

Psm. 11:3

Baptists For Liberty

Prov. 29:2

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Galations 5:1

NEWS LETTER

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"The Furnace of Affliction"

by Bro. Milburn Cockrell

"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10).

The Bible has much to say about the afflictions of God's people. Psalm 34:19 declares: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

It is sometimes necessary for God to put His people in the furnace of affliction. This act flows from both the justice and compassion of God. He does this to try and to prove His people. This was true of Israel of old (Deut. 4:20), and it is equally true of the New Testament believer. In the time of the Old Testament a "furnace" was a fireplace for melting and refining silver and gold (Prov. 17:3; 27:21). The word is used figuratively in the Scriptures. It is an emblem of cruel bondage (Deut. 4:20; I Kings 8:51; Isa. 11:4), or severe and grievous afflictions (Ezek. 22:18-22; Isa. 32:9). In my text it would seem to have the latter meaning.

(continued on page 7)

Good Endurance!

A Man will suffer through much if he truly believes it is worth it! Romans 8:16-18; *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

Romans 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."*

2Timothy 2:3; *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*

Ephesians 1:11-12; *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."*

1Corinthians 15:57-58; *"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."*
Galatians 6:9; *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."*

~ Bro. Donnie Burford

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."
Zechariah 13:9

INDEX

Sermon: "Sincerely Yours Romans 12:9-13"

by Bro. Cecil Fayard, page 2

Forum: "Discipleship, Discipline, Saints", page 3

"The Furnace Of Affliction" by Bro. Milburn Cockrell, page 7

"Manufactured Felonies?" by Sis. Joanna Works, page 10

"Loving the Stranger" by Bro. Todd Bryant, page 11

"Minimum Wage: The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard and Liberty of Contract" by Bro. Blaine Conzatti, page 11

"Are You Ready" by Bro. Curtis Pugh, page 13

Updates From Ireland: "Equality" by Sis. Sarah Doherty, page 16

News From Canada: "You Should Know"

by Sis. Grace Brooks, page 17

"Political Issues In The Philippines & The Presidential Elections" by Bro. Nilo Del Mundo, page 18

"Holiness of The Holy!" by Bro. Donnie Burford, page 20

"Believing Unbelievers" by Bro. Curtis Pugh, page 20

"Persecuted For Their Faith" by Sis. Joanna Works, page 23

Devotion: 2 Corinthians 4:17 by Bro. Jeff Short, page 24

"Does It Really Matter?" by Bro. Donnie Burford, page 25

"Believing Unbelievers"

by Bro. Curtis Pugh

That God's true sons and daughters genuinely believe is a glad and glorious fact. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him," is another truth from God's Word. The other side of that statement is that with faith it is possible to please God! That ought to set all sorts of joyful thoughts soaring through the minds of believers. To be able to please the God of all grace who loved us thoroughly depraved sinners: is this idea of pleasing God not the heart's desire of all God's saints? Faith is that sustaining connection which, along with repentance, God has "granted" to those whom He saved. In the days of the apostles there is recorded for us a most instructive incident. The group within the Jerusalem congregation that favored law-keeping confronted Peter because of his actions.

(continued on page 20)

Sermon:
“Sincerely Yours
Romans 12:9-13”
 by Bro. Cecil Fayard



INTRO: Sincere love is the theme of the love called for in the book of Romans. The old hymn by Albert C Fisher says:

Love is the theme
 Of the themes that men have known,
 One supremely stands alone;
 Thro the ages it has shown,
 ‘Tis His wonderful, wonderful love.

CHORUS:
 Love is the theme, love is supreme,
 Sweeter it grows, glory bestows;
 Bright as the sun, ever it glows!
 Love is the theme, eternal theme!

In chapters 1-11 of Romans, all references to love, agape love, have had to do with the love of God shown to sinners.

His love:
 1. Was demonstrated on the cross of Calvary Rom. 5:8.
 2. Was shed abroad in the believer’s heart Rom. 5:5.
 3. Will not let us go Rom. 8:35,38-39.
 4. Will not let the believer be condemned Rom. 8:1.
 In chapters 12-16, we are exhorted to let love be our theme, to let love guide our lives, to let love influence us for good, to allow love to govern our relationships.
 We are to love God supremely (Matt 22:37-40). We cannot love our neighbor if we do not love God.
 In Romans 12:6-8, we have seen that the church is a body, a body differing in its gifts, diverse, yet unified in purpose, having unity without uniformity. Now in Romans 12:9-21 the need for God’s love in the life of the believer is brought out. We are to love one another (vss 9-13), and we are to love our enemies (vss 17-21).

I. VS 9, THE BELIEVERS OBLIGATION PERSONALLY
 A. Vs 9a, My love must be sincere.
 I. “Let love be without dissimulation.” This means without hypocrisy, genuine, without wax, without a mask.
 2. There is to be no play-acting. We are not to be two-faced.
 3. Our love is to be cleansed of self, and thus it is to be a pure stream of love going out to others.
 a. The first fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal 5:22).
 b. Our true love to other believers proves to the world that we are Christ’s disciples (John 13:35).
 c. Paul prayed for the saints at Thessalonica to “increase and abound in love one toward another...” (I Thes 3:12).

B. Vs 9b, I must hate that which is evil and cling like glue to that which is good. “Abhor that which is evil.”
 a. Here is love’s hatred of evil.
 b. We must realize that evil is the enemy of God, the enemy of good, the enemy of virtue, the enemy of all that is lovely.
 c. We are to hate evil as much as we are to desire love.
 d. The Bible tells us to hate evil: “*Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.*” (Psa. 97:10). Then note the words of David in Psalm 101:4: “*A forward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked [evil] person.*” Then in Prov. 8: 13, “*The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...*” God hates evil so should we.
 2. “Cleave to that which is good.”
 a. The Greek word for “cleave” is *kolla* meaning glue.
 b. We are to stick like glue to that which is good. We are to bind ourselves to right, to good, to righteousness, to good and righteous people.
 c. We are directed back to Rom. 12:2, where we are admonished: “be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed...”
 I.) Fill up on the Word of God, be separated from the world and good will replace evil in your life.
 2.) Think on good (Philippians 4:8).

II. VSS 10-13, THE BELIEVERS OBLIGATION TO THE CHURCH FAMILY

A. Vs 10a, We are to be affectionate and devoted to each other in brotherly love.
 1. “Kindly affectioned,” this means family love in the Greek.
 a. We are to love one another because we are members of the same family.
 b. We are brothers and sisters because we have the same Father, God.
 2. “With brotherly love...”
 a. As brothers and sisters, we are to love one another for brotherly love is the nature of a Christian (I Thes 4:9).
 b. If we do not have love for the brethren, we are not in God’s family (I John 4:20).

B. Vs 10b, We are to prefer each other in honor.
 1. We are to put others first.
 a. J— Jesus first
 O— Others second
 Y— yourself last
 b. We are not to be conceited (Rom. 12:3).
 C. We are to see others as important (Phil 2:3).
 2. We are to honor others.
 a. Not flattery, but genuine admiration and appreciation.
 b. Some folks cannot honor others because they cannot stop honoring themselves.

C. Vs 11 a, We must not be sluggish or lacking in zeal.
 1. We are in a battle, and the world is the battleground. We cannot be “slothful in business.” We have to be diligent.
 2. It is better to burn out for the Lord than to rust out.
 3. We need to be busy for the Lord.
 a. Do good to all men while we have the opportunity (Gal 6:10; II Thes 3:13).
 b. One day our opportunity will be over (Ecc 9:10).
 c. God will reward your diligent work for Him (Heb 6:10-12).

Forum: Discipleship, Discipline, Saints

How does a believer distinguish between the chastening of the LORD and trials for our growth?

Nilo del Mundo (*Baptist Church Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*): After you overcome, hardship, pain, sorrow, you look back. If you have learned your lesson and the fear of the Lord comes to you and others because of the experience, then it is the chastening of the Lord. If you have matured and grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord after the experience, then it is a trial.

Bro. Jason Shults (*Associate pastor Beverly Manor Baptist Church Washington, IL/Dean of Illinois Baptist College*): Before jumping into answering the specific question, let me first note that neither chastening nor trials are punishment. I've had numerous instances of believers going through difficult circumstances and concluding the Lord was punishing them for some sin in their life. I want you to understand that's not possible! For those of us Christ Jesus, He took on Himself all our sin and all the punishment due for our sin fell onto Him – leaving not a single drop of punishment for us!

Chastening corrects us when we are engaging in some particular sin that the Lord seeks to bring us out of. Hebrews 12:7-13 tells us the Lord disciplines those whom He loves. Such divine correction is often not enjoyable, any more than the correction of my earthly father was pleasurable to me. Yet, just like the sign of a loving earthly parent is discipline and correction, the sign of God's love for us is also discipline and correction. If we are not being corrected, we are not being loved.

Trials and tribulations, on the other hand, create within us patience and more reliance on the Lord. (Romans 5:3; James 1:3) It is through facing difficulties in life – things which are far beyond our ability to overcome ourselves – that we learn to follow the Psalmist's command to wait courageously on the Lord for deliverance. (Psalm 27:14)

So perhaps, with that understanding, it will make more sense when I say that I don't differentiate between chastening and trials. Both of those are intended for our growth! But it is always important to remember that neither of those is punishment for sin. Jesus took all of that to the Cross and satisfied God's anger toward us.

Bro. Donnie Burford (*Pastor South Irvine Baptist Church Irvine, KY*): Because of the many similarities in their manifest nature, the question arises how can one tell whether they are suffering the profitable and positive pains of growth through trials, or whether these pains are not growth pains, but rather the pains that are brought on us because of our failures in our trials of life and in faithfully walk rightly with our Lord.

Let me try to be clear, all God's children, if truly his children, will go through the pains caused by both trials and chastening. It

D. Vs 11 b, We must be fervent in spirit.

1. We are to be on fire for the Lord; we are to be boiling for Him.
2. We need to be enthusiastic in God's work, aglow with the Spirit.
3. We are not to be lukewarm in God's work (Rev 3:15-16).

E. Vs 11 c, We are serving the Lord.

1. We are not serving self; we are serving the Lord; and what we do is to honor and glorify Him. What Paul has written here is a safeguard to unbridled emotion.
2. Our enthusiasm is to be in accordance with God's Word, not contrary to it.

F. Vs 12a, We are to rejoice in hope.

1. Christians are to be optimists for we know that, "the best is yet to come."
2. "There are no hopeless situations in life; there are only men who have grown hopeless about them."
3. Heaven is yet to come (John 14:1-6); rewards are yet to come (II Tim 4:8).

G. Vs 12b, We are to be patient in tribulation.

1. We maybe in the fire; yet with us is the fourth man of Daniel 3:24-25, the Lord Jesus.
2. Tribulation will make us bitter or better.

H. Vs 12c, We must continue to pray.

1. When we do not pray, we are going on in life, on in spiritual battle without God and His power. We are going it alone.
 2. "No man should be surprised when life collapses if he insists on living it alone" (Barclay 166).
- I. Vs I 3a, We are to share with those who have needs.
1. The world is bent on getting. Let us be bent on giving.
 2. Let us help our brothers and sisters when they are in need. a. "Distributing"-- Greek *koinoneo* meaning "to share in, share with, fellowship, communion." b. The church is to have a spirit of sharing.

J. Vs 13b, We are to be given to hospitality.

1. As Christians, we are to have an open hand, an open heart, and an open door.
2. Prov 14:31.

CONCLUSION: May the Lord help us to live as we are instructed to in Romans 12:9-13.



is a necessary part in our personal and progressive sanctification as His children. They are both indispensable in our proper relationship and walk with the Lord. In fact, the words discipleship and discipline are derived from the same Latin root word and carrying the notion of order. A disciple is one who in trials is taught to walk orderly before the Lord. And the disciple that stumbles in those trials will often find himself being disciplined of his Lord to correct his faltering steps and teach him, possibly even again, how to walk in the right and orderly way, the way of faith and faithfulness.

