

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." Galatians 5:1

NEWS LETTER

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Matthew Henry Commentary 5:17-22

The people of God express deep concern for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities. But whatever changes there are on earth, God is still the same, and remains forever wise and holy, just and good; with Him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace; Turn us to thee, O Lord. God never leaves any till they first leave him; if he turns them to him in a way of duty, no doubt he will quickly return to them in a way of mercy. If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will by his favour renew our days. Troubles may cause our hearts to be faint, and our eyes to be dim, but the way to the mercy-seat of our reconciled God is open. Let us, in all our trials, put our whole trust and confidence in his mercy; let us confess our sins, and pour out our hearts before him. Let us watch against repinings and despondency; for we surely know, that it shall be well in the end with all that trust in, fear, love, and serve the Lord. Are not the Lord's judgments in the earth the same as in Jeremiah's days? Let Zion then be remembered by us in our prayers, and her welfare be sought above every earthly joy. Spare, Lord, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach, for the heathen to rule over them.



Picture by Sis. Tamara Restituto

"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this."

~Ecclesiastes 7:10~

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The Christian Voter's Guide

by Bro. Jeff Short

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Proverbs 29:2

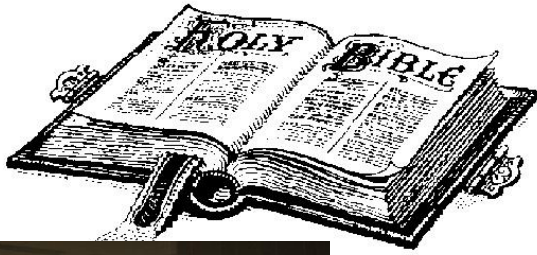
As Christian citizens, we sometimes wonder what the extent of our involvement with the civil government of our country should be. Usually, election time sparks a renewed interest in this issue. In this article I would like to consider especially one aspect of civil involvement - voting. Voting is one means by which we may be involved and help to elect leaders that will cause "the people" to "rejoice." Our text makes it obvious that we have a certain interest in the government of our land. The people can be made to "rejoice" or "mourn" by those in authority.

Our government can affect us positively or negatively. In fact, our leaders have a profound power to impact our lives morally, socially, and economically. They can affect us as citizens, as churches, and as families. The government can encroach on our freedoms through expansive government, complex regulations, and burdensome taxes, or we may enjoy more liberty with a small, limited government that stays within its proper jurisdiction.

(continued on page 13)

Sermon

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. II Timothy 4:2



“Don’t Weep Now”

by Bro. Jeff Short

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.
- Revelation 5:1-5

Introduction

After seeing the glorified Lord and receiving letters for the seven churches in the first three chapters, John is taken up to Heaven in the beginning of chapter 4. In Heaven, he sees God’s throne in indescribable splendor. From the throne and about the throne radiates glory, power, and judgment. There God sits on the throne in complete control and absolute sovereignty over the universe he has made. John saw the four living beings around the throne who worship God continually without ceasing. They are full of eyes, continually beholding the perfection of God and they want nothing else in Heaven or upon the earth. John also saw the twenty-four elders in white robes with golden crowns worshiping and praising the One who sits upon the throne.

In chapter 5, John saw a book, or scroll, with seven seals in the Father’s right hand as he sat upon the throne. We know from further reading that ultimately the lamb will take the book, be worshiped, and begin opening the seals. The opening of the seals begins the time of tribulation in chapter 6 that culminates in

chapter 19 with the Lord’s return to the earth on the white horse with his saints behind him. He will then make war on his enemies and destroy them, and begin his millennial reign on the earth.

Our text is the first five verses of chapter 5. At this point in the text, John hasn’t seen past verse 5. He is only seeing the scene that’s unfolding before him. In the midst of this scene in heaven where God is worshiped in such splendor on his throne, John weeps according to verse 4. The word used speaks of wailing and crying, not merely a tear on the cheek or gentle sob. As we read the account and try to imagine in our minds the scene, John’s weeping seems out of place. Why was John weeping?

John had been with Jesus for three years. He had listened to Jesus expound all the things concerning himself in the Old Testament (Luke 24:27). After the resurrection, John saw Jesus and heard him teach of things pertaining to the kingdom before his ascension (Acts 1:3). John was with the disciples who asked Jesus whether he would then restore the kingdom (Acts 1:6). John had been promised to sit on one of twelve thrones in the kingdom to judge the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). So John was not ignorant of the prophetic promises concerning things to come. It’s hard to envision John weeping because he thought it would not come to pass.

Verse 5 records one of the elders telling John to stop weeping. All this raises two questions for us to answer. 1) Why was John weeping? 2) Why should John stop weeping? We seem to have more insight on the second question in verse 5, but in order to answer these questions we need to know more about this book, or scroll with seven seals.

The Creator and the Creation in Context

This scene begins unfolding in chapter 4, where the twenty-four elders fall down before the throne, worshiping the Creator, and casting their crowns at his feet. The elders say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). The four living beings around the throne were praising the holiness of God and the twenty-four elders praised God as Creator. To speak of the creatorship of God is to speak of his ownership of all things (Nehemiah 9:6). As Creator, he has created all things for his own pleasure, or purpose (Romans 11:36).

Later in chapter 5, the twenty-four elders sing a new song to the Lamb about blood redemption and reigning on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10). We don’t want to diminish the importance of the throne and the Lamb, but in the context of this vision, it’s obvious that this scene is about the earth. There are several references to the Creator and creation, as well as reference to reigning on the earth, and the scroll has something to do with this. We will get to the scroll a little later.

God created the Heaven and the earth and it was very good (Genesis 1:31). Man was also created good (Ecclesiastes 7:29) and given an inheritance, the dominion of the earth (Genesis 1:27-29). Man was created good and given a good inheritance. However, man did not maintain his first estate but rather sinned

and forfeited his inheritance. The earth fell under a curse because of the man's sin.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

-Genesis 3:16-19

Man forfeited his inheritance and Satan has usurped the dominion of the earth. Paul referred to him as the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). As the god of this world, Satan works to blind the minds of men that they will not see the light of the Gospel. Satan is also called the "prince of the power of the air" and "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). He works on the earth to ensnare and enslave men (2 Timothy 2:26). The whole world lies in his sway (1 John 5:19). Satan does not own the earth. He is a trespasser and usurper on it. He will be evicted one day.

God owns the earth. He is the Creator and sustainer of all things. He gave the earth as an inheritance to the first man, the first Adam, but he was not able to possess his possession and forfeited the inheritance through sin and disinherited all his posterity. So now man squats on a cursed earth he can't take dominion of and which is constantly fighting against him. This state of things is what Solomon called "vanity of vanities" (Ecclesiastes 1:2) and "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

God has not left us to futility and despair, though. He has promised to redeem his creation, both man and the earth (Romans 8:19-23). Fallen, sinful man must be redeemed in order to be an heir of God and to inherit the earth (Romans 3:27; 8:16-17). Likewise, the earth is defiled and polluted and must be cleansed and redeemed (Numbers 35:33-34; Genesis 4:10).

The Law of Redeeming a Forfeited Inheritance

God revealed many things about himself and the future through his law. Likewise, he foreshadowed the ultimate redemption of creation through the law given to Israel. Before giving the law, God made a covenant with Abraham to raise up his seed and make a great nation of them and to give them a land of inheritance (Genesis 12:5-7). After the exodus from Egypt, the promised land was divided up with a portion going to each tribe (Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54). The tribal land was further divided among the families of the tribe as seen in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11). This case also established that the inherited land could not go into possession of another tribe (Numbers 36:1-12).

The sale of inheritance land was regulated in the law. The land could not be sold in perpetuity (Leviticus 25:23-28). Any sale had a provision for redemption, or it was automatically redeemed in the Year of Jubilee. Sale of a house within a walled city was an exception to this. It had a one-year term of redemption and it did not return in the Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:29-31). There were also some differences in the land for the Levites, sanctified land, or devoted land for the priests. If the land sale was a forced situation like a debt situation, then the nearest kin had a right to buy it (Leviticus 25:25; Jeremiah 32:7).

In addition to selling the land, inheritances could also be forfeited or otherwise lost. A ruler could confiscate or seize the land. This was forbidden in the law, but a foreign power would not heed it (Ezekiel 46:18). Of course this happened to Naboth and cost him his life (1 Kings 21:1-16). Inheritance could also be forfeited through sin (Leviticus 18:24-30; Numbers 35:30-34), or it could simply be abandoned through a lack of faith or loss of hope. This was the case with Elimelech and Naomi (Ruth 1:1-5). Inheritance could also be lost through extreme poverty or hardship. This was the case with Jeremiah and his cousin (Jeremiah 32:1-15).

The law also made provision for the redemption of a forfeited inheritance. The Year of Jubilee, which was the fiftieth year by Jewish reckoning, was the year of release for slaves, debts, and land to be returned to the inheritor (Leviticus 25:8-16). The law thus secured the inheritance that it would not be permanently lost. The land could also be redeemed by the near kinsman and this was the case with Boaz, the near kinsman to Elimelech (Ruth 4:3-11).

In the case of Jeremiah mentioned earlier, he was commanded by the Lord to redeem the field of his cousin. That seemed a useless transaction in light of the exile, but God had Jeremiah do it as a sign of the redemption of the land after the Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 32:1-15). As a sign of future redemption, Jeremiah wrote a title deed to the land and sealed it. We know that the return from exile in Babylon was only partial and never lived up to the promises concerning it. Why? Because that return was only a lesser fulfillment of the greater return to come at the end of the Day of the Lord. This is a sign of the greater fulfillment in the redemption of creation to come.

The Seven-Sealed Scroll

John saw a book, or scroll, sealed with seven seals in the right hand of the Father on the throne in Heaven (Revelation 5:1). This scroll is sealed until the day of the redemption of the purchased possession (Ephesians 1:14; 4:30). John sees "a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (Revelation 5:2). The angel is advertising for a redeemer who is worthy. A worthy redeemer is one who is qualified and able to redeem the possession. In the case of Boaz and Elimelech, there was a redeemer qualified to redeem the possession, but he was not able (Ruth 4:1-6).

There was not a man in Heaven, in the earth, or under the earth who was qualified and able to claim the scroll. This was the point when John wept. Why did John weep? It was not idle curiosity, for John knew that scroll was the title deed to the earth. He knew

what it meant. As John saw this scene, he was zealous for God's glory. It was overwhelming to think that no one was worthy to open the seals, meaning the world would continue in sin and Christ's kingdom would not come. He longed for the knowledge of the glory of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). John is like the prophet Isaiah considering the things to come and crying out for Christ to come (Isaiah 51:9-11; 64:1).

