth that if they did not put away that one who was living in sin, that his sin would affect the whole church, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6).

As a result of Achan's sin Israel met a crushing defeat in the next encounter with the enemy. I wonder if that is not the problem with many of our churches today. "sin in the camp" which has not been judged? Paul asked, "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:12,13).

"And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the county. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him; Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labor thither; for they are but few" (Josh. 7:2,3).

Now that there had been such a great victory at Jericho, Joshua wasted no time but began to make preparations for the next encounter. The next city to be taken was the little city Ai, which lies about 10 miles northeast of Jericho. As before, he sent spies to view the land. Upon their return they spoke with much self-confidence. They told Joshua that the taking of Ai would be easy, that there was no need to make all the people go up to Ai, for it would only take about two or three thousand men to take that little city. They had forgotten that it was God that had brought down the walls of Jericho and caused the hearts of the men of the city to "melt" and not to have any "more courage" (2:11). They were now walking by sight instead of by faith. Their report, upon their return from Ai was quite different from the spies' return from Jericho who, "said unto Joshua, Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us" (Josh. 2:24).

Joshua now makes a very serious mistake, a mistake that was a contributing cause for their defeat at Ai. Achan's sin was the cause of God's anger being kindled against Israel, but Joshua did not know of this sin. Where he went wrong was when he listened to the advice of the spies instead of seeking the leadership of the "Captain of the host of the LORD". It would seem that

Joshua had forgotten who was in command of this warfare, therefore he and Israel had to be taught a lesson.

"So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water" (Josh. 7:4,5).

Taking the advice of the spies, Joshua sent only about three thousand men up to take the city. It would seem that these three thousand men must have marched right up to the gate of the city expecting it to fall down as did the wall of Jericho and that they would find the men of Ai paralyzed with fear. But when they got there they found the men of Ai ready to fight. Their hearts and courage was not like that of the men of Jericho. God was not in this operation, therefore He had not melted the hearts and taken away the courage of the men of Ai. Result? They put the men of Israel to flight, killing about thirty six of their number. Instead of the hearts of the people of Ai being melted it was the hearts of the people of Israel whose hearts were "melted and became as water".

What went wrong? No one really knew. The primary problem was hidden sin in the camp. Because of the sin of Achan the Lord had left Israel to act upon their own. They had just come off a great victory, and pride and self confidence had taken over. Joshua made the fatal mistake of taking human advice instead of seeking the will of the Lord. The result was a humiliating defeat, "they fled before the men of Ai". The cause of their defeat was that God was not with them. Achan's sin had caused God to place a curse upon Israel, but the spies had no business in acting upon their own and giving advice on how to take the city. Joshua did wrong in listening to the spies instead of going to his Commander-in-Chief for his orders. Israel's victory over Jericho had given them so much pride, and boastfulness was manifest in the statement of the spies, "No need to send all the people up---". They failed to remember that it was not they themselves who won the battle, but God who gave the victory. Joshua made the mistake we, today, too often make, that is going ahead of God and making our own plans instead of waiting upon God and His leadership. Israel must be taught a lesson. God only had to withdraw His support and what was the result? Defeat! Look at the result this defeat had upon the people, "the hearts of the people melted, and became as water".

"And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Josh. 7:6).

Joshua was crushed by the defeat of Israel by the men of Ai. He could not imagine what went wrong. They had just come from a great victory of that great city Jericho, now thinking the taking of little Ai. (only about twelve thousand in all) would be a sim-

ple matter. Not so, He reasoned without God. Is that not what goes wrong with many of our plans? Things that seem easy to accomplish we go ahead without God's direction. Though Joshua, being the man of faith that he was, let his emotions take over. Though he, "rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD", in humility, at the same time he was more concerned about his own feeling than he was in finding out what went wrong. This is brought out in his prayer.

"And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people ever Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan" (Josh. 7:7).

It would seem that he was blaming God for their defeat. He was accusing God of bringing them over Jordan and now He had deserted them. It would seem that he had forgotten God's promise that He had given them the land. Did not Joshua react to this defeat much like we do today when we meet a setback? Joshua's actions show that though he was a man of faith, yet he was human, and as human he could be depressed by his failures. He was feeling sorry for himself. "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turned their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" (Josh. 7:8,9).

Joshua, in his prayer, now gets to the question of God's honor and His glory. What effect will this defeat have upon what the heathen think of God and His power? When they hear of this defeat at the hand of Ai they shall, "Cut our name from the earth". Then he asked God, "What wilt thou do unto the great name?" What he is asking is that if God permits the Canaanites to destroy the Israelites what would they say of God, the God who had been with the children of Israel all these many years? Was He so great after all? Were the gods of the heathen greater than the God of the Israelites? It would seem at this point Joshua's great concern had turned from self to that of his Lord. If they "cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

"And the LORD said unto Joshua. Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you" (Josh. 7:10-12).

The Lord told Joshua, "Get up and stop complaining. I will tell

you what the trouble is. There is sin in Israel. They have transgressed my covenant and have stolen that which is mine." Why did Israel turn their backs and run from the enemy? It was because they no longer had God to lead them. God also told Joshua that, "Except ye destroy the accursed from among you", that He would no longer lead them, "neither will I be with you any more".

In verses 13 through 15 the Lord gives Joshua the instructions how to discover the one who has caused the whole host to be accursed. Joshua was to tell the people to "Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow" (v.13). Then all the tribes were to be lined up with each family and each household in their proper place. The Lord would then choose the tribe, then the family, then the household and on to the man who was guilty of this sin (v.14).

"And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: ...because he hath wrought folly in Israel" (v.15).

We may ask why did the Lord use this method of bringing to light the one who was guilty of the sin which had caused so much trouble to Israel? First, I believe it was to impress upon the people the terrible sin of breaking God's covenant. Second, it gave the guilty one space to repent and confess his sin, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). But his heart was hardened and he failed to step forward and confess that he was the guilty one. The sentence was, "he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath".

"So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and brought Israel by their tribes: and the tribe of Judah was taken;" (v. 16,17).

Joshua wasted no time in complying with God's command concerning this matter. He brought Israel out and lined them up according to tribe, family, and household. I can see all of Israel standing waiting, wondering who would be the guilty person. Some may have wondered, as did the apostles when Christ told them that one of them would betray Him, "Is it I?" We are not told by what method the guilty one was to be revealed, but it was likely by lot. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD" (Prov. 16:33).

If this was the method used, the lot first fell upon the tribe of Judah. Of the tribe of Judah the family of Zerah was taken. From Zerah the family of Zabdi and then Achan, the son of Carmi was found to be the guilty one. (Josh. 7:17,18). To be continued.

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