The obvious difference is one is suffering for righteousness sake and the other is suffering brought on because of the lack of it. One is for our progressive strengthening and learning, (Growing in Grace and knowledge) and one is for our correction that we might again be brought into a proper state to make progress. One is that we might be strengthened in our walk with the Lord and the other that we might again be brought back and taught to rightly walk with the Lord.

Dealing only with the issue of discerning the pains brought on us because of our failures, rebellion and sin, i.e. Chastening, it may not be immediately known or discerned that it is indeed because of some such failures, but it very soon will be undeniably recognized and then should be acknowledged and repented of, that we might be restored in a right relationship, fellowship and walk with our Lord. (1John 1:7-10)

Chastening would be of no real purpose if the disciple who is under its corrective effect did not recognize it, eventually or immediately, as such. This is the clear implication from the classical text on this matter, Hebrews 12. That to endure it you first must recognize for what it is, and that it is of your loving Father, Vs. 7 ; *“If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”* Some times because of some known wrong my Dad corrected me, and immediately I knew well why. Other times there are such cases, as often in church discipline, that a member may not immediately recognize that corrective measures have been taken in order to teach them of their sin and yet it is the hoped belief that God will eventually bring them to the recognition of why such corrective action has been taken. In either case, God brings about the acknowledging of it as sin and that for the purpose of teaching and correcting us.

If one is truly walking daily with the Lord, striving to be faithful to him in all they do, it is unlikely that the pains experienced are of a corrective and disciplinary nature but rather simply the pains brought about in Gods growing of us.

Bro. Hansel Villasor (*Pastor Providence Baptist Church San Carlos City, Negros Occidental, Philippines*):

Chastening is a result when a believer miss the mark as directed by the Lord. It is therefore:

1. **A form of Correction.** I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. 2 *Samuel 7:14;*

2. **A way for restoration.** I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. *Jeremiah 31:18; and*

3. **A sign of God’s love to His children.** And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Hebrews 12:5- 12

Trials are permitted by God to happen to His children in order for them to fully understand the presence of God. Like Job, he was tested as no other man was tested before or after him. His trials included his health, loss of ten children, and wealth. Most human beings were tested on one area at a time, but Job's testing was on all matters relating to a man, his family, his health, loss of wealth, and status in the community. Job may have been knowledge about God but the trials made him experienced the presence and fellowship with God. Job 42:1-6

Bro. Clint Keith (*Pastor of Grace Baptist church Monticello, KY*): The reality is, for the child of God, we must endure both chastening and trials as long as we are in the flesh. This is not true for those that do not belong to Christ, for Hebrews 12:8 declares only the children of God endure chastening. Chastening is the loving response of our Father toward His children to the things in our lives that have separated us from our Lord. Now trials are suffered by everyone that lives upon the earth. But our Father in His grace uses the trials of life to build in us the spiritual character, to make us more like Christ Jesus (Romans 8:29).

Notice a few examples of trials and chastening given to us in the scriptures:

- ❖ **Trials;** James 1:2-4 James tells us to rejoice, count it all joy, when we suffer through trials because the Father is working in us.
- ❖ Job 1:8 We find that Father allows trials to come in our lives even when He can brag on us. Even though Job’s friends continually claimed Job must have sinned to deserve such suffering, Job continually declared his innocence. Job’s story reminds us that just because a

brother is suffering in a trial does not mean it is because of sin.

- ❖ Genesis 50:19-20, Poor Joseph's life was one continuous trial, but he declared in this passage, though it was meant for evil against him, it was exactly where Father wanted him in order to save His people by the hand of Joseph.
- ❖ II Corinthians 12:9-10 Paul describes his thorn in the flesh, a trial that God left Paul with in order that Father might, through Paul, show His glory.
- ❖ **Chastening;** Hebrews 12:6-13 describes that all of God's Children receive chastening, for we are ever failing our Lord, but our Father in His love for us, corrects His children that we might be more and more like Christ.
- ❖ I Corinthians 11:28-32 Paul declares that there were some in Corinth that had treated the communion table with no reverence and in the chastening of God there were some who were sick and even some that had died because of the chastening on them.
- ❖ James 5:15-16, 19-20 tells us when a brother is under the chastening hand of God and is repentant, we should come along side that one and pray with him for healing from God, and God would use us to save that one from physical death.

But, how is it that we are able to tell the difference between trials and chastening? Well, James intimates that the child of God knows exactly when he is under the punishment of God. The chastening always comes with the conviction of the Spirit on our hearts. In my own experience it takes very little introspection for me to know when I am enduring a trial or a chastisement. As Paul points out in the Hebrews 12:9 we have had earthly fathers that punished us when we needed correction, and speaking as a father when one of my four children receive punishment they know why they are being punished, it is a part of teaching our children, Our Father does no less for His children. I cannot necessarily look at another's trial, and recognize whether it is chastening or trial, but the one suffering should and can know by coming to His Father in prayer if he does not know right away. The wonderful thing about our Father is He chastens because He loves us, and even His punishments He uses to teach and to mold us as He would have us to be.

Many accept Catholicism's idea of what a saint is, how does Scriptures define "saint"?

Nilo del Mundo: In the scriptures, saints are sanctified ones, people who are of God, whether dead or alive.

Bro. Jason Shults: Modern day Christians think of saints as almost perfectly virtuous historical figures. A lot of that confusion is due to Roman Catholicism which has set up a level of saints which operate as intermediaries between God and man. In the process they reject the truth that there is only "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

The true understanding of the word just means someone who is

holy, pure or set apart. It doesn't mean you have to be the perfect example of Christian virtue to be a saint. Think about the church at Corinth. Most often we find them to be good examples of a bad example. There was, within that church, fornication, drunkenness, Christians taking brothers to court over financial quarrels. And yet Paul writes and says they are "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." (1 Corinthians 1:2)

In short, anyone who is saved through faith in Jesus Christ is a saint because they are called to be holy, pure and set apart. One of the most touching evidences of this is in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 4:21-22

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

In verse 21 we find everyone in Christ Jesus are saints and Paul intends to greet them. In verse 22 we find all other saints joining in that greeting, especially the saints in Caesar's household! Wherever a Christian may find themselves – whether in the safety and comfort of a community of believers, or the challenging circumstances of being a believer in Caesar's house – we are called upon to be saints.

Bro. Donnie Burford: What Biblically is a Saint?

First of all, it is not something conferred by any man or church, but rather it is a result of God's calling and His declaring and acknowledging us as such in respects to our positional standing now before Him. Holy ones, sanctified ones, those who have been consecrated by God through the person and work of Christ and His shed blood for Holy things and purposes. All who are truly saved are truly Saints and should live accordingly. You are either a Saint or you ain't! Just as either you are saved or you are not. We are declared such not because anything in or done by us, but because of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2; *"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"*

Bro. Hansel Villazor: Saint basically means "to set apart", "sanctify" or "to make holy". Apostle Paul, in many instances addressed his epistles to saints in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse. This ascertains that saints are living individuals who are made holy by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. They are set apart to gather and worship God and carry and proclaim the gospel to every corners of the world.

Bro. Clint Keith: The definition of saint in the New Testament is one who sacred, pure, and morally blameless according to Strong's definitions. Now, Catholicism teaches the saints are those who have already died, whose lives were "notable for holiness and virtues practiced, and who have been officially declared saints by the church through the process of beautification and canonization..." (The Catholic Concise Encyclopedia, Robert C. Broderick, 1956.) Therefore only those appointed by the Catholic Church after their death can be made saints. In fact Catholicism reveres them so highly that Vatican 1

and Vatican 2, both teach that you can pray through Mary and the saints and angels to get to Jesus. First of all, Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man, there is no other that we go to or pray to, we pray directly to the Lord Jesus. Secondly, this is not the case in the scripture. According to the many uses of the word "saints" in the scriptures it is always in reference to the children of God, and not after they have died, but they are declared saints while they yet live. Paul says a saint is called, (Romans 1:7, 1 Corinthians 1:2). He describes Jesus interceding for His saints (Romans 8:27) and then in Hebrews 7:25 he declares all those that belong to the Lord Jesus are interceded for by Him, therefore, equating the saints with the saved.

We know the saints to be living saints described in the scripture, because Paul describes them in need of being ministered to. (Romans 15:25-26) In fact Paul declares the saints were the church at Corinth in I Corinthians 6:1-2. Paul considered himself a saint and the least of them. (Ephesians 3:8) In fact when Jesus returns in glory to take His throne, He is coming with His saints. (I Thessalonians 3:13, Jude 14, and Revelation 19:8, 14) My friend if you belong to the Lord Jesus, and your sins have been washed in His blood then you are a saint of God. You do not have to wait till you die, or some ecclesiastical board from Catholicism to declare you to be.

***How does sanctification relate to our theme?
(Refine like silver/trials, affliction, & persecution of God's people, theme verse Zechariah 13:9)***

Nilo del Mundo: Isaiah 48:10-11 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. (11) For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

God refines, gives trials, preserves, allows persecution, of his saints for his own glory.

Bro. Jason Shults: Sanctification is the process in which God takes a believer and, through their learning and experience, makes them progressively more holy. Ultimately, sanctification will not result in complete sinlessness in this life. It is merely the life-long process through which a believer becomes a more mature and obedient saint.

God uses many methods to ensure the sanctification of His people. Trials and afflictions are only one of those methods. We can grow by reading the Word, learning God's truths, participating in the active work of the church, etc. But it is also clear the sanctification progresses through the refining fires of God's design for our lives.

1 Peter 1:6-7

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

One of Peter's points here is that trials work as a refining fire.

Precious metals are put into the fire in order to burn out impurities. Similarly, precious saints are put through trials in which our self-sufficiency is scorched and what is left is a mature God-reliant saint who looks to his Lord for all things. That is the very essence of sanctification.

Bro. Donnie Burford: Positionally in our standing before God we are already Sanctified, Holy before Him and that by and in Christ! (1Corinthians 1:30) This is a once forever act of God. And yet still being sinners, we need more and more to progressively, Personally and experientially by the Grace and power of God to sanctify ourselves more fully unto the Lord and that repeatedly and daily. What we are spiritually before God we are to be more and more practically/experientially/personally living out in the daily life He has given us. This is not only our responsibility but it is God's present activity as He works out His purpose in us. He has made us Holy before Him, He desires and purposes that we would now live Holy unto Him (1Peter 1:16) and we are sure one day He will complete His work making us completely Holy, matching our state to our standing in Glorification. (1John 1:1-3) Knowing this we pursue His will. If there is one thing we as Saints, Holy ones should know for certain, whether it be the pains of our trials or from the pains of our chastening, persecution, or from whatever else is going on in our lives, God is working out His will conforming us to the image of His Holy Son, sanctifying us!

Philippians 2:12-15; *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;"*

Philippians 1:6; *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"*

Bro. Hansel Villazor: Saints are also subject for trials, afflictions, and persecutions. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: **1 Peter 2:21**. Jesus also had testified it by saying "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (**Jn.15:20**). This is what the world will do to God's children because the world do know God. But these persecutions shall not be the reason to falter from faith. Jesus once again testified that blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (**Matthew 5:10**)

Apostle Peter told the saints to be joyful when tried saying "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. **1 Peter 4:12-13**

Trials therefore are refining agents saints must undergo so we can fully know who really God is. **John 17: 1-3, Philippians 3:10**

Bro. Clint Keith: Zechariah 13:9 is speaking of the remnant of Israel that will come through the Tribulation period. Verse 8 describes that the other two-thirds will be killed during the wicked reign of Anti-Christ. How does this passage have an application to sanctification? First of all we see sanctification is to set apart for service, to make holy. This sanctification is a grace just like justification and glorification. Now does that mean we no longer sin in the flesh? No, and this is the reason for the need of continual cleansing, I John 1:9. Sanctification is carried out through the word, John 17:19; in Christ Jesus, I Corinthians 1:2, 30; by God, Jude 1; and by the Holy Ghost, Romans 15:16. Therefore as he works this grace, to make us like Christ, Romans 8:29; we are refined in trials, tribulations, and persecutions to be conformed to the image of Christ, and to make us conformable unto His death, Philippians 3:10.