Stop Weeping

One of the elders tells John to stop weeping (Revelation 5:5). John's weeping is out of place and it is not the time to be weeping. He is about to look on the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world who is coming back in power, glory, and vengeance. He tells John the Lamb has "prevailed," or conquered. This is a time of victory and not defeat.

The Lamb takes the scroll and Heaven erupts in praise and worship (Revelation 5:6-14). The Lamb is "worthy to take the book." He is the Redeemer. Verses 5 and 6 give five symbols of Jesus that are all related to the restoration of Israel and the redemption of the land. This is not the time to weep.

Conclusion

Christians currently gaze on the glorified Lord with the eyes of faith. We will one day "see him as he is" (1 John 3:2), but here and now we are waiting and watching for his coming. The earth is given to Christ (Psalm 2:8) and he will redeem his full possession one day (Psalm 110:1). We being in Christ are made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15-17). These things are sure and we are simply waiting in patient hope (Romans 8:18-39).

In light of our inheritance with the saints, we should not be defeated, discouraged, and downcast. Jesus Christ has conquered death and hell. They have no more power over us. He will tread down all his enemies and the persecutors of his people. He will rule upon David's throne on the earth in a kingdom of perfect peace and righteousness. This is no time for fear and desperation. Jesus has all power in Heaven and on earth, and we go forth in His name (Matthew 28:18-20). If God be for us, who can be against us?



The State of

Man

by Bro. Donnie Burford

The Original State of Man was sinless. The Present state of Man is sinful. The Needed state of Man is Redemptive.

In Redemption a man is not only forgiven, but cleansed and restored to a right standing with God, enabling him to now live in a right state before God again! And that all only because of Christ and His providing Himself as a Atonement for our sins.

Romans 3:23-26; *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."*

Ephesians 1:7; *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"*
1 Peter 1:18-21; *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."*

Galatians 3:13; *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:"*

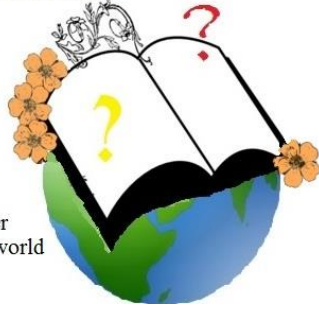
Colossians 1:12-14; *"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:"*

Revelation 5:9; *"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"*

The Forum

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

~ Proverbs 1:5



Questions and Answers to help the believer make sense of our sin filled & confusing world

Restoration of the Creation

What was the state of creation, and especially man's relationship with God, like before the fall?

Bro. Nilo del Mundo (Baptist Church Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia): IT WAS VERY GOOD. Gen. 1:31 That included Lucifer. He was created very good. Adam was created upright. Before the fall of man came the fall of the woman (I Tim 2:14), and before that was the fall of Lucifer (Ezek 28:15).

Bro. Jason Shults (Associate pastor Beverly Manor Baptist Church Washington, IL/Dean of Illinois Baptist College): Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve were morally upright. When God concluded creation after Adam He said all things were "very good." (Genesis 1:31) Ecclesiastes 7:29 also states God made man upright. There was no sin nature and no predisposition toward sin. In fact, the Genesis account reveals that Adam and Eve were both morally upright, intellectually capable and in perfect fellowship with God. This is the purpose of God in creating man. The short answer is, God did it for His own pleasure. (Revelation 4:11) Colossians 1:16 says all things were created "by Him and for Him."

It is also important to understand that God made man mutable, that is, changeable. There was a potential for change if Adam and Eve disobeyed. The good nature could be lost and the blessings could be forfeited. That is even seen in the nature of God's warning in Genesis 2:16-17. While obedience would allow for a continuation of the current state, disobedience would bring a change to that state and a change to Adam and Eve. Due to their sin, Adam and Eve were no longer morally upright. They died spiritually, possessed a sinful nature and passed on to their children a predisposition toward sin. To imagine this visually, humanity is not a corn field of unrelated plants, but a true family tree with rotten roots!

Adam and Eve lost the communion they had with their Creator. They now feared the time when God would come and visit, walking with them in the cool of the day. Ultimately, God ejected them from the Garden of Eden as evidence that they no longer had the relationship with Him they once had.

Bro. Todd Bryant (Pastor of Sovereign Grace Baptist church Northport, AL): There's not much to say about this really. We have just a few verses that even touch on man's unfallen condition and his relationship with God. We know that all God made originally was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). This included man. We know Adam and Eve had unhindered fellowship with God prior to the Fall and we know "work" wasn't hindered by thorns and sweat until after the Fall. We know Adam's fellowship with God was far beyond anything we can experience due to our own personal sin. We can assume work was enjoyable – beyond any satisfaction we may get when we finish a project. Adam and Eve had no comprehension of good and evil (Genesis 2:25) until they ate the fruit of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17). They were innocent of crimes against God. They weren't rebels against their Creator. They had no true fear of anything bad happening unless they violated their one command... which they ultimately did. After the Fall, everything completely fell apart and the world as we know it ensued.

Bro. Jeff Short (Pastor of Charleston Baptist Congregation in Charleston, WV): Genesis 1 and 2 give the account of creation before the fall. Everything God made was very good. Sin had not yet entered the world and so there was no death nor curse of sin upon creation. Man was made upright and was without sin. Adam had open access and communication with God because there was nothing to separate man from God. There was work and marriage before the fall into sin. Man was to take dominion of the earth and to subdue it. He was to name the living things and dress and keep God's garden. There was also law before the fall as God told Adam not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Genesis 3 gives the account of the fall and the cursing of the creation. We have some idea of life before the fall based on the curses given. They either added or took away from man's life. For instance, there was still marriage and still work, but the curse made them harder and more sorrowful. The woman would still bear children but now it would be painful.

What does it mean to be restored/reconciled/redeemed to God?

Bro. Nilo Del Mundo: 2 Cor. 5:19 "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

To be reconciled means to not impute trespass after the trespass has transpired.

Reconciled means no more offended because someone mediated between the offending party and the offended party.

Bro. Jason Shults: Each of those words reveals a slightly different perspective on the same process. To reconcile means to restore a relationship. To be redeemed literally means to be purchased as a possession. Jesus Christ does both of those in

saving a sinner, restoring them to God (Romans 5:10) and redeeming us at the cost of His own blood. (Revelation 5:9) Perhaps restoration is the most interesting of the words in the context of the first question. To restore is to put something back in its original place or original state. I personally believe, when God said He would make man in His own image, it suggested that man would be a three-in-one being like God Himself. Adam was created with a physical body – to interact with the world around him; a thoughtful mind – to consider, will and choose; a spiritual nature – to interact and have a relationship with God Himself. But in the Fall, God assured they would die “in the day” they disobeyed. I believe they were immediately spiritually dead, having lost any relationship to God.

This idea, called the Trichotomous View, explains some important verses in the New Testament such as Paul’s assertion that mankind is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). 1 Corinthians 2:14 also becomes more clear as Paul says, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Through the work of Jesus Christ, a believer is restored to that original three-in-one nature by being brought to spiritual life and given the Holy Spirit of God Himself. As Paul explains in Colossians 3:10, the believer is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

Bro. Todd Bryant: “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). We all became rebels in the Fall of Adam. As this verse plainly teaches, when he sinned, we all sinned right along with him. He is the root of the human genealogical tree. When he fell, the entire tree was cut at the root, so to speak. God is the State and we are rebels of the State. Our transgression comes with a price – eternal punishment. In order for God to save us eternally, the payment had to be made. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13). That is, Christ bought us back. That’s what it means to redeem us. He paid the price that was due. By doing this, He reconciled us to God. Before Christ purchased us, we were at odds with our Creator. But Christ, having paid the ransom, reconciled us to God and now we have peace with God through faith in Him (Romans 5:1).

Bro. Jeff Short: First of all, it means to need to be. We are by nature alienated from God through sin, both the sin we inherited at conception and the practical sin of every day of our lives (Ephesians 2:11-12; 4:18; Psalm 51:5; 58:3). To be alienated from God means to be dead in trespasses and sins now (Ephesians 2:1-3) and eternally in the lake of fire in the future (Revelation 20:15; 21:8). Restored, reconciled, and redeemed are different aspects of what it means to be saved from God’s wrath (Romans 8:29-30, 33). Ultimately, by grace through faith in Christ our vile bodies will be changed to be like Jesus’ glorious body (Philippians 3:20-21), we are saved from destruction from the just wrath of God, and we will live with God forever (Revelation 22:3-5; John 11:26).

Why has God purposed to restore any of His creation instead of just destroying us all?

Bro. Nilo Del Mundo: To glorify himself through the grace which He bestowed on those restored through Christ. Eph 2:7 “*That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*”

Bro. Jason Shults: First, let’s make clear that God didn’t have to save anyone. The very fact that God does save rebellious sinners is a testament to His nature being radically different from ours. He has done something gracious for us that we, in our sinful nature, would never do for others.

In Ephesians 1, Paul offers a wonderfully detailed discourse of the purpose of God. He shows, in the first 14 verses of that letter, exactly what the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit had to do in order to save sinners. The Father chose and predestinated some for salvation (1:4-5). Jesus the Son redeemed sinners by His blood through His work on the Cross (1:7). The Holy Spirit draws, seals and secures those sinners in their salvation (1:13-14).

It is apparent that Paul was also dealing not only with what God did, but also why He did it. Throughout that passage he sprinkles in explanations of the purpose of God in salvation. He says it is: • according to the good pleasure of His will. (5) • to the praise of His glory. (6) • according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself. (9) • after the counsel of his own will. (11) • that we should be to the praise of his glory. (12) • unto the praise of his glory. (14)

In short, God saves sinners because He is pleased to do it and it brings Him glory.

Bro. Todd Bryant: I assume “restore” here speaks of our being eternally saved in glorification. As to why God purposed to save any of His creation, the answer seems plain. He saved us because He loved us. Romans 8:29-30 states that God predestined a people whom He foreknew. This foreknowledge of God speaks more to an intimate love such as when Adam knew his wife Eve (Genesis 4:1). God loved us. So, He chose us in Christ, sent Jesus to die for our sins, called us to faith in Christ, preserves us by His power and will glorify us eternally. This is all the result of God’s covenant love for His people. Why did He love any of us? I haven’t a clue. But I’m certainly glad that He did.

Bro. Jeff Short: We have to be careful whenever we talk about why God does or doesn’t do anything. We could ask, Why does God save some? Why does God destroy some? Why doesn’t God save all? Or, why doesn’t God destroy all? You notice the answer to all those questions is the same. One reason we know that is because of the reality that is. God doesn’t destroy all and God doesn’t save all. God saves some and God destroys some. That is how it is.

We could go further and ask, Why did God create at all? Why didn’t God create everything so that sin wouldn’t enter the

world? I think the answer is still the same no matter what question we ask about why God does or doesn't do anything. The short answer is: everything God does is maximally for his glory. I believe we get that succinct answer in Romans 9:21-23. Another way to approach the question is to answer that because God is infinitely perfect, immutable, and has all knowledge there are no alternative works of God.



In Health

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. ~ III John 1:2

with Bro. John Fry D.C.



Pesticide And Produce

It may come as no shock that many of the fruits and vegetables we eat are grown by using heavy amounts of pesticides. Obviously, the use of pesticides is widespread to ensure the largest supply of produce possible. What is rarely discussed though is the long term affects these pesticides have on people. Let's not forget the chemicals were designed to kill!

I've watched a growing concern over food safety in the last few years as consumers have become more educated and I'm thankful for that as well. I know it will continue to be a big issue as people become more aware of just what their getting at the supermarket and at restaurants as well. The truth is those that are concerned aren't just your "hippie" crowd. Your doctor is as well! In fact, there is a growing concern in the scientific community that even small doses of pesticides and chemicals over time packed away in good old fatty tissue can adversely affect people as those concentrations build up over time. It's not just older adults though that need to be worried. Some of the most at danger are developing fetuses and young children where body fat ratios are still relatively low.

So the question arises, is washing and peeling enough to ensure food safety? Unfortunately, the answer is no. While washing may eliminate some pesticide residue, it most certainly will not remove all of them. Peeling seems like a great alternative and can be for removing toxins, but often removes the most vital nutrients. The best option for the informed consumer is to buy organic when possible, wash all vegetables bought in the store and eat a wide variety of produce.

The Environmental Working Group (EWG) each year produces a list of the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables and 12 cleanest fruits and vegetables. The guide was based on more than 6000 field tests performed by the USDA. The lists take into account the typical methods people treat the produce such as peeling and washing.

The "dirty dozen" as ranked by the EWG for 2016 are as follows: strawberries, apples, nectarines, peaches, celery, grapes, cherries, spinach, tomatoes, sweet bell peppers, cherry tomatoes, and cucumbers. Each of these foods were found to have higher concentrations of pesticide residues than other foods. Many of these seem to make it on the list year after year.

The group also reports a list of the "Clean 15". These are: avocados, sweet corn, pineapples, cabbage, frozen sweet peas, onions, asparagus, mangoes, papayas, kiwis, eggplant, honeydew melon, grapefruit, cantaloupe, and cauliflower. These fruits and vegetables were found to have very few pesticide contaminates.

By eliminating the dirty dozen from your traditional store-bought items and buying organic instead, it is estimated that you could reduce your exposure to harmful pesticides by 90%. That could have great affects on future health!

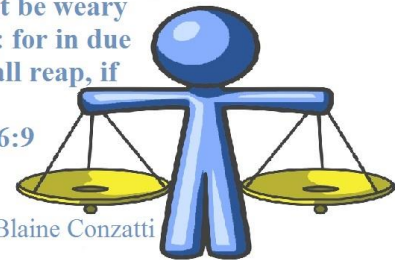
If you would like to ask any questions for a future article, please don't hesitate to send me your questions to pastorjohnfry@att.net. Until next time, I pray that you might find yourself in health!

Biblical Economics

And let us not be weary
in well doing: for in due
season we shall reap, if
we faint not.

Gal. 6:9

with Bro. Blaine Konzatti



Delaying Marriage Hurts Men and Families

Not only are married men healthier and happier than their single peers, but statistics show they are also more financially successful.

"Becoming a husband means growing up, making a transition from prolonged semi-adolescence to true male adulthood," says Robert Rector, Senior Research Fellow in Domestic Policy Studies at the Heritage Foundation.

Holding other variables constant, men earn [0.9 percent higher wages](#) for each year they are married. After being married for ten years, husbands earn [17 to 20 percent more](#) than unmarried peers with the same characteristics.

These statistics reveal an economic phenomenon that [economists have termed](#) the **marriage premium**. Entering into marriage causes men to be more productive and receive higher earnings,

after controlling for variables such as the unemployment rate, age, race/ethnicity, education, and mother's characteristics.

Men who delay or forgo marriage lose out on the marriage premium. For each year that a man resists tying the knot, he falls further behind his married peers financially, sacrificing the significant bump in wages and productivity that he would have otherwise received.

The effect of the marriage premium on a man's financial condition becomes more pronounced over time. After decades of receiving a 0.9 percent annual increase in wages that is caused by entering into marriage, married men are often making tens of thousands of dollars more per year than their single peers.

Even less-educated men benefit from the marriage premium. The marriage premium among married men with a high school diploma or less [is at least \\$17,000](#). Understanding the marriage premium allows us to better understand why [researchers from the Brookings Institution](#) found getting married is more effective in preventing and reducing poverty than getting more education.

Many millennials want to wed but are delaying getting married until they have achieved financial security. This paradigm is challenged by the marriage premium, which seems to indicate that marriage allows for the financial security millennials are seeking.

Marriage also has a strong effect upon poverty. A [2003 study released by the Brookings Institution](#) found that poverty would be reduced from 13 to 9.5 percent if the marriage rate among families had remained unchanged from 1970 to 2001.

Why does the marriage premium exist? Married men are healthier and happier. They tend to live more stable lives, move less, and demonstrate more responsibility. Their wives provide them with emotional support and professional advice, as well as support around the house. All of these characteristics make for better employees that are more productive at work and highly valued by employers.

When society promotes the idea that young adults should pursue financial stability before getting married, it increases the likelihood of poverty and makes it more difficult for men to achieve financial success. The marriage rate among millennials is significantly lower than previous generations, and fewer young adults are getting married than ever before. As long as this trend continues, men will continue to suffer from missing out on the marriage premium.

Men do better when culture promotes marriage. Families are more resilient when men are healthy, happy, and professionally successful – and marriage is the ideal first step.

This post was originally written for the Family Policy Institute of Washington: <http://www.fpiw.org/blog/2016/06/13/statistics-show-delaying-marriage-hurts-families-incomes/>.

Mr. Practical



I have no greater joy than to hear
that my children are walking in the
truth. ||| John 1:4



with Bro. Todd Bryant

Living in the Past

“Say not, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.” – Ecclesiastes 7:10

“Oh, that we were still living in the ‘Good Ole Days’”, people often remark. This is a common theme often related to every part of life. Patriots want the “Good Ole Days”, businessmen desire the “Good Ole Days”, older people reflect on the “Good Ole Days” and I’ve often heard preachers in the pulpit reflect on how good things used to be. Living in the past is a sure fire recipe for failure in the present. “Nobody wants the truth anymore” pastors often say. But a man that recognizes human depravity as taught in God’s Word should realize that nobody has ever naturally wanted it. “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). This whole “Good Ole Day” perspective is not a wise one. I say that by the authority of our text verse. We would do well to cast such a perspective aside and keep plugging along with the instructions we have been given.

It should be mentioned that American Christians are spoiled – all of us. We see the world from a completely different viewpoint than pretty much all believers of the past. We’ve had freedom to worship and live out our faith in a way that the vast majority of Christians in the past and present (in other countries) simply know nothing about. We have expectations of what is “due” to us as “citizens of America”. Because of this, we have taken to fighting more political battles than we ever have fought spiritual ones. Historians that write of our generation will write of a generation that sought more change through the voting booth than the Gospel. Our freedoms have made us lazy in carrying out the Great Commission and passionate about restoring Americanism – the “Good Ole Days” of America’s past. We want to “Make America Great Again” while our neighbor dies apart from Christ. And this entire mindset has caused us to see revivals and excitement surrounding God’s Word as a thing of the past. If we aren’t cautious, our lack of zeal concerning the last instructions Jesus gave His church will continue to see our

churches closing their doors. Our view of the world is skewed and it needs corrected 50 years ago.

For those who may not know, the Book of Ecclesiastes is written to us that we may have a more spiritual viewpoint of what's going on around us. The writer is constantly reminding his readers not to have an "under the sun" perspective on life (Ecclesiastes 1:3). That is, quit only thinking about things on planet Earth (under the sun). God's plan is bigger than what you can see and your allegiance to God is greater than your surroundings. It's like when Paul reminded the Philippian believers that our "citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20) or when he told the Colossian saints "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Colossians 3:2). As believers, we should see more going on than what our eyes perceive around us every day. Perhaps we are so busy laying up treasures here on Earth that we get too caught up in the daily affairs of this life. We must always remember, "...he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

We need to accept this truth - living in the past is driven by an earthly mindset. Practically, at least, it reduces the power of God to an age gone by. The sovereignty of God becomes a doctrine we believe on paper but rarely apply in real life. There was a mighty movement of God in the past...somewhere. But we seem to have this idea that He cannot move today. Look, 1st century Christians faced a depraved world much like our own. The Roman Christians under Nero lived under the dominion of a monarch who was reportedly a twice-married homosexual who relished the opportunity to murder Christians. He blamed them for everything that went wrong under his reign. First century believers were tortured and martyred in every imaginable way. First century Christians literally faced rulers and laws that forbade them from doing the very work Jesus gave His church to do. And again, death was promised to those that broke such laws. That's the "Good Ole Days". If you trace church history through the centuries following, you'll find a similar theme. That's the "Good Ole Days". We see persecution as being forced to bake a cake for a homosexual couple or not allowing us to buy a machine gun. What a "Woe is me" perspective we often have. While the first century Christians were concerned they would become an "event" in the Colosseum where lions were unleashed on them, we are concerned that we may not have tax-exempt status anymore. Folks, our perspective is skewed. The folks living in the "Good Ole Days" would have loved to live in our day.