“The Furnace of Affliction”

by Bro. Milburn Cockrell
(1941-2002)



Many agents are used by God in working out His sovereign purposes. He may use men, things, and circumstances. This is all hinted at in the action of fire in a furnace. A furnace with a fire in it causes suffering and separation. Fire finds out what is worthless; it cleanses. Now I want to list some of the forms these afflictions take.

First, God may send us a scantiness of earthly things: *“And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD”* (Amos 4:6). We may not have enough food to dirty our teeth. The Lord controls both nature and worldly circumstances. He has many ways of taking away our temporal goods. Though we may work hard every work day and make much money, God can cause it to not go very far. *“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes”* (Hag. 1:6).

Second, there can be affliction in our body:

“My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh” (Ps. 38:5-7). It is a small matter for the great Proprietor and Manager of the furnace of affliction to make the body burn with fever or waste it by

disease.

Third, this affliction may take the form of bereavements: *“And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her”* (Gen. 23:2). Our friends and relatives get sick and die. Many of us have been put in this furnace of affliction. Friends and relatives are removed by death, lest we trust too much in them instead of the Lord.

Fourth, the Lord sends domestic trials: *“And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah”* (Gen. 26:34-35). Sometimes our child will make a bad choice of a mate for life. Often times even small children in the home mock their father and despise their mother (Prov. 30:17). The actions of our children can break our hearts, put gray hairs in our heads, and hasten us to the grave. Millions of God’s elect have been in this furnace of affliction. Adam first experienced it when he sinned in Eden. Moses suffered afflictions with the people of God. David was persecuted by his blood-thirsty enemies. Job lost his possessions, children, and health. Jeremiah and Isaiah were cruelly treated. Daniel was put in the lions’ den. Paul and Silas were put in prison. Even our Lord was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

THIS FURNACE IS DIVINELY APPOINTED

Afflictions are not the result of chance or blind fate. They arise not out of the dust. They are not to be traced to secondary causes. They are not merely the work of our enemies. Affliction comes from the moral government of God. They are the wise and gracious arrangement of His providence. *“That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto”* (I Thess. 3:3).

“Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it” (Micah 6:9).

The same God who sends the sunshine and the rain also sends His people into the furnace of affliction.

“The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up” (I Sam. 2:6-7).

In Isaiah 45:7 Jehovah declares: *“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.”* The wise man sees the hand of God in affliction as well as in affluency. Every event is either of His appointment, or it has His all-wise permission. God works all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11), and so all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. 8:28). *“He taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou? He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked”* (Job 9:12, 22). God’s afflictive providence is the working out of His sovereign will. Often we see God’s hand in great things, but not in little things. We see His hand in good things, but not in evil things. *“Behold, this evil is of the LORD”* (II Kings 6:33). Job asked his wife: *“What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”* (Job 2:10). *“Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?”* (Amos 3:6). *“For the*

inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem" (Micah 1:12). These verses do not teach that God is the author of sin. Rather they teach that when God sends us afflictions they seem evil unto us. When grace enables us to see the hand of God in all events, we can bear these without murmuring or complaining. Job lost his family, his wealth, and his good health, yet he consoled himself: *"For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him"* (Job 23:14).

David suffered much from his enemies and his family, yet he was happy to say: *"My times are in thy hand"* (Ps. 31:15). Still again hear him: *"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it"* (Ps. 39:9). When Eli was told his family tree would be cut off, he said to young Samuel: *"It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good"* (I Sam. 3:18). When Hezekiah was told by the Prophet Isaiah that his sons would be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon, he said: *"Good is the word of the LORD which thou has spoken"* (Isa. 39:8). How wonderful to know that a God of infinite love and wisdom has arranged all things which come to pass in this world. When we find ourselves in a very dark chapter of the book of Divine Providence, we must fall upon the words of our Lord: *"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shall know hereafter"* (John 13:7).

THIS FURNACE IS NOT VINDICTIVE, BUT GRACIOUS

The chastisement of God is always less than we deserve: *"He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities"* (Ps. 103:10). If God dealt with us as our sins deserved, we would be consigned to the lowest Hell. But because of His mercy and grace we never suffer as we deserve to suffer. *"But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath"* (Ps. 78:38).

"And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this" (Ezra 9:13). Our sins are many: *"For in many things we offend all"* (Jas. 3:2). Nevertheless, God's judgments are few: *"For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men"* (Lam. 3:33). The afflictions He sends because of our sins are "light afflictions" (II Cor. 4:17). They are of short duration: *"For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"* (Ps. 30:5). The Lord told the Israelites: *"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer"* (Isa. 54:7-8).

THE FURNACE IS FOR OUR EVERLASTING GOOD

There can be no caprice, nor unwise, or interperate anger in God toward His peculiar people. When He sends upon us afflictions they are designed for our spiritual and everlasting good. They are corrective, not destructive. When we are cold and indifferent to His cause He will permit persecutions and reproaches to befall us. But this is not the same way God punishes the wicked for their sins. The wicked are punished in wrath; the righteous are

chastened in love. The wicked is punished for the good of society; the righteous for his individual good: *"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10; cf. Deut. 8:15-16).

Afflictions exhibit the faithfulness of God:

"I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (Ps. 119:75). God always justly and wisely chastens us. It is the faithfulness of God to His covenant which brings the elect under the rod. *"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips"* (Ps. 89:30-34; cf. Ezek. 20:37). These chastisements are blessings in disguise; they are veiled mercies. When sore afflictions come upon us we have the greatest evidence that we are loved with an everlasting love: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent"* (Rev. 3:19).

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12:6-7). None but the sons and daughters of God in the family are corrected. To live without chastisement is a sad sign of alienation from God. Our heavenly Father chastens us to prevent our final condemnation: *"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"* (I Cor. 11:32).

THE FURNACE IS PROPORTIONATE

As a furnace is prepared for refining gold (Prov. 17:3), so afflictions are appointed for the saints, who are compared to fine gold (Lam. 4:2). Let us see here the high value that God places upon His people. Being chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit, they are His precious gold. As His gold they get tarnished by the world and sin, and they must be subjected to the refining process. The power of His glory and grace must be seen in them. Hence Jehovah seeks their spiritual improvement: *"And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin"* (Isa. 1:25).

The Lord does not treat Israel in the severe manner in which gold or silver is treated by the refiner: *"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver. . ."* (Isa. 48:10). The Great Refiner knows His metal; He knows what each one can bear. He never suffers us to be tested above that we are able to bear. Sometimes He pours water on the fire if it gets too hot. He never goes beyond our strength. Neither does He turn the furnace up to the same temperature for all alike. He proportionates the temperature to the strength of the bearer, allotting a greater heat to the strongest, and a less to the weakest. *"I will correct thee in measure"* (Jer. 30:11). God will not over afflict. The goldsmith keeps the furnace burning with the gold in it until all the dross has been removed, and he can see his face in the pure gold. Even so does our heavenly Father. Let us be cheerful and hopeful when we are in the furnace, knowing He seeks only to see His pure image

clearly in us. We are in the furnace of affliction “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness” (Heb. 12:10).

An all-wise God regulates the heat of the furnace according to the needs of His people.

“And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:3). Some of us need more heat than others, so He quickens the fire when needed. Micah said: “I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him. . .” (Micah 7:9). There are other times that He lowers the temperature, according to His Divine inspection. The prophet Jeremiah said: “O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing” (Jer. 10:24).

THE TENDENCY OF THE FURNACE IS BENEFICIAL

Matthew Henry gives this beautiful exposition of my text: “I have made thee a choice one by the good which the furnace has done thee.” The design of God in choosing us to suffer in the furnace of affliction was for our everlasting good and His glory. Regenerating grace implants in us the seeds of immortality, which require cultivation in order to bring about maturity. The furnace is designed to develop these principles and to fit us for higher enjoyment.

First, the furnace of affliction is designed to prevent us from going astray: “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. . . It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Ps. 119:67, 71). By our natural corruption we are ready to wander in the pathway of sin and go astray after worldly vanities. Hence the Lord makes affliction to serve us as an electric fence and a thorny hedge to keep us on the right course. Afflictions amend us and strengthen us to keep God’s statutes.

Second, they wean us from the evil world: “For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (Ps. 66:10-12). When Egypt became an iron furnace the Israelites became weary of it. The prodigal never thought of his father until he experienced famine. The Lord makes this world a grief so it may not become our god. It is to be our purgatory that may never make it our paradise.

Third, to test our religious profession: “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). We profess to be gold for God’s treasury, yet there is dross in us. We claim to be grain fit for the garner of heavenly glory, yet there seems to be more chaff than wheat in us. Therefore the Lord cast us into the furnace of affliction that we may be tried and purified. The dross must be severed and separated from us. We must be winnowed with the strong wind of affliction that the chaff may be blown away and the pure grain remain. We profess to be soldiers in the army of the King of kings. We claim to fight under the banner of the Lord of hosts. Therefore the Lord suffers us to be attacked by Satan and assaulted by the world with afflictions and persecutions to try us

and to find out if we are traitors. Cowards will yield early in the fight. Real soldiers will stand and fight to the death, but a traitor will join with the enemy.

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended” (Matt. 13:20-21). “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Tim. 2:3).

Fourth, the furnace of affliction brings about growth in

Christian graces: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom. 5:3-4). Our heavenly Father longs to see His children grow up spiritually. To bring this about He uses the instrumentality of afflictions. In these we learn patience and we are caused to hope in God. The Lord buffets and afflicts us with severe trials to give occasion to exercise these graces which otherwise would die dormant with us.

Fifth, the great Refiner aims to drive us to prayer: “LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them” (Isa. 26:16).

“*Is any among you afflicted? let him pray*” (Jas. 5:13). The furnace is necessary to stir up prayer in us. In peace and prosperity we seldom recognize our need of Divine help. Afflictions bring us to God and show our need of dependence upon Him. In suffering those who formerly sought God slowly will seek Him early. “*In their affliction they will seek me early*” (Hos. 5:15).

Sixth, afflictions prepare us for greater usefulness and fruitfulness: “. . .and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15:2). The wise farmer prunes his fruit trees in the winter so that they may produce more fruit in the summer. Superfluous branches and suckers which steal the sap must be removed. Creature comforts are often to the soul what suckers are to the tree. Therefore the great Farmer takes these off that the tree of the Lord may produce much fruit. God will prune His people, but not hew them down. The right hand of His mercy knows what the left hand of His severity is doing.

CONCLUSION

1. Do not think the life of a Christian is easy. It is not a flowery bed of ease. During our life on earth we all must spend some time in the furnace of afflictions. But like the three Hebrews in the furnace in Babylon, God is always with us in all these sufferings. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa. 43:2).

2. By placing His people in the furnace of affliction He is educating us for crowns and thrones in His coming kingdom. At present the Lord is fashioning the inward spiritual life for the world to come. The oppression, the piercings, the anguish, the disappointments, and all events are but the preparation for the position we shall occupy in the millennial age to come.

3. As Israel did not understand election till they were in Egypt, even so today we come to see ours in the furnace of afflictions. When convicted by the Holy Spirit the sorrows of death compass us and the pains of Hell get hold upon us, then we come to see distinguishing grace and everlasting love. In soul trouble we come to understand the text: "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction."

4. There is in this world a furnace of afflictions for God's elect. Then in the world to come there is another furnace of literal, physical fire that is heated for the ungodly after the judgment.

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:41-42). Oh, sinner, flee the wrath to come!

"Manufactured Felonies?"

by Sis. Joanna Works

"MANUFACTURING FELONIES: How Driving Became a Felony for People of Color in Georgia" is a report put out by Advancement Project & Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights (GLAHR) on March 24, 2016. You can read the full report [here](http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/a23a889905f33b63a2_lim6bsbhf.pdf)
http://b.3cdn.net/advancement/a23a889905f33b63a2_lim6bsbhf.pdf

The cover sheet to the report introduces these two organization and their work as follows;

"Advancement Project is a multi-racial civil rights organization. Founded by a team of veteran civil rights lawyers in 1999, Advancement Project was created to develop and inspire community-based solutions based on the same high quality legal analysis and public education campaigns that produced the landmark civil rights victories of earlier eras."