For what it's worth, God worked mightily in the past centuries under which Christians were heavily persecuted. They didn't quit doing what they'd been instructed to do even in the face of such atrocities. I fear sometimes that we are so caught up in American rights that we forget we still live in, perhaps, the most free society that has ever been for the propagation of the Gospel. I see churches today where we are bold to speak on the truths of God's Word...as long as it's inside the four walls of a church. But the moment we walk outside, "nobody wants the truth anymore" so we don't even offer it. The world around us is perishing from the disease of sin. Yet, here we are with the

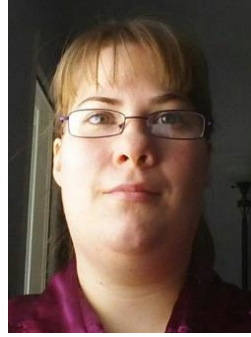
antidote and we keep it to ourselves. Paul saw the wrath of God on a wicked society (Romans 1:18-32) and this drove him to preach the Gospel (Romans 1:15-17). Why does it not do the same for us? Perhaps we are living in the past. Perhaps we believe that God is done working. Perhaps we've lost our love for our fellow man! We should consider that maybe God has chosen to use stones to carry on His work because we are failing to do what we've been called to do (Luke 19:40).

There is another sense in which we live in the past. Oftentimes, those of us that lived in gross immorality simply cannot shake what we did before we were saved. Whether it was partying and carousing or whether it was abominable acts, we are unable to serve God today because yesterday is still bogging us down. I'm certain that the enemy is pleased with any attitude that would keep us from serving God today. Paul certainly had sins in his past. He was a murderer. And if that wasn't enough, he was murdering the people of God...Bible believing Christians, if you will. Yet, Paul had the most widespread personal ministry of anybody that has ever lived. How so? He told the Philippian saints, "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way" (Philippians 3:13-15a). You cannot change the past. It's done. It is forever written. But you can affect your future service for Christ. And that begins today.

How are we to live then? I mean if the past was the "Good Ole Days" and tomorrow seems bleak, what are we to do? Our Lord gives us some pretty plain instruction on this very subject. Jesus said, "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34). Live for today. You cannot change the past. You cannot live in the past - "Good Ole Days" or not. You may not be here for the future. We simply do not know what tomorrow may bring. But today...we are here. You can affect right now. You can serve God right now. You can do what you've been instructed to do right now. Whether churches or individual believers, we need to get busy doing what God has called us to do. Right now, as believers living in America, we have great freedoms that most Christians have never been afforded. But don't let a fight for those freedoms take over your life to the point that you aren't fighting the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Read God's Word and do what it tells you to do. This needs to be our goal and focus. As our text verse implies, it's easy to see today as the hardest time that there's ever been to live. The "Good Ole Days" are past and the future may be bright. But today, it's tough. That simply is an unwise assessment. And again, it is a poor application (at best) of God's sovereignty. If we truly believe He is sovereign, then He is sovereign today just as He was yesterday. And, He is sovereign outside the church doors just like He is inside. Let us stop dwelling on the past. God has sovereignly placed you and I in this exact moment. Let us use it to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

A Conservative Legacy: Reagan

by Sis. Joanna Works



Being so close to the U.S.A's presidential election & our theme of restoration and looking at the past I thought it would be a good time to look at one of the most famous and beloved of conservative presidents in our more recent history; Ronald Wilson Reagan.

Born February 6th, 1911 in Tampico, IL and passed June 5th, 2004 in Bel-Air, Los Angeles, CA Reagan was the 40th President of the United States after serving as the Governor of California for two terms. His campaign and presidency are frequently referred to as the Reagan Revolution. There have been movements within the Republican party and Conservative circles that shook things up before and since Reagan, such as the Barry Goldwater presidential campaign of 1964 and Ron Paul Revolution of 2008-2012. Yet none have been embraced by hardline Republicans like that of Reagan. Main stream conservative political pundits don't talk about wanting to return to an era of Goldwater, but they do of Reagan.

Why do Republicans & Conservatives still present it as a golden age? I asked some knowledgeable cohorts, "Most republicans would consider it a golden age, because I would argue that the Republican Party hasn't elected or even ran a true conservative since." Answered Bro. Jason Smith, high school principle of Greenup, KY and former history teacher. (We've interviewed him in our Labor in Love column before which you can read [here](#))

Bro. Greg Wilson, pastor of [Landmark Baptist Church](#) in Archer, FL replied in his [weekly blog](#) "When I was recently asked why so many people hold up Ronald Reagan as a standard of a great conservative president, I was a bit taken aback. I could think of a multitude of reason for why they **SHOULD NOT**, but that was not the question. Why **DO** they hold him up as the consummate conservative?" I was half tempted to simply republish Bro. Wilson's article instead of writing my own, but we'll return to this in a moment.

I had also asked Bro. Smith and Bro. Glen Tweet (full discloser, my brother-in-law) **What was the Reagan Revolution about?** "Deregulation of unions making the top 5% much more wealthy, increased our military and brought back American pride of country. He publicly went on international TV and asked Gorbachev to bring down the Berlin Wall. He is credited for stopping the Cold War with the communistic "evil" empire - I

think the event would have happened anyway-- it was a once-in-a-lifetime event that conveniently made for amazing PR!!" replied Bro. Tweet. "It was the return of conservative principles that Barry Goldwater often spoke of, but wasn't electable. In addition, it was the Reagan Democrats who voted republican that were unhappy with the policies & economy of Jimmy Carter. That revolution shifted the political party identification particularly in the south." Bro. Smith commented, he further elaborated, "Reagan was a natural on camera based on his acting career. He also had a great sense of humor and was personable. Goldwater was none of those things. Policy-wise. Goldwater was an old school "war hawk". Reagan fought for peace. Used the strength of the military to try & avoid it at all costs."

How did Reagan's rhetoric and actions differ? "Regan could communicate in a way the American people related to. The international community didn't like him-- they saw him as ignorant about world relations. His actions differed in that when businesses abroad needed protection, he was left in the dark and American CIA and black ops teams trained foreign militaries who then went rouge and committed atrocities in the name of American and foreign business interests." – Bro. Tweet "The Iran Contra scandal is probably the best example I can think of in terms of a contradiction in rhetoric & actions. Reagan ran the office of the presidency in such a way that everyone knew he was in charge. Everything ran through the Oval Office except the decisions by his subordinates with arming of freedom fighters in Nicaragua. I honestly don't think Reagan knew what was happening." – Bro. Smith

What is his legacy today & consequences of his foreign policy? "End of the Cold War, the demise of the USSR, & nuclear proliferation in general. His legacy of "peace through strength" (a well-armed, highly equipped, technology driven military) is still the philosophy of the Republican Party today." – Bro. Smith

"He pulled all of congress toward the right of center on a few issues with his communicating about the need for a strong military, the need to refrain from raising income taxes and to raise the wages for our military. While his staff sold arms to fund the contras, his foreign policy opened the door for the drug smuggling that the Clinton admin used to fund their agenda. (Without oversight--and the Lord--people will sink down to their worst self at times...)" – Bro. Tweet.

Getting back to Bro. Wilson's article however he listed these points as ways Reagan was not a true conservative, which are relevant to military and foreign policy:

- He greatly increased the size of the military and the associated military industrial complex. He sent Marines into Lebanon where 241 were killed in a suicide truck

bombing (at least two them were old friends with whom I had served). He ordered the invasion of Grenada without a Declaration of War. Wouldn't a conservative know what the Constitution requires? Wouldn't a conservative care?

- He oversaw the illegal Iran-Contra Affair that reeked of being a CIA operation and was no doubt directly overseen by his VP, the old CIA Chief, George H. W. Bush.
- He funded, and essentially created Osama Bin Laden and the Islamic resistance to Russia, which eventually became the Islamic resistance to the US by its various names: Taliban, Al-Qaida, ISIS, etc.

While I agree with Bro. Wilson on Reagan and Bush's involvement with the Iran-Contra Affair, obviously, this isn't universally held as historical fact, and perhaps the debate on this point is a primary reason why many can still consider Reagan a good president.

Some of Bro. Wilson's other points include:

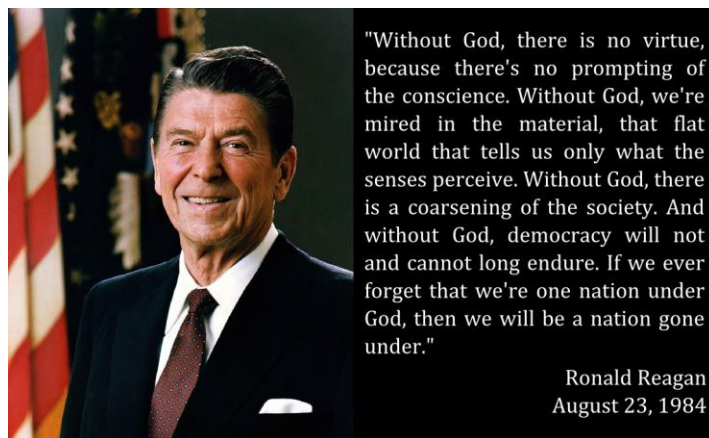
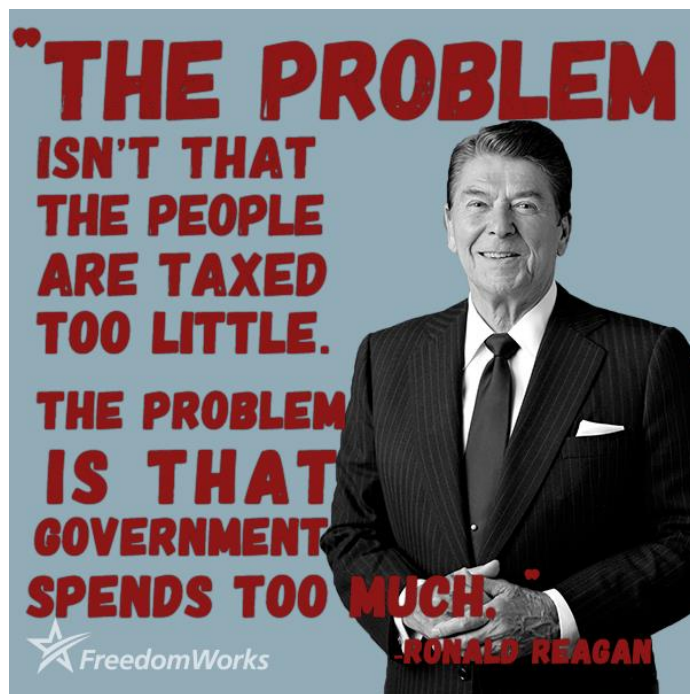
- He raised taxes multiple times during his presidency. (Eleven times in eight years)
- He greatly expanded the Federal government, including the Departments of Energy and the Departments of Education, both of which he had promised to eliminate. He also added even more, including the boondoggle called the Department of Veteran's Affairs.
- He signed into law the "Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986," which banned the ownership of automatic firearms not purchased prior to 1986. This is why automatic weapons are cost prohibitive, even if one possesses a Class III firearms license.
- Though he occasionally mouthed opposition to abortion on demand he actually did next to nothing to bring about its end. Pretty much like the entire Republican Party.

You can read his full article "[Was Reagan a Conservative? Is Any Republican a Conservative?](#)" by clicking on the title or going to his blog [Truthcrushedtoearth.blogspot.com](#)

Reagan's policies were not without its detractors among conservative of his time, the October 1988 issue of The Free Market published an article "[The Sad Legacy of Ronald Reagan](#)" by Sheldon L. Richman which critiques Reagan's administration on; spending, taxes, regulation, bureaucracy, and trade. Under the heading of Results Mr. Richman concludes, "Reagan's fans argue that he has changed the terms of public-policy debate, that no one today dares propose big spending programs. I contend that the alleged spending-shyness of politicians is not the result of an ideological sea-change, but rather of their constituents' fiscal fright brought about by \$250 billion Reagan budget deficits. If the deficit ever shrinks, the demand for spending will

resume. This is the Reagan legacy. He was to be the man who would turn things around. But he didn't even try. As he so dramatically illustrated when he accepted the plant-closing bill, there has been no sea-change in thinking about the role of government." You will find his full article at [Mises.org](#)

Yet for those longing for a return to the Reagan era and brand of leadership Ronald Reagan is immortalized in such good quotes as:



To what degree Mr. Reagan believed and practiced what he preached is a subject worth more examination in future articles.

The Election: Theirs or Yours

by Bro. Donnie Burford

There is a lot of uncertainty about the upcoming election, But the real concern should be over the certainty of your own Election by God! Have you in Faith come to Christ, are you following Him? This only is where certainty begins!

2 Peter 1:10-11; "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

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

Romans 9:16; "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Ephesians 2:8-10; "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Philippians 2:12-13; "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."

1 Peter 1:3-5; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

John 10:26-30; "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

John 6:37-40; "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on

him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."



The Christian Voter's Guide

by Bro. Jeff Short

(Continued from the cover page)

In America, we have a representative republic. The magistrates are elected to office by the citizenry of this country. This means that every adult citizen has the privilege of voting in elections. In light of our text, it would be foolish not to vote because of apathy or irresponsibility.

Perhaps, some do not make use of this privilege because voting can seem to be such an overwhelming endeavor. There are so many candidates and offices and it is hard to find reliable information. We can simplify things somewhat when we consider that each voter elects roughly about sixteen key candidates to public office on the national, state, and local levels combined. The overall number may vary given a person's exact location, e.g. if a person lives outside of an incorporated city, he will not vote for a mayor, city councilman, etc.

We can elect five candidates on the national level - a president, a vice president, two senators, and a congressman. We can elect about five candidates on the state level - a governor, a lieutenant governor, an attorney general, a senator, and one or more representatives. Depending on the place of residence, we may elect about six candidates on the local level - a mayor, a city councilman, a city attorney, the school board, a county supervisor, and a sheriff.

These are the key public office holders that we may vote for. We elect them and pay their salaries with our taxes. They are supposed to be servants of the public and representative of their constituency. They should especially represent us morally. When we consider the number of offices that we are responsible for, it is not such a large task to be informed of this small number of people. This brings us to the question of how we are to determine a candidate's suitability for office. Is there some reliable guide by which we can make determinations of how fit a candidate is

for the office he seeks? Yes, there is such a guide; the Bible is the best Christian voter's guide.

Let us now look into our guide and see if we can find help for the voting dilemma.

Let us consider two main questions and as we proceed, I will also try to address some common questions and difficulties we meet with as Christians trying to vote with a clear conscience.

I. In the first place, how may we determine a candidate's suitability for office?

Certainly, we seek more than just opinion in this matter. What does the Bible have to say about qualifications for government leaders? Or perhaps we might ask, "Should a Christian even vote at all or even be concerned with politics?" We probably all share a degree of disgust with politics on all levels. Does that mean we should just stay away from the whole issue? What does the Bible have to say on this matter?

Moses prepared the people of Israel for the time when they would occupy the land of Canaan. He instructed them, "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment"(Deuteronomy 16:18). Moses taught the people that they would be responsible for choosing their civil officers. Their form of government made the people responsible to make their own judges and officers. This was not always the case in Israel's varied history, nor is it the case in all the world today. In some countries, the citizens cannot elect their officials in free elections. So, I suppose that Christians in those countries do not have to face this issue of voting.

However, in the United States, we still can vote and we should. Considering our text, it would be foolish, at best, not to vote. If all Christians would quit voting, our country would move from a moral decline to a free-fall. When Israel was self-governed, they were responsible to choose their leaders. Along with this charge, they were also given guidelines as to the type of men they should choose. There are two primary texts that bear on this subject, from which, we will note seven marks of qualified candidates. There are actually many verses that seem to speak to us on this subject, but we will stick with the two primary passages in Exodus 18:21 and Deuteronomy 1:13.

After Israel was delivered from Egypt, they had grown to a very large multitude. Moses was the chief magistrate of the civil government of the nation. He was the only judge, and the people would come to him for judgment from morning until night. Moses' father-in-law was concerned that Moses was going to wear himself out and the people too. He wisely advised that lesser judges should be chosen to help in governing the people. Jethro also told him what types of men were fit to be civil officers.

"Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (Exodus 18:21). The first

qualification mentioned is that they should be "able men." "Able" refers to strength and especially strength of character. This speaks of men of ability, integrity, virtue, and courage. These must be men who will act from principle, even in the face of opposition.

He next says that these men should "fear God." They must have a reverence for God and His Word. They would not be atheist or agnostic. They would not advocate the removal of God's Word from all public life, nor would they advocate the transcendence of man's law to God's law. They must "fear God" for "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction"(Proverbs 1:7).

Next, they should be "men of truth." They should love truth and hate falsehood. They should not be perpetual prevaricators or supporters of those who are. They must love truth and seek it even when it is not convenient.

These should also be men "hating covetousness." They should not be greedy for unjust gain. They should not seek to use their office for enriching themselves or their friends. They would also not allow others to use the government for getting unjust gain through frivolous lawsuits and massive redistribution of wealth programs. These four qualifications are given in this passage.

We find three additional qualifications in Deuteronomy 1:13: "Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." In this passage, Moses referred to the time in Exodus 18 when, forty years prior, Jethro counseled him to have other judges to help him. Notice that Moses told Israel they were to "take," or choose, the men fit for these offices, and he would "make them rulers over you."

The fifth mark of those fit for office is they should be "wise men." This means they should be skillful and intelligent. This speaks of a natural ability and a wisdom that is gained through experience. No fools need apply.

Next, they should be "understanding" men. This does not refer to some sappy sentimentalism, rather they should be able to deal wisely and discern. They must be able to make proper moral and ethical decisions. By the nature of their position they must make tough decisions, decide on legislation, etc. A fit candidate should be able to give a definite answer concerning issues such as abortion, sodomite marriages, etc.

The seventh qualification given is that they should be "known among your tribes." This indicates that these men had proven themselves among the people. They have a track record in their homes, church, community, and business. These would not be novices, but men who have earned respect in other spheres of life and labor. This probably eliminates the carpetbagger from consideration for office.

Though these verses deal with the nation of Israel, the passages are relevant for us today. The authority for all civil government comes from God, whether in Israel, Rome, or the United States. God defines the purpose and responsibility of the government. Regardless of whether they acknowledge Him or not, they will be held accountable by God for how they fulfilled their responsibility.

Consider the passage in Romans 13:1-6. There we have the purpose of the civil government defined and the Apostle was talking about the Roman government at that time. If we compare this and other New Testament passages with Old Testament passages related to Israel, we find that the purpose of the government is the same. We can safely conclude that if the civil government authority is the same, the purpose is the same, and the jurisdiction is the same, then the qualifications for officers in the government are also the same. Therefore, we must use these guidelines to determine the suitability of candidates today and tomorrow in the US as well as any other country.

II. Secondly, we must consider another important question on this subject: Should Christians vote for a woman for public office?

A woman holding public office is an accepted fact in our day. We do not even hear this subject being debated in the public arena. For most, it is not even a consideration. In fact, probably few Christians even think about it or seriously consider whether this is acceptable by Scripture.

In America, this has been a reality since the 19th century. Susanna Medora Salter was the first woman in the history of this country to be elected to a public office. She was elected mayor of Argonia, KS in 1887. Different women had run for office before this time, but she was the first to win an election and hold a public office. Since that time, we have been used to women as mayors, governors, senators, representatives, judges, and eventually even president.

For conscientious Christians, voting for a woman can be a dilemma when it appears that a woman is the most fit candidate for the office. We cannot deny that this is the case at different times. A woman may be running unopposed or she may just simply be the most conservative and moral candidate by far. However, this question must be brought first of all to the Scripture. Before we even consider a woman's qualifications, i.e. her ability, wisdom, integrity, moral and spiritual condition, we must find out if a woman can hold public office according to God's Word. If she is not permitted by the Word, her suitability for office is irrelevant. If she is permitted, then we must determine her suitability by Scripture just as we would for a man.

The answer to this question in brief is that the Bible does not permit women to bear rule over men in any sphere. They are not permitted to rule over the man in the home, in the church, or in the public arena. It is not a question of her abilities, nor is it a question of history where a woman has held a public office and done well, or even where women have done good things for the country by their office. When the question is put to the Scriptures alone, the position of authority over men is not given to women by God.

Let us now consider some reasons for this conclusion from the Word. If we go back to the qualification passages referenced earlier, we can see that these verses have men in view. The word "men" in these verses is gender specific, meaning the male gender as opposed to the female gender. The context will also

bear this out that men were to be selected for positions of civil leadership. Women holding public office would also violate the doctrine of headship taught throughout the Bible - from beginning to end. The order of authority given by God is God-Christ-man-woman (I Corinthians 11:3). We have no authority to change the chain of command established in ante-antiquity by the eternal God. This order is seen in the first three chapters of Genesis, the second chapter of I Timothy, Ephesians chapter five, and other passages. This order is never overturned by any precept in the Bible.

Paul taught Timothy that women should "learn in silence with all subjection" and they should not "teach," neither should they "usurp authority over the man" (I Timothy 2:11-12). He went on to support this saying, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (I Timothy 2:13). He goes right back to the beginning and sets forth the order not to be violated: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11:8-9).