Their website (<http://www.advancementproject.org>) champions such causes and issues as; ending the schoolhouse to jailhouse track, redistricting, voter protection, & immigration justice, as they put it.

"GLAHR, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights is a non-profit organization created to help educate and organize Latinos in their own communities with the purpose of increasing community participation in the struggle for human and civil rights, focusing on low income communities without regard to their immigration status.

GLAHR persists on building and fostering collaboration between the leaders and community organizations to advance social justice and the well-being of the immigrant community, at the same time, promoting a healthy integration into their new communities." Over at GLAHR's website (<http://www.glahr.org>) you will find information on their help hotline and resources for getting involved in your community.

Yes both of these organizations could easily be identified as liberal. There are few, if any, conservative organizations in the United States whose mission is to shed light on the hardships or miscarriage of justice faced by immigrants, Latinos, African-Americans, or other minorities. Nonetheless with Sis. Grace Brooks having just covered the issue of Canadian authorities using traffic laws as sources for revenue in our previous issue this report out of the great state of Georgia (FYI: all States in the U.S., but particularly in the South, are Great States) caught my attention. Another reason it didn't seem right to pass on reading and analyzing this report is because I failed to take the time to write an article on the Ferguson Report when it came out last year, March 4th, 2015.

The Ferguson Report, more appropriately titled "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department" is the 102 page long report by the United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division after the police involved shooting of Ferguson resident Michael Brown and the subsequent protests and riots. We did share articles commenting & analyzing the report in our news highlights though. If you're interested the full report is available for the public to read [here](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf)
https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf

I'd also recommend these articles on it "[Justice Department's Report on the Ferguson Police Department](#)" From the NY Times & "[Justice Department Announces Findings of Two Civil Rights Investigations in Ferguson, Missouri](#)" from Justice.gov, and "[Monopoly Police and Courts as Profit Centers in Ferguson](#)" Michael S. Rozeff at Lewrockwell.com, just to round it out "[Ferguson Reports: The "Disparate Impact" Racket](#)" by Thomas Sowell.

Back to the subject at hand, while there hasn't been a police involved shooting hitting the national news out of Georgia this is related to the Ferguson case in that this report claims that people of color (Latinos & African-Americans) are deliberately targeted by police for the purpose of collecting revenue. It further charges Georgia State laws & local authorities of harassing minorities, specifically of intimidation of immigrants and deportation.

"Georgia is an example of a state that has passed laws that seek to restrict immigration. As far back as 2007, Georgia legislators introduced 20 bills that began to create an environment of fear and intimidation towards immigrant mothers and fathers."

While "Manufacturing Felonies" does a solid job of providing evidence (mostly data from other reports) on Georgia using driving laws to arrest & deport immigrants, it's accusations of targeting residents based on ethnicity is lacking. It also doesn't do much in regards to local authorities targeting poor & colored residents for the purposes of collecting revenue.

Full disclosure, I personally am of the belief that most regulations & especially driving laws exists for the purpose of collecting more taxes. So I as quite annoyed with this reports lack of focus on this issue. Nevertheless take a look at this report & draw your own conclusions.

“Loving the Stranger”

by Bro. Todd Bryant



“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” –Hebrews 13:2

What is to be the attitude of believers towards immigration? Do we sometimes allow political alliances to steer our theology? Is it possible that cultural elitism has somehow made Christians more self serving and less concerned about our neighbor? All of these are good questions and the Bible may have more to say about this subject that we’ve ever considered.

“Strangers” in our text verse carries the idea of one that is not from your area. It could mean one from out of town or it could mean one from out of the country. Either way, we are to show them hospitality. The Book of Ruth is a wonderful example of its hero Boaz showing hospitality to Ruth. She declared in **Ruth 2:10**, “Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” Boaz takes the role of Kinsman Redeemer in this book – a role that Jesus takes for us. He has the ability and the willingness to redeem Ruth physically. And after he redeems her, she takes her place in the genealogy of Jesus (**Matthew 1:5**). What if Boaz would have taken the position that many believers find themselves in today? And honestly, being a citizen of a nation that God Himself established, Boaz had all the more reason to be elitist. Thank God he wasn’t.

God addressed the treatment of foreigners in the Law. For instance, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (**Leviticus 19:33-34**). And again, “For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” (**Deuteronomy 10:17-19**). The Jews were commanded to love foreigners on the basis that God loved them. We should consider that God might sovereignly be bringing a foreigner into contact with the Gospel – a thing he never had in his native land.

Jesus wasn’t exactly silent on this issue either. In looking forward to future judgment, Jesus declared that some would be

rewarded because “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (**Matthew 25:35-36**). Some at the judgment will question Him as to when they welcomed Him as a stranger. He will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (**Matthew 25:40**). By definition, “strangers” are people we don’t know. And without a doubt, some are Jesus’ “brothers”. Our duty is to show them hospitality including, of course, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with them.

In no way is this article meant to be political in nature. On the contrary, this article is meant to show that oftentimes political “common sense” differs from the rather clear teaching of Scripture. Child of God, let us pray that we will all reach out to those in need – both in physical need and spiritual need. Let us follow God’s leadership through His Word as it relates to the immigrant.

“Minimum Wage: The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard and Liberty of Contract”

by Bro. Blaine Konzatti



We have watched the scene repeatedly shown on our favorite cable news shows. Across the country, fast food employees are engaging in strikes, protests, and other forms of civil disobedience, demanding that the federal minimum wage be raised to \$15 per hour. Cities like Seattle and Los Angeles, and states like California and New York, have capitulated to the protestors’ demands, enacting legislation that phases in drastic increases to the minimum wage.

Basic economics teaches us that far from reducing poverty or helping the plight of the working poor, in reality, raising the minimum wage actually makes it more difficult for poor people to find sustainable employment. Raising the minimum wage increases the supply of labor and reduces its demand, creating a surplus of individuals looking for work and a shortage of businesses looking to hire. Low skilled workers are disproportionately harmed by a high minimum wage because they lack the marketable skills and work experience that justify higher wages. Their jobs may be transferred to salaried employees, replaced by automation, done by the business owners themselves, or left undone. Additionally, poor individuals must pay the higher prices for goods and services necessitated by increased labor costs.

Economists are now able to utilize complex econometric computer models to quantify the economic effects of changes in

public policies. One such study, published by the Heritage Foundation, found that raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would reduce fast food profits by 77%, reduce fast food sales by 36%, and would force fast food restaurants to raise prices by 38% and cut employee hours by 36%. Another study, published by the American Enterprise Institute, used data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to demonstrate that unemployment in Seattle increased 1.2% during the nine months that followed the city-wide minimum wage increase from \$9.32 to \$10 an hour in 2015. Imagine the effect on Seattle's unemployment rate when the minimum wage is raised to \$15 per hour for larger businesses in 2017 as mandated by the law recently passed by the city council.

As Christians, we bear the responsibility of faithfully applying biblical principles to all areas of life, including economics. Through a combination of carefully studying the Scriptures and prudently observing economic phenomena, we can derive economic principles rooted in biblical truth and the reality of economic science.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, found in Matthew 20:1-16, records a parable told by Jesus to his disciples. Proper exegesis requires that we first determine what Jesus's purpose was in telling the parable. It is from this parable that we glean the spiritual principle of *"the last shall be first, and the first last"* (Matthew 20:16). No matter how long we individually labor for the Kingdom of God, God's grace is such that we will all enjoy blessings of Heaven and eternal life with Him.

Behind every parable is both a spiritual and earthly principle. Parables use earthly stories that contain self-evident truisms to communicate spiritual truths. The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10), for example, uses the self-evident truism that we search after lost things that are valuable, and rejoice when we find what we have lost, to elucidate why Jesus seeks His lost sheep and angels rejoice in Heaven when sinners repent. Just like the woman seeks after her lost coin, Jesus pursues lost sinners, and all of Heaven rejoices when they are found.

What is the self-evident and earthly truism utilized by Jesus in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard? In the parable, a group of laborers confront the vineyard owner at the end of their workday, claiming that it is unfair that they would make the same wages as those who worked for less time. The owner replies, *"Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree to work for me for a denarius [a Roman silver coin]? Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?"* (Matthew 20:13-15, NKJV).

By using this example, it is clear that Jesus assumed that employers were free to offer whatever wages they wished. Similarly, employees are free to agree to certain wages; if they don't feel that the wages offered are reasonable, they can reject the employer's offer. This is called **liberty of contract**, which allows for employers and employees to voluntarily assent to the terms of the exchange of labor and wages. As humans created in the image of God, we are endowed with the ability to decide with whom we contract and the terms of that contract, much as God reserves for Himself the agency to decide with whom He

covenants.

Minimum wage laws violate this biblical principle by interfering in the employee/employer relationship. Employees and employers are stripped of their constitutionally protected liberty of contract when the federal government suspends the laws of economics by instituting a wage floor. The employer and employee cannot contract to exchange labor for wages under the minimum wage, even if both parties find the exchange mutually beneficial according to their own self-interest.

Employers are accountable to God in that they pay their employees fair wages in a timely fashion. *"Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath"* (James 5:4). We can safely assume that government does have a legitimate obligation to penalize fraud in the workplace when wages are withheld from employees.

Like their employers, employees are equally accountable to God in that they abstain from laziness, dishonesty, and theft of time. John the Baptist also told the Roman soldiers to *"be content with your wages"* (Luke 3:14). When both parties faithfully uphold their moral responsibilities, God is glorified.

Minimum wage laws strip us of our liberty of contract, which was given to us by our Creator and allows us to glorify Him. These laws also hurt the poor, which are the very people that minimum wage advocates claim they want to help. Next time someone recommends increasing the minimum wage as a way to help the working poor, share with them the economic consequences of doing so, as well as the biblical principle of liberty of contract.



"Are You Ready?"

by Bro. Curtis Pugh



Religious groups and their schools of all sorts - from the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) to the Southern Baptist Convention to the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Erskine College (and others) are promoting taking a stand – some more and some less. Their stand is that lesbian and homosexual behavior is a sin according to the Bible. Their stand is that marriage is between one man and one woman. A brief perusal of individual church websites shows that a considerable number of congregations are including statements in their confessions of faith about what biblical marriage is. At least one U. S. Christian law association is providing suggested wording and model resolutions as guidelines for churches who want to legally safeguard themselves. Safeguard themselves from what? Why from both lawsuits and the forced incorporation of homosexual men and women as members and or employees. The Southern Baptist Convention has had information online for some time – information to help their congregations protect themselves from legal actions against them for refusing to receive homosexuals and lesbians as members. At this moment in our history, it seems that U. S. churches and religious institutions have the right to include such articles in their organizational papers. But for how long?

We ask the question in our title, "Are You Ready?" The reason we do so is this: at this moment in time the highly organized and well funded lesbian and homosexual groups are lambasting those who do not approve of their sinful behavior as being "hateful" and "bigoted." Three hundred and seventy nine American businesses have come out in favor of same-sex "marriage" as they call it. They have joined together asking the Supreme Court to support same-sex "marriage." The name calling of those who oppose such sin will probably get worse. Polls show that most Americans – well over fifty percent – approve of what they call "gay marriage." As an example of religious groups favoring the homosexual/lesbian agenda, the Nashville, Tennessee American Baptist College leadership has recently invited three active proponents of same-sex "marriage" to speak and lead worship at upcoming annual lectures as well as to preach at worship services there. One of those invited is United Church of Christ Bishop Yvette Flunder, who is legally married to another woman. A group of pastors in the largely Black National Baptist Convention are opposing the school's plans, but at this writing the group has not succeeded in stopping the move by their college. Other so-called Christian religious schools and groups favor and even ordain practicing homosexuals and lesbians. One Reformed Jewish organization has installed a lesbian as president of their group. Can things get worse? We think they can and will.

God's elect people are going to be hated. Jesus Himself said so: **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you,"** (John 15:18-19). Here we are told that God's election to salvation of some is enough to make the enemies of Christ hate those so elected. Why? Because following election comes salvation – all that God does in conforming His children to the image of Christ and thus making them different from the world. Salvation includes working in His children so that they love and stand for the truth of the Bible. And the Bible condemns sexual activity outside of marriage and also teaches that same-sex intimacy and unions (falsely called marriages) are wicked sins. As Paul wrote in Galatians 4:29: **"But as then he [Esau] that was born after the flesh persecuted him [Isaac] that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."** These United States and a few other places have been unique in that old-time laws still on the books have kept down overt persecution of the saints, but that is changing and changing fast. The various levels of government in this country are taking the stand that you can believe whatever you want to believe, but you cannot practice your religion, if for instance, you might hurt the feelings of those who disagree. This has already been seen in the case of at least one bakery and one florist on the west coast. In these two instances if you own a small business you must bake for same-sex "marriages" and you must prepare flowers for their ungodly "weddings." If you do not approve of same-sex-sin you must keep quiet about it and cannot operate your business according to your faith.

The Lord Jesus in praying to His Father said of His disciples: **"I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me,"** (John 17:14-21). Jesus prayed not only for those of His disciples who were alive back then, but for us also. The true "latter day saints" shall be hated as were Christ's "early day saints" because they are one in faith and practice with them. Holiness is always hated by the unholy. **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,"** (2 Timothy 3:12).

In John 15:20 the words of the Lord are these: **"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."** And Paul, in Romans 12:14 wrote, **"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not."** We are in what began in the days of our Lord's sojourn on earth. He called these days the **"beginning of sorrows,"** in Matthew 24:8. The word translated "sorrows" there is the word also translated "travail" and means birth pains. This world, like a woman in labor, is going down

into the valley of death as it were, not knowing what it shall bring forth. But we know! This world is facing a birth – the establishment of Christ's earthly millennial kingdom in which He shall rule the gentiles with a **“rod of iron,”** (Revelation 2:7; 12:5; 19:15). But before that time will come, first will come the time of **“Jacob's trouble”** when Israel shall suffer great tribulation, (Jeremiah 30:7). We pre-tribulation rapturists do not believe that the Lord's people of this church-age shall even enter that time of Jewish suffering. But leading up to that terrible time is this present day in which we find ourselves. Days of “sorrows” for the Lord's followers. Days of labor pains! And while we oppose much of that goes on in this world, we are to bless those who persecute us for Christ's sake.

And so we ask “Are You Ready?” Ready to be called a hate-monger? Ready to be accused of hate crimes? Ready for a time when great courage will be required to say what the Bible says about marriage and the sins of practicing lesbians and homosexuals? Ready to have your church and pastor investigated? Are you ready to have your church's name smeared in the press as an identifiable hate group? If not, maybe you ought to move your membership immediately! Ready to have your relatives – perhaps your own children and grandchildren - turn against you if they choose to practice homosexual and lesbian sins and you speak against such things? Do not think it cannot happen to your family! Satan and this world are engaging in the biggest “evangelistic effort” ever seen: an evangelistic effort to convert men and women to homosexual practices or at least to the approval of such sins. And, left unchecked, rotten human nature – the “flesh” - falls right in line with the devil and his crowd. The homosexual/lesbian agenda is making use of the public school system to set forward their sinful acts, calling them an “alternate lifestyle.” With media, business, academic, political and government support, the homosexual/lesbian agenda is galloping ahead.

Remember our Lord forewarned us, saying, **“Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law,”** (Luke 12:51-53). This is not an endorsement of hatred or wrong treatment of those who have made themselves enemies of Christians and of the Bible. They are our enemies, but we are not theirs. We do not wish them harm. We wish for them a real work of God in them and in their lives. We do not endorse mistreatment of them. We are becoming more and more aware that we live in difficult times unless... unless you compromise by saying nothing against sins such as are now approved by the majority of Americans. If you will just keep quiet and go with the flow – even a dead fish can float downstream – if you will do this, you may, perhaps, escape persecution. If you choose your friends, church affiliation and words and actions carefully enough – just maybe... maybe you will not suffer. But do you really want to escape by being on the world's side? Are you that far gone?

Things have changed. This preacher cannot find evidence that these United States were ever a Christian nation. But our country was founded as being based upon, at least in part, those Jewish-Christian teachings and morals found in the Bible. Now we face the lawlessness of unbridled sexual immorality on the one hand and the prospect of Islamic Sharia law on the other. Both these extremes are against biblical Christianity and those Christians who believe in and stand for Bible truth.

No doubt you are familiar with the saying “forewarned is fore-armed.” Paul wrote reminding the saints in Thessalonica that he had forewarned them saying, **“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know,”** (1 Thessalonians 3:4). In this text Paul wrote **“we told you before that we should suffer tribulation.”** And we, too, like them should be forewarned and thus forearm ourselves. We here in the U. S. have lived in unusual circumstances for many years because of the biblical heritage of this government. In the past, professing Christians with some modicum of morality have been in the majority. That is fast changing before our eyes. No, it has already changed! The world, and these United States, are not the same as those into which this preacher was born. The Bible, biblical Christianity and the true Children of God are regarded as irrelevant, out of step, narrow, ignorant, haters of that which the world accepts and consists. And the current view is that whatever the majority thinks is right must be right. The true children of God are on the opposite side of the fence from those whose whole realm of existence is this present evil world. That phrase, “present evil world” is a biblical one. Paul wrote of it in Galatians 1:4. He penned these Words speaking of Christ: **“Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”** Are you feeling at home in this world? Feeling at home with evil? Look again at that last quotation. How can you feel comfortable with this world and know Christ as savior? The one who has delivered His people and is delivering them from this present evil world. How can a true child of God take sides with the world and be living **“according to the will of God and our Father?”** How can a child of God look, dress, talk and act like the world without being a traitor to the Lord's cause? Are you ready – to be different? Are you ready to be persecuted? Are you ready to be slandered? Are you ready to be mocked? Are you ready to speak out against sin? Are you ready to have friends and family members turn against you? Are you ready to be harassed by your own government? Are you ready for so-called Christian leaders and the media to speak of you as a religious fanatic and worse?

Only the grace of God can and will sustain the Lord's people and the Lord's churches in these days and in future ones as things progressively worsen. “Will they worsen?” someone asks. Yes, the Bible specifically says that very thing: **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived,”** (2 Timothy 3:12-13). Think of those who have walked this way before us: think of those mentioned in Hebrews 12:36-13:6 There we read: **“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered**

about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Brethren, we need chastening and scourging! Standing in the ranks with those mentioned in this last text are those “anabaptist” forefathers – the successors of the first century churches – and our ancestors if we stand connected by that chain link succession of churches to them. (There cannot be a succession or a perpetuity of churches if there are no links!) They, too, suffered for their faith – the faith – our faith. Why should we not likewise partake in such sufferings? Are we better than they?

Those faithful men and women in the last biblical text quoted shall not **“be made perfect”** without us! That last text says that God has **“provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”** or complete. The suffering that is coming is a purifying or chastening kind of suffering. Suffering saints are pure-living saints. Suffering congregations are pure congregations. With ease and plenty comes complacency, compromise and sin. The gross sins of Sodom were brought about at least in part by ease and plenty. The Bible says so and condemns those things that produced their homosexual sins. Ezekiel 16:49 says: **“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”** You would think that God would have listed the gross sins of the citizens of Sodom, but He spoke of **“pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness.”** The citizens of Sodom and her daughter cities ran to excessive and gross sins because they were soft, had plenty, and a great deal of idle time. In their pride they thought that whatever their town majority allowed as acceptable behavior was indeed right. And they cared nothing for the needy among them. Our government throws millions of financial bones at the poor, but does not strengthen their hands enabling them to make their own way. Can you not see that these same things have happened right here in these United States? Americans, including her professing Christians, have grown soft and accustomed to ease. That is why most professing Christians in these United States look, live, talk and think like the world, for the most part – Oh perhaps they are a tad behind the world, but follow the same broad way that leads to destruction.

Consider our Redeemer, our Shepherd, our Savior. The text above says, **“consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”** Keep Christ foremost in your minds! It is our minds that must be fortified. Being forewarned in our minds forearms the child of God. Are you ready? Are you forewarned? Are you forearmed? Peter wrote: **“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy,”** (1 Peter 1:13-16). In biblical times a man would gather up the skirts of his robe and bind them in his belt or sash. In this way his garment did not get in his way as he labored or battled. Peter here speaks of gathering up the loose ends of our minds: of preparing our minds for labor and battle ahead of time. Are you ready? Have you got a single mind? Is your purpose pleasing God by living for Him or are you partying with the world? Oh, this preacher has heard it all before. We must be like the world in order to win the world. We must join in clubs and associations with them in order to witness to them. Most American Christians have succumbed to “Country-Club-itis.” We must allow our children to socialize with worldlings in sports, music, school, etc. so as not to be too different. Too different? Hogwash! Where did you ever read in the Bible a warning about being too different from the world? That is not where the battle is! God never called His people to be like the world! We are in the world, but not of the world! A light in a dark place is not of the darkness. It is not like the darkness. It is at odds with the darkness. It reveals what is hidden in the darkness without being a part of the darkness. And God has called us to be light in this world, regardless of the consequences. To efficiently chop wood you must “let the chips fall where they may.” Be busy chopping wood, so to speak, and not be busy worrying about the chips. So it is with following the Lord and standing as a light in this dark world. Let the rays of light shine where they may. Let them reveal what God wills without regard to consequences. Let the oil God has put into our lamps of clay shine forth even as the oil is consumed. Are you ready? Do you hear and do you understand?

The prophet Jeremiah penned one of the most appropriate of verses for our times although it was doubtless aimed at his own people in his own time. Jeremiah 12:5 says: **“If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”** Christian friend, have you compromised and remained silently complicit rather than bring down criticism and opposition upon your head? We, here in these United States, have had it easy as Christians in bygone years. Baptists have been buttered up by the world. Colonial Baptists were considered the off-scouring of the world just like Baptists in biblical days. But now Baptists are “respectable.” But no more shall it be that way if we take a stand. And if we have not been able to keep up with foot soldiers (as our last quote says) what shall we do when we must contend with enemy fighters on horseback? We have lived **“in the land of peace”** and been overcome. What shall we do when Jordan overflows her three

sets of banks? Some think that the “swelling of Jordan” refers to the seasonal flooding of the three different sets of banks of that river. When the waters reach the level of the trees and brush along the higher banks it drives out the lions and other predators. What shall we do when the flood fully comes upon us? What shall we do when the waters rise and the predators walk our streets and sit in high places of government? Are some of them not already prowling about our towns and cities? Are not the enemies of biblical Christianity already in the halls of government? But Jordan has not yet reached her highest and third set of banks! When this world's lions are free to prowl among the followers of the Lamb because they hate our strict lives and our teaching and preaching of God's Word, how shall we stand? Are you ready? Prepare your minds! Settle it: you will serve God regardless. Remember our Lord's words to the congregation in Smyrna: **“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,”** (Revelation 2:10). Those words were addressed to a church in this present church-age. Can we expect less? Let us be faithful even unto times of government harassment, prosecution, slander, gossip, imprisonment and death if necessary. Amen.



Updates From Ireland: “Equality” by Sis. Sarah Doherty



What does equality mean?

It's one of the ideals a democratic society, and so the fight to attain different kinds of equality, like racial equality, gender equality, or equality of opportunity between rich and poor, is often associated with progress toward that ideal of everyone being truly equal.' (Dictionary Definition)

This day and age 'equality', means acceptance by everyone regardless of colour, age, weight, religion, sexuality or gender. For the past few years (from the 1800's to 2010 to be exact) people have become stronger on this issue and it has become more predominant in the 'social world'. Everyone is 'beautiful', excepted...and has the right to do and feel what they like. Is this true?