We have been so conditioned by our society of humanist/feminist rebellion against God that to say these things is shocking. However, the question is not one to be determined by our feelings, opinions, preferences, etc. The question is rather: What does God require? The Bible tells us plainly that God requires men to take leadership in all spheres. He requires men to be men, not the whining, whimpering, in touch with his inner child or feminine side, feminized pretty boy of our day. Biblical manliness has been lost today in a quagmire of touchy-feely, spineless manhood that is subject to political sensitivity and correctness. The question that should perplex us is where are the men, the real men?

We do not deny that women have been in positions of authority over men at different times in history, and even in Bible times. This fact should not surprise us, for men, women, and children have been violating God's Word since Adam and Eve did so in the Garden of Eden. In the Bible when women were ruling over men, rather than condoning or commending it, the words are plain that it was an error and even a curse. We have this lament in Isaiah 3:12, "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths." This was a sad situation, even an error. It was also a judgment against the men of that day who abdicated their God given responsibility.

Notice also that ambition for public office was unknown to the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. In this chapter, we have the inspired description of a godly and virtuous woman. It is a beautiful description of biblical womanhood. An examination of this chapter reveals, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (Proverbs 31:23). In ancient times, "the gates" was the place where the elders and judges would sit and conduct official public business.

It would be similar to speak of the courthouse, capitol building, town hall, or some other municipal building where the affairs of civil government are handled. It was this woman's "husband"

who was known and sat "among the elders of the land." She had no thought or desire of taking his place.

The virtuous woman is the central focus of this passage, and we see that her interests and work were centered in her home (v. 27). She was industrious (vv. 13, 16-19). She worked to feed her household (vv. 14-15). She labored to clothe her household (vv. 21-22). She performed important community service (v. 20). She excelled in her God-given opportunity so much that her works praised "her in the gates" (Proverbs 31:31), but she never sat there in a public office.

She was a manifold blessing to others, using well her opportunity as a wife and mother (v. 26). Her husband dealt with matters of civil government and was blessed to have her as his most trusted counselor (vv. 11-12). This woman is styled as one who "feareth the LORD" (Proverbs 31:30). She was not misguided by seeking the deceitful favor or vain beauty of a powerful "public woman."

Additionally, the virtuous woman is not unfulfilled or unproductive and unhappy because she is not contributing to society in a meaningful way by living her life as a man. On the contrary, she is strong and honorable (v. 25), wise and kind (v. 26), happy and fulfilled (v. 25), well respected and honored (vv.28-31). This woman was not trying to find herself; rather she found God and great joy in serving Him and others through her home.

I am sure that by this time, someone is ready to protest, "But, what about Deborah?"

The conventional wisdom is that she was a judge in Israel and certainly, this must be an argument for women holding public office. Let us now consider Deborah and see if her case is such that would commend the practice of women running for and holding offices in the civil government.



What we know of Deborah, we read in Judges Chapters 4 and 5. At this period of time, Israel was in a state of civil confusion. They were passing in and out of enemy occupation. The "judges" that Israel had at this time were more military leaders than they were judicial bench sitters. These men were warriors who led the people into battle and delivered them from the strong hands of

their enemies. This forms the context for when Deborah came on the scene.

We are introduced to Deborah in the fourth chapter of Judges. "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judges 4:4-5). We learn that she was "a prophetess" and that "she judged Israel." The Hebrew word shaphat is here rendered "judged." Shaphat is a verb that means primarily to judge or decide. The word itself in its primary meaning and usage does not necessarily indicate judging in an official sense. The word refers to a third party who sits over two parties at odds with one another, hears their side of the story or complaints, and then gives a judgment or a decision. The word does not require that this is an authoritative or official judgment.

We may think of it this way. A man has two neighbors who have a squabble over something and they both respect and trust this man. So, they both come and spread the matter before him and he gives them his opinion (judgment) in the matter. His opinion is not legally binding because he is not acting in any official capacity, but he has judged his neighbors. Just so, the language of the verses in Judges 4 does not require that she was an official judge in Israel.

The context of these two chapters in Judges is actually against the idea that she was a judge in the official sense as Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, etc. During Deborah's time, there was a man named Barak who was the leader of Israel.

Consider the heroes mentioned in Hebrews 11. Not all judges are mentioned, but the writer does say, "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets"(Hebrews 11:32). He mentions four judges from the book of Judges in a group - Gedeon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthae. It is not Deborah that is foisted to the spotlight here but Barak, who led Israel to victory at the time when Deborah was a prophetess.

We come to the fifth chapter and read, "Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day"(Judges 5:1). Deborah and Barak sang a song of victory after Israel was delivered from victory. This was a song of praise to God for His mercy and deliverance in battle. This song also contains some words that do not support the idea that Deborah was an official judge. By her own declaration, Deborah "arose a mother in Israel" (Judges 5:7). It is significant that she called herself a mother and not a father. The father is the head of the home and the Hebrews knew that very well. She considered herself a mother who has a very important role in the home but it is supportive and subordinate to the father. This is consistent with her being a "prophetess." She spoke of, but did not number herself among, "the governors of Israel" (Judges 5:9). These governors were lawgivers and the term refers to the elders and rulers of the tribes. This reinforces the idea that the judges of this period were more military leaders than civil magistrates. Deborah was outside of this group.

The roles of Deborah and Barak at this time were spoken of clearly in Judges 5:12: "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Deborah was called on to "awake" and "utter a song." Barak was called on to "arise . . . and lead." Barak was the official judge and Deborah's role was supportive. A casual reading of verse 13 may suggest to us that Deborah was bearing rule in some way. "Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty" (Judges 5:13). Does the last phrase of this verse teach that Deborah had dominion, or was a public office holder?

First of all, we must remember that this song was sang by both Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:1). So, it is not clear that Deborah speaks this personally of herself. Secondly, in light of the context, this passage refers to their victory in battle. I am not saying that Deborah had no role; she certainly did have a role. She was a prophetess. She encouraged Barak to go up to battle saying, "the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand"(Judges 4:14). We also find that another woman had a hand in Israel's deliverance. Her name was Jael. It was by her hand that the mighty Sisera was slain (Judges 4:21-22).

What we understand about Deborah is that she was a prophetess. She was more like Miriam who was a leader of women in her day (Exodus 15:20-21). Miriam's role was supportive and when she tried to lead men (Aaron), she was punished (Numbers 12:10, 14-15). We have no such stain on Deborah's record though. She was a godly woman and the people of Israel sought her wisdom. This is a commendation of her and a condemnation of the low state of the men of Israel at this time. She was not appointed a civil judge over Israel and her case is certainly not an argument for going against plain Scripture and having women rulers.

Conclusion—Let us now take up a few final considerations. The guidelines we have considered from the Bible admittedly set a very high standard. Does this high standard for civil magistrates make it impossible for us to vote at all? I think we have to realize that no man will ever meet these standards perfectly. This does not mean that we should just forget these guidelines and vote for anyone we want.

There were obviously men in Israel made judges by the people and Moses. So, they must have reasonably conformed to the standard. We should not lower the bar to accommodate men of low degree, but we should demand a high standard for those that we will elect and pay their salary. We should seek men for office who have a reasonable conformance to this standard.

Using the Bible as the Christian voter's guide does eliminate some candidates from consideration. The amoral humanists, for example, would be eliminated. These are the evolutionists, feminists, sodomites, abortionists, etc. The Christian could not vote for such candidates according to their voting guide—the Bible.

We may also eliminate any woman from our consideration, because they are not permitted by the Bible to hold public offices. This certainly does not equate all women with amoral

humanists. In fact, this does not take into account their morals or abilities at all. We cannot help elect them simply because the Bible forbids women from ruling over men.

At this point, the pickin's are beginning to look mighty slim. There are only a few candidates that we could vote for, if this is going to be our policy. I certainly agree that our current selection is whittled down greatly. The lack of suitable candidates is a situation that is not helped by Christians who will not vote for a reasonable candidate when he does run. Usually, we will not vote for him because we think there is no way he can win. He will not be backed by the liberal media or morally bankrupt politicians already in office. He will not gain widespread popularity among the special interest groups that seem to be driving our modern public thought and he will be at a distinct disadvantage financially. We figure this would just be a wasted vote.

This brings us to consider the common philosophy of the day. There are two prevailing thoughts about voting in our day that we hear repeatedly. For all practical purposes in our day, we have a two party system in this country. And, it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell them apart. So, we really only see two candidates in the race for an office. Essentially, in these two, we have the bad and the worse. We have the candidate that we do not want and the candidate that we really do not want.

The first common thought is this: To vote for a candidate other than the two mainliners is to vote for the candidate that we really do not want. In other words, say the two mainliners are candidates A and B. We are not thrilled with candidate A, but we are terrified at the thought of having candidate B. The common thought is that to vote for a candidate C, who is not a member of the main two parties, is really a vote for candidate B - our worst nightmare. I cannot understand this logic. As an individual citizen, I have one vote. If I cast that one vote for candidate C, then I voted for C and not A or B. When the votes are tabulated, my vote is put in the column for candidate C and not B. I suppose that we are assuming that we are taking a vote away from candidate A and thereby giving candidate B a better chance of winning.

What does God require of us as Christian citizens? Are we responsible to become pollsters, political strategists, or statisticians? Are we to calculate the odds and try to play them? Are we in some way responsible for what everyone else does and therefore we have to try to counteract their vote with ours? This is all a hopeless game that we cannot win. We are responsible to God for our thoughts and actions. We are responsible to take His Word as the final rule of all faith and practice. We are responsible to follow His Word and to have a clear conscience before Him. When we vote for a candidate, we are voting for that candidate and not for someone else.

The next common thought is also based on the presupposition that only one of the two main party candidates has any hope of winning. We reason that since only one of the two main candidates has any chance at winning, we have to pick the lesser of two evils to keep the worst candidate from being elected. This logic admits that we are not voting for a suitable candidate. In order to mollify our conscience, we reason, "The man is going to

get in office that God puts there anyway, so I'll just pick the lesser of two evils and hope everything turns out all right." We justify voting for an unsuitable candidate by appealing to the sovereignty of God. When we boil it all down, we just vote for whomever we want because of the party and our belief in the greatest economic benefit through them. So, we basically choose our candidate based on some personal preference - whatever pet issue we have - and then figure everything is all right because of God's sovereignty. This whole line of thinking ends with God's sovereignty, when God's sovereignty should be at the beginning of our thoughts.

Let me explain what I mean by that. God is absolutely sovereign and "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth"(Daniel 4:35). He reigns in the affairs of men and even in the civil governments of the nations. We are told that God "changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Daniel 2:21). "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psalms 75:6-7).