It was the gay referendum, this year in Ireland, that really brought this issue to a head, in my eyes. So, do people really have the right to do as they please? Love who they want? Believe what they want?...with absolutely no regard for others and their beliefs.

Most of my life, I was bullied and looked down on for being.....'different' by 'social standards'. Mostly because, I am a Christian, my family goes to church, I am homeschooled by my mom, I prefer to wear skirts and the newest one is that I don't smoke, drink or do drugs.

But what amazes me is that the people who made fun of me are the same people who fight so strongly for 'equality' right now.

These are the same people who praise gays for being 'out there' but yet in the same breath criticised me for 'supposedly shoving my religion down their throat' by simply giving them a tract. The same people who believe all are equal.....until it comes to Christians. Am I right?

The catholic church and what they believe in is completely respected by so many people. As we wouldn't want to 'offend' them.

Muslims are both respected and feared for what they believe. As we wouldn't want to 'offend' them.

Buddhists are respected for what they believe in. As we wouldn't want to 'offend' them.

The list goes on, and on and on about who are 'equal'..., who have the rights to believe what they will and who are welcomed by 'society'....until it comes to Christians.

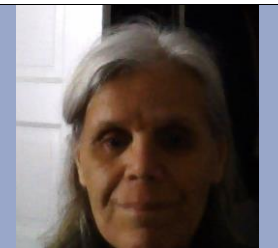
On Friday May 22nd 2015, Ireland voted in two referendums: Same-Sex Marriages and Presidential Age. It approved changing of the Constitution to extend civil marriage rights to same-sex couples but rejected reducing the age of eligibility for the office of President. The Same-Sex Marriage was passed due to 62% of the people who voted, voting Yes. There were so many celebration across Ireland and worldwide the day it was announced that the Yes campaign won, as Ireland had now become the first country to introduce Same-Sex marriage by popular vote.

It was such a sad day for me and my heart is still heavy when that day comes to mind. But after a while I started to think "Not all voted 'Yes', surely! I know that certain members of my family and all our church members voted 'No', so how many other did so likewise?" When I started my research I was flabbergasted to find a surprising 38% voted 'No', and it made me stop and think once again.....where are our rights? Where are the rights for the 'No' campaign? If we are living in a time where you have the supposed 'right' to express both your opinions AND beliefs then surely we have the right to not want the meaning of marriage redefined. God said sodomy is wrong and voting it into man's law won't change that; it will only ease their conscious as they continue to live in their wicked sin. God made a man and a woman; Adam and Eve NOT Adam and Steve. We have our rights too as Irish citizens to make this county better, but right now our voices are not being heard as they are drowned out with the ones who scream equality and preach that all views are 'equal'.

It just makes me very sad to see the same people who preach these thing are the same ones who don't practice them. As I've said before and I'll say it again...May God Have Mercy On This Nation!!!

- Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7)

News From Canada "You Should Know" by Sis. Grace Brooks



What is Agenda 21? As usual it is an armed government monster that wants to enslave us all.

Here's an excerpt from the Canadian government's own website ENVIRONMENT CANADA

- Sustainable Development: Sustainable development is about meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations. It is about improving standard of living by protecting human health, conserving the environment, using resources efficiently and advancing long-term economic competitiveness. It requires the integration of environmental, economic and social priorities into policies and programs and requires action at all levels - citizens, industry, and governments.

- See more at: ["Is UN Agenda 21 In Canada"](http://www.democratsagainstunagenda21.com/the-way-we-see-itour-blog/is-un-agenda-21-in-canada)
<http://www.democratsagainstunagenda21.com/the-way-we-see-itour-blog/is-un-agenda-21-in-canada>

"So long as the people do not care to exercise their freedom, those who wish to tyrannize will do so; for tyrants are active and ardent, and will devote themselves in the name of any number of gods, religious and otherwise, to put shackles upon sleeping men." - See more at: ["The Canadian Government?"](http://www.democratsagainstunagenda21.com/the-way-we-see-itour-blog/is-un-agenda-21-in-canada)
<http://www.democratsagainstunagenda21.com/the-way-we-see-itour-blog/is-un-agenda-21-in-canada>

They are the ones who are pushing this agenda!! What makes you think our Government is looking out for the best interest of THEIR people?

Agenda 21 is based on the idea of building super large cities. In order for this to become reality, urban and rural areas have to be emptied. If you don't already know this, Canada, this is already well underway. Urbanization in Canada started over twenty years ago. You will not learn this from any tv news broadcast.

In the United States, the country is being divided into eleven densely populated suburban and rural areas. The idea is to build megacities. The framework was laid in the North American Free trade Agreement(NAFTA).

NAFTA is a liberalized trade agreement between the three countries, Canada, Mexico and the United States. Farmers' incomes in the three countries have fallen drastically. Millions of small town farmers have lost their land and homes. Yes, In Canada, too. These once family farms, land that had been in the family for several generations, are replaced with agribusiness cooperation (COOPS) which reap huge monetary benefits. NAFTA is also blamed for increased immigration in the United States. Over three million farmers have been bankrupted

in Northern Mexico. Millions of immigrants leave their home lands looking for work in Canada. This speeds urbanization.

NAFTA Was the Beginning of Rural Flight In the United States
The first notable effect of NAFTA is that it is credited with greatly accelerating illegal immigration and almost immediately bankrupted over three million farmers in northern Mexico and this group became the vanguard of millions of Mexicans illegally entering the US in search for subsistence work of any type.

The second dramatic impact of NAFTA lies in the fact that it has had catastrophic consequences for U.S. farmers as a record number of small farmers have lost their farms and have gone through foreclosure while the government subsidized corporate farms have thrived. Since NAFTA, the average annual growth of the US trade deficit has been 45% higher. Also since NAFTA took effect, about 170,000 small family farms have gone bankrupt which represents a decline of 21% of family farms in the U.S. The 21% of American small farmers who have been bankrupted since the advent of NAFTA, represents a higher percentage of displaced American farmers than what is happening with the forced relocation of Chinese farmers to the ghost cities as covered in the first part of this series. And what happens to American small farmers who have lost their livelihood? They either work on their former competitors corporate farms as hired hands, or they relocate to urban areas in search of employment.

In a case of “death by a thousand cuts”, the American farmer is rapidly moving towards extinction. If it is not the EPA enforcing its Agenda 21 wetlands regulations with devastating consequences on farmers, it is the FDA harassing farmers for pursuing time-honored farm related industries such as the raw milk industry. Congress is plotting new attacks on the U.S. farmer as I write these words. Even Amish farmers have felt the “swat-team wrath of the federal government. Average, everyday Americans are being arrested for merely growing their own food. The relationship between the federal government and the independent American farmer has become so strained that a 17 county region in northern California and southern Oregon have come together to try and form a 51st state dubbed the State of Jefferson.

Canadians need to know that AGENDA 21 is in operation. It affects every area of our life, yet most Canadians don't know this monster exists. Agenda 21 schemes to end the rights and freedoms of all Canadians, maybe even end our cities as we know them now.

Don't believe it's about the environment. Don't ever believe the government is looking out for us, the citizens of Canada, best interest. No way! It's obliterating private property and wants to control every human being on earth. If we don't stand up now we will be brought to our knees, saying yes, yes to government officials.

How do we fight back? We need to organize peaceful protests with speakers spreading the word so more people can know about G21. Children are brainwashed through The Earth Charter

to become good little citizens. The Earth Charter Initiative.org is a global movement of organizations and individuals that embrace The Earth Charter and use it to guide the transition towards a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. Earth Charter is confident they will replace, become, the new Ten Commandments. Even volunteering is not an individual right. Volunteerism will be, or is in some cases, mandatory. Is Canada a free country?

“Political Issues In The Philippines & The Presidential Elections”

by Bro. Nilo Del Mundo

POLITICAL ISSUES IN GENERAL PCOS MACHINE ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD

There are credible allegations that the Precinct-Count Optical Scanners used for the automated elections six years ago were rigged and therefore did not produce accurate results. That is why former senator Richard Gordon filed a case in the Supreme Court against the Commission on Elections which was planning to again bypass some protective measures to ensure clean elections. The commission however is now threatening a delay or even the possibility of failure of elections due to the additional burden of printing receipts after each vote is cast.

THUS, WE COULD HAVE A SCENARIO WHERE PRES. AQUINO'S GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ON HOLDOVER STATUS UNTIL ORDERLY ELECTIONS ARE CONDUCTED. Such a situation would lead to a constitutional crisis with the possibility of another people power.

EARLY CAMPAIGNING

Candidates found a loophole in the law against early campaigning, wherein they can buy media time and announce their names to the public as long they don't persuade people to VOTE for them. It is a subtle way of campaigning and millions were spent by most of the candidates even before the official campaign period.

SUPREME COURT ALLOWS A CANDIDATE WITH DOUBTFUL NATIONALITY AND RESIDENCY

Sen. Grace Poe Llamanzares faced several disqualification cases because she was a foundling and two DNA tests were not able to establish Filipino parentage. There is also that issue of lack of residency because she was still technically an American Citizen ten years ago. (<http://pinoytrendingnews.net/senator-grace-poe-claims-she-dropped-us-citizenship-in-2010-but-us-government-records-says-otherwise/>)

The irony of it all is the possibility that if she wins, we will have a President whose husband and kids are all Americans. The Philippine Supreme Court ruled in an extremely divisive ruling that she should be allowed to run. The Petitioners have not yet given up and are filing Motions for Reconsideration.

POLITICAL ISSUES IN PARTICULAR

YOLANDA FUNDS. The millions of dollars given by many nations sympathetic to those who suffered under Typhoon Yolanda (International name: Haiyan) were not dispensed of in a judicious and timely manner. This gives a bad name to all candidates who occupied a government position in the current administration. The Commission on Audit even found Php 48 million of these funds just sitting in banks. We have several people who attend our church testifying that the government response was snail paced and the people themselves were doing their best to get to food, clothing, shelter, electricity, construction materials and government facilities for several months after the typhoon.

BANGSAMORO BASIC LAW. The government, in order to push for peace which has eluded the country for decades, and to pacify those who are calling for secession in the South has authored a bill called the BBL or Bangsamoro Basic Law. They will give large sums of money, the right to bear heavy arms, exclusive territory, to a group of people who were before enemies of the state so that these groups can police their own ranks and theoretically destroy all the secessionist and terrorist activities in their domain. It was sailing smoothly to become the law of the land, even if it was against the constitution, when the Mamasapano incident occurred. The President met with police generals allowing American Military personnel to assist them directly with U.S. assets in order to catch international terrorist Marwan. The whole operation went awry because the MILF – Moro Islamic Liberation Front regiments, who were the direct partners for peace in the BBL, opposed the police in a 12 hour battle, resulting in the deaths of 44 members of the Special Action Force (SAF 44) of the Philippine National Police. The resulting investigation pointed to the President as ultimately responsible because he used a suspended Chief of Police as the commander of the failed operation, in violation of the law, and there was information that a STAND DOWN ORDER was given to the Armed Forces of the Philippines so that they will not violate the terms of peace with their partners in the push for the BBL. This led the Congress and the Senate to look deeper into the proposed BBL due to the outcry of the people. The bill did not become law. An important point for us Baptists is the danger that once the law is passed, it may bar us from evangelism and putting up church buildings in our own country due to the implementation of Sharia Law in the areas where BBL is in force. We have the makings of a state within a state. The issue now is: should the new president push for the BBL or should it be revised or scrapped. Should a policy of an all-out war against all armed groups be conducted by the new administration? Should we push for a Federal form of government instead?

CHINA'S LANDGRABBING OF PHILIPPINE TERRITORY. Once elected, what would you do with the Philippine Islands which are now occupied by China? Some candidates say, they will make friends with China and opt for bilateral agreements using the resources in the area for mutual benefit. Some would pursue the complaint presented to the permanent arbitration committee in the Hague. Japan and the U.S. are now giving and leasing lots of military resources to the Philippines in order to prepare us in case war erupts. A corollary issue is EDCA

(Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement) between the Philippines and the United States. This gives the Philippine government the right to host U.S. forces in our territory without the benefit of a treaty or the need for a rental agreement. Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago says such kinds of agreements should be done through the Senate but the Aquino government has a different opinion on the matter. In case of invasion or war, we need the U.S. and Japan to help us defend our country because we have very meager military resources compared to China.

SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION. What would you do to stop the systemic culture of corruption in the government bureaucracy? Mayor Duterte promises to stop criminality and corruption within six months after he is President. Some are saying he will put them all in jail which is easier said than done.

I believe no one can stop corruption. Even if you kill them by firing squad, like what they are doing in China, or cut off their arms like what Sharia Law decrees, or put them in jail like many countries are doing, corruption will still be present. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can stop corruption. If there will be U.S. bases in the Philippines, each town where it is present should be saturated with Baptist churches to prevent the proliferation of prostitution and bar houses. China needs the gospel. Mindanao needs the gospel. It is a blessing that we have our own local Baptist pastors who though unknown by the world, yet the Lord knows them all, as they work tirelessly for the Kingdom of God.

"AND SAUL WAS CONSENTING UNTO HIS DEATH. AND AT THAT TIME THERE WAS A GREAT PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH WHICH WAS AT JERUSALEM; AND THEY WERE ALL SCATTERED ABROAD THROUGHOUT THE REGIONS OF JUDAEA AND SAMARIA, EXCEPT THE APOSTLES." ACTS 8:1

"AND SAUL, YET BREATHING OUT THREATENINGS AND SLAUGHTER AGAINST THE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD, WENT UNTO THE HIGH PRIEST,

AND DESIRED OF HIM LETTERS TO DAMASCUS TO THE SYNAGOGUES, THAT IF HE FOUND ANY OF THIS WAY, WHETHER THEY WERE MEN OR WOMEN, HE MIGHT BRING THEM BOUND UNTO JERUSALEM.

AND AS HE JOURNEYED, HE CAME NEAR DAMASCUS: AND SUDDENLY THERE SHINED ROUND ABOUT HIM A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN:

AND HE FELL TO THE EARTH, AND HEARD A VOICE SAYING UNTO HIM, SAUL, SAUL, WHY PERSECUTEST THOU ME?

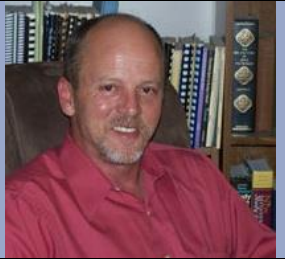
AND HE SAID, WHO ART THOU, LORD? AND THE LORD SAID, I AM JESUS WHOM THOU PERSECUTEST: IT IS HARD FOR THEE TO KICK AGAINST THE PRICKS.

AND HE TREMBLING AND ASTONISHED SAID, LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO? AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, ARISE, AND GO INTO THE CITY, AND IT SHALL BE TOLD THEE WHAT THOU MUST DO." ACTS 9:1-6



"Holiness of The Holy!"

by Bro. Donnie Burford



Most likely to think and talk about what Great things God has done for us, (and we should!)
But few it appears, want to think or talk about what Great things He expects of us!

1Peter 1:14-16; *"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;(all conduct of your life) Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."* (emphasis mine)

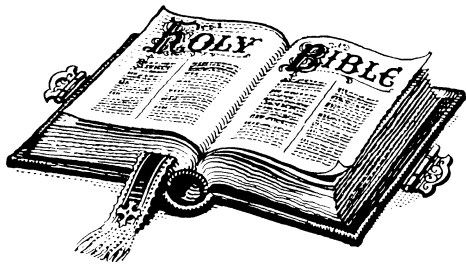
Romans 6:13; *"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."*

Romans 12:1-2; *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."*

1Thessalonians 4:3-5; *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:"*

2Timothy 2:19; *"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."*

Titus 2:11-12; *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;"*



"Believing Unbelievers"

by Bro. Curtis Pugh

(continued from the front page)

The group within the Jerusalem congregation that favored law-keeping confronted Peter because of his actions. This pro-law group was called by Luke "they that were of the circumcision" in Acts 11:2. These contended with Peter for his having gone into the home of a gentile named Cornelius. Such an act was not forbidden in the Old Testament, but was contrary to the rules of their tradition. After Peter rehearsed in their hearing what God had done, we read: "When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life," (Acts 11:18). This was something new! The idea that God would save gentiles apart from Jewish circumcision and law-keeping was unheard of! It is important that we understand that "repentance unto life" is something that is "granted!" It is not "up for grabs." Later Peter would write, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3-4). We cite both verse 3 and 4 here to show that the phrase "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" does not refer to natural things that God gives us such as food and clothing. Rather the "all things" here refers to spiritual things. God "grants" repentance and bestows "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." How? "through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue" - that is how! Translators struggle with the Greek word "knowledge" for in that language there are different kinds of knowledge. The highly competent Greek Scholar W. E Vine says the word knowledge here expresses "a greater participation by the 'knower' in the object 'known.'" Did you notice the word "participation" in his comment? This kind of knowledge is not mere head knowledge: it is the knowledge of experience or "participation." To have this kind of knowledge of God a person must have had an experience of grace. They must have had in essence "a Damascus road experience!" They must have had all their religious "props" knocked from under them. They must have come to see that they were hopeless and helpless unless God would intervene on their behalf. They must take their rightful place before God as filthy, ugly sinners devoid of anything which would commend them to God. They must enter Bunyan's "Slough of Despond" that the Bible calls "godly sorrow." As spiritually dead sinners they must be recipients of God's gift of spiritual life. They must be recipients of the "all things" that God bestows upon His sheep. Oh that Baptists in America could see that God's gift of these "all things" includes saving faith! Oh that they understood that their pitiful little repetition of "the sinner's prayer" is not some kind of mechanical trigger that trips God's salvation spring causing Him to look with favor upon them and save them because they prayed.

Recently there came into my hands a small religious tract. It was printed on both sides of a business card. The following is the quotation exactly as it appears: "PLEASE PLEASE Don't Die

Without (Jesus) With or without Jesus, Eternity is Forever. If you have already Accepted Jesus (Great) (Over-->) If you haven't please Don't wait, Jesus died for you. He loves you so much, all you have to do is pray The Sinner's Prayer **PRAY Dear Jesus, I am a sinner. I am sorry, forgive me of my sins. Jesus cleanse me with your blood that your shed on the cross. Come into my heart right now and be my Lord.**" This quotation is supplied to the reader as proof of what we contend: i.e. that the gospel has been perverted by today's Arminians – even Baptist Arminians. The essential elements of the gospel comprise the good news: the message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as God's sacrifice. (See 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Instead of preaching the gospel and leaving the results in God's hands, men have done a terrible thing. They have changed the gospel of the free grace of God into a works religion. They have added a requirement of human effort or works to the gospel. They will deny doing such a thing, but that is what they have done. When they wrongly assure lost people that God loves them, they do a thing no New Testament era preacher ever did in the Bible. They say that Jesus died for all those whom they address. This is another thing no New Testament era preacher ever did in the Bible. They say that praying "the sinner's prayer" is the way a sinner gets God to act and save them. This, too, is something no New Testament era preacher ever did in the Bible. Of course they deny that repeating the magical formula is works for salvation. But the Bible speaks of praying as laboring (Colossians 4:12) and as serving (Luke 2:37). Oh dear friends, prayer is so much more than just repeating words! But these Arminian men and women, full of self-confidence, think that anyone can repeat a few words and be assured of their eternal salvation based upon the fact that they did something – especially if they were sincere. Of course they can never know if they were "sincere enough:" a thing that haunts many of them. They deny that faith is a gift of God sovereignly bestowed. Their whole religion is based upon the lie that the natural or unsaved man can do something to please God. They think that their homemade faith can please God. That this is a lie is clearly shown by Paul in Romans 8:8 where the Holy Ghost through him wrote, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Multiplied thousands of people in our own country believe this lie about the ability of lost people to come to Christ and obtain salvation without Divine intervention. They deny the truth spoken by the Lord Jesus who said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day," (John 6:44). They believe that if they can persuade a lost person to "pray The Sinner's Prayer" as this tract says, or "make a decision" or otherwise "exercise their free will," the sinner has come to Christ. God is therefore obligated to save that person. And regrettably, it is American "missionaries" - Baptists of many sorts – who have spread this lie around the world.

What is the result of this lie? We have a multitude of people in many countries around the world who have been "evangelized" with this false gospel. They are, as our title says, "Believing Unbelievers." That is, they are professing believers. They are intellectual believers. But they have never had an experience of grace. They have no inkling what an experience of grace is. Their hard hearts have never been broken: their blind eyes have never been healed: they have done religious things expecting their efforts to be rewarded. They have been told that they are

saved because they have done something. No doubt at some time in their lives they were told that God loved them and wanted to save them. They were persuaded this weak God who desires to save everybody, but cannot, would save them if only they would let Him. All they had to do was pray the magical sinner's prayer and heaven would be their eternal home. This they believed with their minds only. Their heads have believed, but their hearts have not for God did not operate on them. The existence of such people as we have called "Believing Unbelievers" is not new. They are as old as Christianity. They existed in the days when our Lord Jesus Christ walked upon the earth among His little congregation. In John 6:64-69 we read about some of these folk. Consider this incident where the Lord Jesus said to many of His disciples, **"But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."** There are important things to be learned from this brief account. (1) Here we see once again the the Lord Jesus was omniscient; (2) we see also the our Lord always spoke the truth even if it cost Him popularity; (3) we see that men hate and reject the idea that they cannot save themselves by making a choice to come to Christ; (4) and we see in contrast to these people the faith of true disciple as shown in Peter's statement. Here is another instance when the Lord Jesus preached the sovereignty of God in salvation with the results that "many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." Sometime after this incident the Lord Jesus would say, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Continuing in God's Word is the mark of a genuine disciple! Let us look at the incident where the Messiah spoke those words. In John 8:31-37 we read as follows: **"As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you."** In the context preceding these verses Jesus had spoken to His hearers of His Father who had sent Him and of His relationship with God. As a result "many believed on him." That they "believed" without understanding is clear from John 8:27. There it is recorded that **"They understood not that he spake to them of the Father."**

Jesus spoke of the freedom that knowing the truth brings. He was speaking to them of freedom from the slavery to sin into which all men are born. He said, "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Their spiritual blindness and dishonesty is

seen in that they denied ever being in bondage. Their claim is the most absurd and bold-faced lie conceivable! At that very moment they and all Israel were under the iron heel of Rome. Their nation had experienced captivity in Babylon in the days of Daniel and other prophets. Their fathers had slaved some four hundred years in Egypt before God used Moses to deliver them from bondage. And yet these “disciples” - “believers” - denied their own nation's history, their own present condition and proclaimed their own so-called freedom. But they were not free. Is there not a parallel here? Does not the Arminian crowd proclaim the (supposed) freedom of each person to “choose Christ” or to reject Him? Free will has been defined as “the ability to make choices without any prior prejudice, inclination, or disposition.” Is this not the claim of today's Arminians? Do they not deny that all men are born slaves to sin because of their inherited sin nature? Do they not deny that every part of man was evilly affected by the fall? They claim “free will” really exists as if the will of man was not affected by the fall – as if it is somehow separate and unaffected by man's sinful nature. Whether they say it or not, whenever they proclaim vocally or in print that “all you have to do is pray The Sinner's Prayer” or meet some other requirement, they are basing their words upon a lie. That lie is the false idea that men and women yet in their sins have the ability to please God. They think that to believe on Christ, or come to Christ, or accept Christ, choose Christ or have faith in Christ by human effort and apart from Divine intervention, is pleasing and acceptable to God. The Jews said, “We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man.” Today's Arminian – be he Baptist or Protestant in name – by his actions and in his thoughts says, “we human beings have freedom of our wills and can do as we please about Christ.” They deny that they have within them a sin nature. They have never been made to see their awful condition. Their eyes are blind to their spiritual deadness. They are dead men who do not know they are dead! They have never grieved over their sinful condition in what the Bible calls “godly sorrow” - that kind of sorrow that “worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of,” (2 Corinthians 7:10). The words “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” mean little or nothing to them. Why? Because they are spiritually dead and bound by their inherent sin nature and have never experienced either spiritual life or freedom. Life is something in which a dead man does not participate. Freedom to a person born in slavery is only a thing to be imagined. Neither a man born dead in sins nor a man born in slavery knows by participation anything of life in the one instance or of freedom in the other example. A man born in slavery has never participated in freedom. Similarly, a man born dead in sins has never participated in life on a spiritual plane. And so our Lord Jesus Christ said to these “disciples,” “I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.”