Beginning with a proper view of God's almighty power, we have no need to play games or strategize. Through faith, we may look to Him and follow His Word to vote for qualified men and leave the disposing of the whole matter in His hands (Proverbs 16:33). We may take our stand with the Apostle Paul who said, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men"(Acts 24:16). Let us vote for a suitable candidate with a clear conscience and where we cannot vote with a clear conscience, let us refrain from voting and "mourn" unto the Lord that He will work for us that we may rejoice "When the righteous are in authority."

(The above article was originally an article written and published in 2004)

Recovery takes time & effort:

Remember the people who have suffered lost due to natural disasters.

The states of West Virginia, Texas, & Louisiana, all had flooding.

Colorado had a long battle with forest fires.

The east coast had tornadoes.

And these are just in the U.S. this year.

If you're interested in helping churches and others in these areas please send an e-mail to WorksJoanna@yahoo.com and we'll get you in contact with churches in the affected areas.

Historical Marker

I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. Psalm 119:99-101



Intercessory Prayer

by C. H. Spurgeon

A sermon delivered on August 11th, 1861 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

"The Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends." Job 42:10.

"THE Lord restored Job's losses." So, then, our longest sorrows have a close, and there is a bottom to the most profound depths of our misery. Our winters shall not frown forever; summer shall soon smile. The tide shall not eternally ebb out; the floods retrace their march. The night shall not hang its darkness forever over our souls; the sun shall yet arise with healing beneath its wings—"The Lord re-stored Job's losses." Our sorrows shall have an end when God has gotten His end in them. The ends in the case of Job were these, that Satan might be defeated, foiled with his own weapons, and blasted in his hopes when he had everything his own way. God, at Satan's challenge, had stretched forth His hand and touched Job in his bone and in his flesh, and yet, the tempter could not prevail against him, but received his rebuff in those conquering words, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." When Satan is defeated, then shall the battle cease! The Lord aimed also at the trial of Job's faith. Many weights were hung upon this palm tree, but it still grew up rightly. The fire had been fierce enough, the gold was undiminished, and only the dross was consumed. Another purpose the Lord had was His own glory. And God was abundantly glorified! Job had glorified God on his dunghill; now let him magnify his Lord again upon his royal seat in the gate. God had gotten unto Himself eternal renown through that divine grace by which He supported His poor afflicted servant under the heaviest troubles which ever fell to the lot of man. God had another end, and that also was served. Job had been sanctified by his afflictions. His spirit had been mellowed. That small degree of tartness towards others, which may have been in Job's temper, had been at last removed, and any self-justification which once had lurked within was fairly driven out. Now that God's gracious designs are answered, He removes the rod from His servant's back, and takes the melted gold from the midst of the glowing coals. God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men for nothing, and He shows this by the fact that He never afflicts them longer than there is need for it. He never allows them to be one moment longer in the furnace than is absolutely requisite to serve the

purposes of His wisdom and of His love. “The Lord restored Job’s losses.” beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, you have had a long captivity in affliction. God has sold you into the hand of your adversaries, and you have wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging your harp upon the willows. Despair not! He who restored Job’s losses can turn you as the streams in the south! He shall make again your vineyard to blossom, and your field to yield her fruit. You shall again come forth with those who make merry, and once more shall the song of gladness be on your lips! Let not despair rivet his cruel fetters about your soul. Hope yet, for there is hope! He shall bring you up again rejoicing from the land of your captivity, and you shall say of Him, “He has turned my mourning into dancing.”

The circumstance which attended Job’s restoration is that to which I invite your particular attention. “The Lord restored Job’s losses, when he prayed for his friends.” Intercessory prayer was the means of his returning greatness. It was the bow in the cloud, the dove bearing the olive branch, the voice of the turtle announcing the coming summer. When his soul began to expand itself in holy and loving prayer for his erring brethren, then the heart of God showed itself to him by returning to him his prosperity without, and cheering his soul within! Brothers and sisters, it is not a fantasy when from such a text as this I address you upon the subject of prayer for others. Let us learn today to imitate the example of Job, and pray for our friends, and perhaps, if we have been in trouble, our losses shall be restored.

Four things I would speak of this morning, and yet, but one thing; I would speak upon intercessory prayer thus—first, by way of commending the exercise; secondly, by way of encouraging you to enlist in it; thirdly, by way of suggestion as to the persons for whom you should especially pray; and fourthly, by way of exhortation to all believers to undertake and persevere in the exercise of intercessions for others.

I. First then, BY WAY OF COMMENDING THE EXERCISE, let me remind you, that intercessory prayer has been practiced by all the best of God’s saints. We may not find instances of it appended to every saint’s name, but, beyond a doubt, there has never been a man personally eminent for piety who has not always been pre-eminent in his anxious desires for the good of others, and in his prayers for that end. Take Abraham, the father of the faithful. How earnestly did he plead for his son Ishmael! “O that Ishmael might live before You!” With what persistence did he approach the Lord on the plains of Mamre, when he wrestled with Him again and again for Sodom; how frequently did he reduce the number, as though, to use the expression of the old Puritan, “He were bidding and beating down the price at the market.” “Perhaps there are fifty; perhaps there lack five of the fifty; perhaps there are 20 found there; perhaps there are 10 righteous found there; will You not spare the city for the sake of ten?” Well did he wrestle, and if we may sometimes be tempted to wish he had not paused when he did, yet we must commend him for continuing so long to plead for that doomed and depraved city! Remember Moses, the most royal of men, whether crowned or uncrowned—how often did he intercede? How frequently do you meet with such a record as this—“Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God”? Remember that cry of his on the top of the mount, when it was to his own personal

disadvantage to intercede, and yet, when God had said, “Let Me alone, I will make of you a great nation,” yet how he continued, how he thrust himself in the way of the axe of justice and cried, “Spare them Lord, and if not,” (and here he reached the very climax of agonizing earnestness) “blot my name out of the Book of Life.” Never was there a mightier prophet than Moses, and never one more intensely earnest in intercessory prayer!

Or pass on, if you will, to the days of Samuel. Remember his words, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” Or think of Solomon, and of his earliest intercession at the opening of the temple, when, with outstretched hands, he prayed for the assembled people! Or if you need another royal example, turn to Hezekiah with Sennacherib’s letter spread out before the Lord, when he prayed not only for himself, but for God’s people of Israel in those times of straits. Think too, of Elijah, who for Israel’s sake, would bring down the rain, that the land perish not; as for him, miracles gave him his bread and his water, it was for others that he prayed. It was for others that he said to his servant, “Go again seven times.” Forget not Jeremiah, whose tears were prayers—prayers coming too intensely from his heart to find expression in any utterance of the lips! He wept himself away; his life was one long shower, each drop a prayer, and the whole deluge a flood of intercession. And if you would have an example taken from the times of Christ and His apostles, remember how Peter prays on the top of the house and Stephen amidst the falling stones. Or think, if you will, of Paul, of whom even more than of others it could be said, that he never ceased to remember the saints in his prayers, “making mention of you daily in my prayers,” stopping in the very midst of the epistle, and saying, “For which cause I bow my knee unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As for the cloud of holy witnesses in our own time, I will hazard the assertion, that there is not a single child of God, who does not plead with God for his children, for his family, for the church at large, and for the poor ungodly perishing world. I deny his saintship if he does not pray for others!

But, further, while we might commend this duty by quoting innumerable examples from the lives of eminent saints, it is enough for the disciple of Christ if we say that Christ in His holy gospel has made it your duty and your privilege to intercede for others! When He taught us to pray, He said, “Our Father,” and the expressions which follow are not in the singular, but in the plural—“Give us this day our daily bread.” “Forgive us our debts.” “Lead us not into temptation.” Evidently, intending to set forth that none of us are to pray for ourselves alone, that while we may have sometimes prayers so bitter that they must be personal like the Savior’s own; “Father if it is plausible, let this cup pass from Me;” yet, as a rule, our prayers should be public prayers, though offered in private; and even in secret we should not forget the Church of the living God! By the mouth of Paul how frequently does the Holy Spirit exhort us to pray for ministers! “Brethren,” says Paul, “pray for us.” And then, after exhorting them to offer prayers and supplications for all classes and conditions of men, he adds, “And for us, also, that we may have boldness to speak as we ought to speak.” And James, who is always a practical apostle, bids us pray for one another. In that same verse, where he says, “Confess your sins the one to the other,” he says, “and pray for one another,” and adds the

privilege “that you may be healed,” as if the healing would not only come to the sick person for whom we pray, but to us who offer the prayer—we, too, receiving some special blessing when our hearts are enlarged for the people of the living God.

But, brothers and sisters, I shall not stay to quote the texts in which the duty of praying for others is definitely laid down. Permit me to remind you of the high example of your Master; He is your pattern; follow His leadership. Was there even one who interceded as He did? Remember that golden prayer of His, where he cried for His own people, “Father, keep them, keep them from the evil one!” Oh, what a prayer that was! He seems to have thought of all their needs, of all their wants, of all their weaknesses, and in one long stream of intercession, He pours out His heart before His Father’s throne! Think, how even in the agonies of His crucifixion, He did not forget that He was still an intercessor for man! “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Oh, remember, brothers and sisters, it is your Savior’s example to you today, for there before the throne, with outstretched hands, He prays not for Himself, for He has attained His glory; not for Himself, for He rests from His labors, and has received His everlasting recompense; but, for you, for the purchase of His blood, for as many as are called by His grace! Yes, and for those who shall believe on Him through our word—

*“For all that come to God by Him,
Salvation He demands!
Points to the wounds upon His heart,
And spreads His bleeding hands.”*

Come brothers and sisters, with such an example as this, we are verily guilty if we forget to plead for others!