The modern Arminian believes that he or she is saved. They believe this because they have become Christ's “disciple” by means of praying “the sinner's prayer.” What do we mean by the term “modern Arminian” as we use it? Basically, an “Arminian” as we use the term today is one who does not believe in the total inability of a lost person to come to Christ in a saving way. He thinks that every man, woman, boy and girl has the ability to be saved by their being sorry for their sins and doing something

about it – praying a prayer, being baptized, confessing with his mouth, etc., etc. That is their foundational doctrine. Their confidence is in their ability. Their faith is in their “doing something about it.” Those of us who believe that God is sovereign and that He saves whom He wants to save whenever He wants to save them sail in a small boat upon the sea of Arminianism. We say this because of the immense popularity of the Arminian view today in contrast to the small number of people who believe in God's absolute sovereignty. We find that we must be diligent in bailing to keep the seas of Arminian ideas from filling our little boat. Those who have been made free by the sovereignly bestowed grace of God walk among men and women who are bound with invisible chains of ignorance of the truth, blindness, hardness and confidence in their flesh. We live in a morgue populated for the most part with spiritually dead persons whose eyes are blind and their hearts hardened. Those who are “disciples indeed” - those truly born again – live in the midst of “disciples” who have converted themselves. Have they not? They walk in the light of the sparks of the fire they have kindled (see Isaiah 50:11). They have “made a decision,” or “exercised their wills,” or “chosen Christ,” or some such thing and think this saves them. They are “believing unbelievers” in many instances we fear. Lost men and women just do not understand that freedom from sin and its penalty must come from Christ who said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” They think that their “sinner's prayer” will make them free or somehow kick-start God so He will make them free. It has repeatedly been said that all men are naturally born Arminians. Yea, verily! And those Arminians who continue to reject the truth of God's sovereignty usually attack those who bear witness to that truth. This is exactly what happened to our Lord Jesus. He knew what was simmering on the back burner of the hearts of these very Jews. He said to them, “I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.” Remember, Jesus spoke these words to some of His “disciples.” We think they were “believing unbelievers!” We do not doubt their sincerity. What we doubt is their salvation. So it is we have called these folk “Believing Unbelievers.” We fear for many that believe on Christ, but are not “disciples indeed” - they are not genuine disciples. They think they have birthed themselves into God's family by praying “the sinner's prayer.” They think that the exercise of their so-called free wills has bought them favor with God. They dare not put these ideas into words because they profess to believe that salvation is by grace. Rooted in their false notion of human ability, they know nothing of seeing themselves as hopeless and helpless sinners. That they are sinners to one degree or another they will admit. That they are hopeless and helpless they will not admit at all. They have no real concept of the necessity of God doing the saving. When someone speaks the truth to them regarding such things as human inability, the need of Holy Spirit regeneration or the new birth, these modern Arminians look at such speakers “like a calf looking at a new gate.” Are not all men welcome to enter God's spiritual superstore and freely choose whether or not they want to go to Heaven? Is it not up to the (ordained) salesman in that great superstore to persuade men that making a decision for Christ is better than going to hell? Does not God offer grace at a greatly discounted price to all men and women? Can they not accept God's grace or trample upon it – whichever they wish? Has not

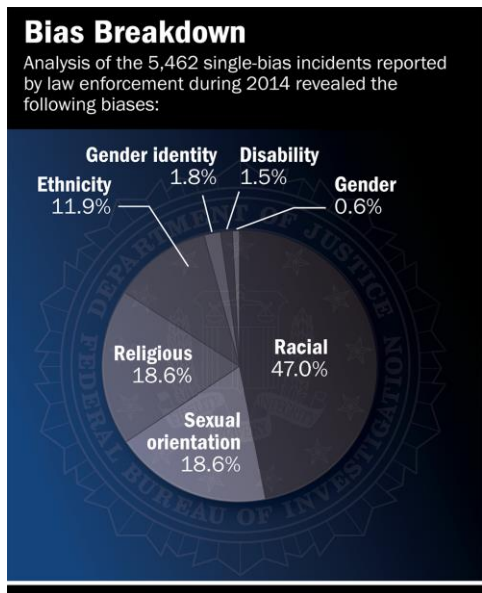
God fixed it so that it is up to spiritually dead sinners whether or not they make a decision for Christ? And if they make such a decision are they not therefore qualified to receive grace? Is not salvation the possession of all “disciples?” What about the “many” who “believed” upon Christ, but whom He said “ye seek to kill me?” Think about these questions in the light of the verses and passages cited in this article. Can you escape the fact that there really are “believing unbelievers” who are not true disciples?

Are you a “disciple indeed?” Is your faith “the faith of God’s elect?” Are you one who has experienced the grace of God that produces “godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of?” We remind the reader of words from the old Baptist hymn which says, “O beware of trust ill-grounded; ’Tis but fancied faith at most, To be cured, and not be wounded; To be saved before you’re lost.” We urge and beseech you not to trust in anything you have done nor in your sincerity. You must experience the grace of God in order to be saved. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

“Persecuted For Their Faith”
by Sis. Joanna Works

“Hate Crimes” is a specific classification of criminal acts according to the FBI.gov: “- the FBI has defined a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.””

It isn’t too uncommon to see news stories about religiously motivated hate crimes in other countries however the U.S. isn’t immune to violent acts either. Last year a man went into a Charleston, S.C church and killed nine people, though this was actually a hate crime based on the church’s ethnic makeup rather than any of their theology it certainly shook up churches around the nation and I have seen & discussed with members of various



churches of like faith the importance of safety and having means of protection in case of such an event occurring during one of their worship services.

The latest statistics on hate crimes that I could find are from 2014 published in November 2015.

(chart from FBI.gov)

Certainly we don’t live in the same kind of fear of many professing Christians around the world, however it is shameful that any one has to live in fear for what they believe, their ethnicity, disability, or other even sexual immorality. (Sin will be judged by God, but let’s not get side tracked.)

Looking at the FBI statistics what religious groups face the most persecution in the U.S.?

Religious bias Of the 1,140 victims of anti-religious hate crimes:

- 56.8 percent were victims of crimes motivated by their offenders’ anti-Jewish bias.
- 16.1 percent were victims of anti-Islamic (Muslim) bias.
- 6.2 percent were victims of bias against groups of individuals of varying religions (anti-multiple religions, group).
- 6.1 percent were victims of anti-Catholic bias.
- 2.5 percent were victims of anti-Protestant bias.
- 1.2 percent were victims of anti-Atheist/Agnostic bias.
- 11.0 percent were victims of bias against other religions (anti-other religion). (Based on [Table 1.](#))

Table 1. (edited to just the Religious based biases)

Religion:	Incidents	Offenses	Victims ¹	Known offenders ²
	1,014	1,092	1,140	687
Anti-Jewish	609	635	648	380
Anti-Catholic	64	67	70	35
Anti-Protestant	25	28	28	12
Anti-Islamic (Muslim)	154	178	184	148
Anti-Other Religion	107	120	125	70
Anti-Multiple Religions, Group	44	51	71	29
Anti-Atheism/Agnosticism/etc.	11	13	14	13

¹ The term *victim* may refer to a person, business, institution, or society as a whole.

² The term *known offender* does not imply that the identity of the suspect is known, but only that an attribute of the suspect has been

identified, which distinguishes him/her from an unknown offender.
<https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2014/tables/table-1>

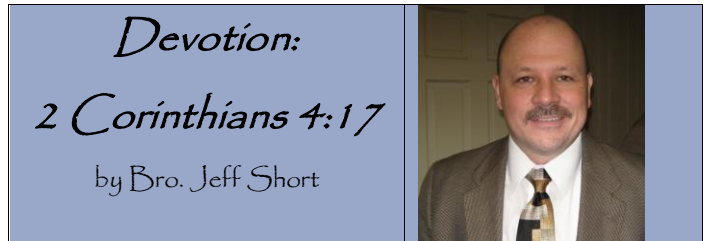
In comparison Christians have fared much better than most other religions in this country. However, the violence people face (regardless of the reason) is evidenced of the spiritual needs of our neighbors.

“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.” Geneses 6:11-13 Those in Christ need not fear either God’s wrath nor the violence of mankind, but we are called to have compassion & love towards all, to show God’s love by sharing both a warning of the judgement to come and hope of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:43-48 *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*

Matthew 28:18-20 *“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

Revelation 14:6-8 *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*



“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”
~ [2 Corinthians 4:17](#)

This verse seems paradoxical to life. While it ends on a high note of glory, it is eclipsed by the dissonant chord in the beginning. To read of a “light affliction” that is only “for a moment” is difficult for many who have suffered or are suffering in significant ways. Why? Because their suffering doesn’t feel light and it doesn’t seem momentary.

You might be tempted to roll your eyes at Paul as though he were a fifteen-year-old prattling about the hardships of life. The earlier part of the fourth chapter is sufficient to disabuse us of any notion that Paul does not know suffering. He wrote:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed
~ [2 Corinthians 4:8-9](#)

A brief survey of his life reveals many afflictions:

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” ~ [2 Corinthians 6:4-10](#)

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. ~ [2 Corinthians 7:5](#)

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.
~ [2 Corinthians 11:24-28](#)

When we put the words of our text against the background of Paul’s life, we cannot think that he did not know what he was talking about from experience. He walked through the valley of

the shadow of death and he also found comfort in the rod and staff of the Shepherd.

Two juxtapositions give us our perspective. The first is our "light affliction" compared with the "weight of glory." This isn't levity nor is it a denial of the severity of afflictions human suffer. Even the sharpest affliction is but light in comparison to future glory. Paul wrote in [Romans 8:18](#): "**For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.**" There is no unit of measure that compare the two and that future glory is such a weight that afflictions are hardly a feather when compared. The second is the "moment" of afflictions compared with the "eternal" glory that awaits. What are a few years in light of eternity? Even if we suffer our entire life, it is but a moment in light of eternity. The Bible consistently reminds us how short life is. The span of our suffering does not merit a blip on the timeline of eternity.

Our suffering is a light moment. That does not mean it isn't real or painful. It does mean that there is an end to our suffering—a final, forever end.

The two ends of the verse are joined in the middle by *working*. The affliction is neither random nor pointless. It is not some sort of hazing on our way to eternity. The affliction that comes to us from the hand of our loving Father is working glory in us and for us. It is sanctifying.

Before we close, let me touch on an objection. I just said that our affliction comes from the hand of God. This is exasperating to some. How can such a thing be? A lengthy defense could be provided, but rather let us look at an example. The great affliction of Jesus was from the hand of His Father.

"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." ~ [Acts 4:27-28](#)

Christ's death was from the hand and counsel of God. It was the fulfillment of His will and He permitted that cruel slaughter by evil men. Christ knew this as He told His disciples that this was the reason He had come into the world ([John 12:27](#)). Christ accepted the affliction, knew it was momentary, and knew it was accomplishing a greater good.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." ~ [Hebrews 12:2](#)

"Does It Really Matter?"

by Bro. Donnie Burford

Popular saying today, 'I don't care what others think about me!' True only if what they say is wrong or false! While on the other hand, if they Rightly think of you as a Prideful, Selfish Jerk, i.e. an Idiot, then you should care. But even more importantly, you should care what God rightly thinks and knows of you! It should matter what they rightly think of you because you are to reflect Christ!

Philippians 2:15; *"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;"*

1Peter 2:12; *"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."*

Proverbs 22:1; *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."*

1Peter 3:14-17; *"But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."*

Matthew 5:11-12; *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."*

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