But, I will go a little further. If in the Bible there were no example of intercessory supplication, if Christ had not left it upon record that it was His will that we should pray for others, and even if we did not know that it was Christ’s practice to intercede, yet the very spirit of our holy religion, would demand us to plead for others! Do you go up into your closet, and in the face and presence of God, and think of none but yourself? Surely, the love of Christ cannot be in you, for the Spirit of Christ is not selfish! No man lives unto himself when once he has the love of Christ in him. I know there are some whose piety is comfortably tethered within the limits of their own selfish interests. It is enough for them if they hear the Word, if they are saved, if they get to heaven. Ah, miserable spirit, you shall not get there! It would need another heaven for you, for the heaven of Christ is the heaven of the unselfish, the temple of the large-hearted, the bliss of loving spirits, and the heaven of those who, like Christ, are calling to become poor, that others may be rich! I cannot believe—it were a libel upon the cross of Christ, it were a scandal upon the doctrine which He taught—if I could ever believe, that the man whose prayers are selfish has any-thing of the spirit of Christ within him! Brothers and sisters, I commend intercessory prayer because it opens one’s soul, gives a healthy play to his sympathies, compels him to feel that he is not above every-body, and that this whole world and this great universe were not, after all, made that he might be its petty lord, that

everything might bend to his will, and all creatures crouch at his feet! It does him good, I say, to make him know that the cross was not lifted up for him alone, for its far-reaching arms were means to drop with benedictions upon millions of the human race! You lean and hungry worshipper of self, this is an exercise which would make another man of you—a man more like the Son of Man, and less like Nabal the churl!

But, again, I commend the blessed privilege of intercession because of its sheer brotherly nature. You and I may be naturally hard, and harsh, and unlovely of spirit, but much praying for others will remind us we have, indeed, a relationship to the saints, that their interests are ours, that we are jointly concerned with them in all the privileges of grace. I do not know anything which, through the grace of God, may be a better means of uniting us, the one to the other, than constant prayer for each other. You cannot harbor enmity in your soul against your brother after you have learned to pray for him! If he has done you ill, when you have taken that ill to the mercy seat, and prayed over it, you must forgive! Surely, you could not be such a hypocrite as to invoke blessings on his head before God, and then come forth to curse him in your own soul! When there have been complaints brought by brother against brother, it is generally best to say, “Let us pray before we enter into the matter.” Wherever there is a case to be decided by the pastor, he ought always to say to the brethren who contend, “Let us pray first,” and it will often happen that through prayer, the differences will soon be forgotten. They will become so slight, so trivial, that when the brethren rise from their knees, they will say, “They are gone; we cannot now contend, after having been one in heart before the throne of God.” I have heard of a man who had made complaints against his minister, and his minister wisely said to him, “Well don’t talk to me in the street. Come to my house and let us hear it all.” He went and the minister said, “My brother, I hope that what you have to say to me may be greatly blessed to me. No doubt I have my imperfections as well as another man, and I hope I shall never be above being told of them, but in order that what you have to say to me may be blessed to me, let us kneel down and pray together.” So our quarrelsome friend prayed first, and the minister prayed next, both briefly. When they rose from their knees, he said, “Now, my brother, I think we are both in a good state of mind. Tell me what it is that you have to find fault with.” The man blushed, and stammered and stuttered, and said he did not think there was anything at all except in himself. “I have forgotten to pray for you, sir,” he said, “and of course, I cannot expect that God will feed my soul through you, when I neglect to mention you at the throne of grace.” Ah, well, brothers and sisters, if you will exercise yourselves much in supplication for your brethren, you will forgive their tempers! You will overlook their rashness, you will not think of their harsh words, but knowing that you also may be tempted, and are men of like passions with them; you can cover their faults, and bear with their infirmities.

Shall I need to say more in commendation of intercessory prayer except that it seems to me that when God gives any man or woman much grace, it must be with the design that he may use it for the rest of the family? I would compare you who have near communion with God, to courtiers in the king’s palace. What do courtiers do? Do they not avail themselves of their influence at

court to take the petitions of their friends, and present them where they can be heard? This is what we call patronage—a thing with which many find fault when it is used for political ends, but there is a kind of heavenly patronage, which you ought to use right diligently. I ask you to use it on my behalf! When it is well with you, then, think of me. I pray you use it on the behalf of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, the desponding, the despairing, the imprisoned! When you have the King's ear, speak to Him for us! When you are permitted to come very near to His throne, and He says to you, "Ask and I will give you what you will." When your faith is strong, your eyes clear, your access near, your interest sure, and the love of God sweetly shed abroad in your heart—then take the petitions of your poor brothers and sisters who stand outside at the gate, and say, "My Lord, I have a poor brother, a poor sister, children of Yours, who have desired me to ask of You this favor. Grant it unto me; it shall be a favor shown unto myself. Grant it unto them, for they are Yours. Do it for Jesus' sake!" No, to come to an end in this matter of commendation, it is utterly impossible that you should have a large measure of grace unless it prompts you to use your influence for others! Soul, if you have grace at all, and are not a mighty intercessor—that grace must be but as a grain of mustard seed—a shriveled, uncomely, puny thing! You have just enough grace to float your soul clear from the quicksand, but you have no deep floods of grace, or else you would carry in your joyous boat, a rich cargo of the needs of others, up to the throne of God! And you would bring back for them rich blessings, which but for you, they might not have obtained! If you are like an angel with your foot upon the golden ladder which reaches to heaven; if you are ascending and descending, know that you will ascend with others' prayers, and descend with others' blessings—for it is impossible for a full-grown saint to live or to pray for himself alone!

II. We turn to our second point, and endeavor to say something **BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT**, that you may cheerfully offer intercessory supplications.

First, remember that intercessory prayer is the sweetest prayer God ever hears. Do not question it, for the prayer of Christ is of this character. In all the incense which now our Great High Priest puts into the censor, there is not a single grain that is for Himself. His work is done. His reward obtained. Now, you do not doubt, but that Christ's prayer is the most acceptable of all supplications, do you? Very well, my brethren, the more your prayer is like Christ's, the more sweet it will be; and while petitions for yourself will be accepted, yet your pleadings for others, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, perhaps more faith, certainly more brotherly kindness—they will be as the sweetest oblation that you can offer to God, the very fat of your sacrifice! Remember, again, that intercessory prayer is exceedingly prevalent. What it has worked! Intercessory prayer has stopped plagues! It removed the darkness which rested over Egypt. It drove away the frogs which leaped upon the land. It scattered the lice and locusts which plagued the inhabitants of Zoan. It removed the pestilence and the thunder and the lightning. It stayed all the ravages which God's avenging hand did upon Pharaoh and his people. Intercessory prayer has healed diseases—we know it did in the early church; we have evidence of it in old Mosaic times. When Miriam was smitten with

leprosy, Moses prayed, and the leprosy was removed. It has restored withered limbs. When the king's arm was withered, he said to the prophet, "Pray for me," and his arm was restored as it was before. Intercessory prayer has raised the dead! Fair Elijah stretched himself upon the child seven times and the child sneezed, and the child's soul returned. As to how many souls intercessory prayer has instrumentally saved, recording angel, you can tell! Eternity, you shall reveal! There is nothing which intercessory prayer cannot do! Oh, believer, you have a mighty engine in your hands—use it well—use it constantly! Use it now with faith, and you shall surely prevail. But, perhaps, you have a doubt about interceding for someone who has fallen far into sin. Brothers and sisters, did you ever hear of men who have been thought to be dead while yet alive? Have you ever heard around the farmer's fire, some old-fashioned story of one who was washed and laid out, and wrapped up in his shroud to be put into his coffin, and yet, he was but in a trance and not dead? And have you not heard old legends of men and women who have been buried alive?

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of those tales, but I can tell you, that spiritually, there has been many a man given up for dead who was still within reach of divine grace. There has been many a soul that has been put into the winding sheet, even by Christian people; given up to damnation, even by the ministers of Christ; consigned to perdition, even by their own kinsfolk. But yet, into perdition they did not go—

God found them—and took them out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set their living feet upon His living rock! Oh, give up on nobody! Still pray; lay none out for spiritually dead until they are laid out for dead naturally! But, perhaps, you say, "I cannot pray for others, for I am so weak, so powerless." You will get strength, my brothers and sisters, by the exertion. But, besides, the prevalence of prayer does not depend upon the strength of the man who prays, but upon the power of the argument he uses! Now, brothers and sisters, if you sow seed, you may be very feeble, but it is not your hand that puts the seed into the ground which produces the harvest—it is the vitality in the seed! And so in the prayer of faith—when you can plead a promise, and drop that prayer into the ground with hope, your weakness shall not make it miscarry; it shall still prevail with God, and bring down blessings from on high. Job! You come from your dunghill to intercede, and so may I come from my couch of weakness! You came from your poverty and your desertion to intercede for others—and so may we! Elijah was a man of like passions—sweet word!—of like passions, like infirmities, like tendencies to sin, but he prevailed and so shall we! Only, see to it that you are not negligent in these exercises, but that you pray much for others, even as Job prayed for his friends.

Now that the air is very hot, and the atmosphere heavy and becalmed, our friends find it difficult to listen—more difficult even than the speaker finds it to preach! Now, may I have your attention yet once again—and a change of position may do us all good—will you stand up and put the text into use by offering an intercessory prayer, and then I will go on again? It shall be this one—

"Pity the nations, O our God,
Compel the earth to come!
Send Your victorious word abroad,

And bring the strangers home!"

[The congregation here rose and sung the verse.]

III. The third head is A SUGGESTION AS TO THE PERSONS FOR WHOM WE SHOULD MORE PARTICULARLY PRAY.

It shall be but a suggestion, and I will then turn to my last point. In the case of Job, he prayed for his offending friends. They had spoken exceedingly harshly of him. They had misconstrued all his previous life, and there had never been a part of his character which deserved censure—for the Lord witnessed concerning him, that he was a perfect and an upright man—yet they accused him of hypocrisy, and supposed that all he did was for the sake of gain. Now, perhaps there is no greater offense which can be given to an upright and a holy man, than to his face, to suspect his motives, and to accuse him of self-seeking. And yet, shaking off everything, as the sun frets the darkness that has hidden its glory, and scatters it by its own beams, Job comes to the mercy seat and pleads. He is accepted himself, and he begs that his friends may be accepted, too. Carry your offending ones to the throne of God; it shall be a blessed method of proving the trueness of your forgiveness! Do not do that, however, in a threatening way. I remember having to deal faithfully with a hypocrite, who told me, by way of threat, he would pray for me. It was a horrid threat—for who would wish to have his name associated with a prayer which would be an abomination to the Lord? Do not do it in that sense, as though like an arrogant hypocrite, you would make your prayer itself a stalking horse for your vain-glory; but do it when you are alone before God, and in secret, not that you may gratify your revenge by telling the story again, for that were abominable indeed, but that you may remove from your erring brother, any sin which may have stained his garments, by asking the Lord to forgive him.

Again—be sure you take there your argumentative friends. These brothers had been arguing with Job, and the controversy dragged its weary length along. Brethren, it is better to pray than it is to argue! Sometimes you think it would be a good thing to have a public discussion upon a doctrine. It would be a better thing to have prayer over it. You say, "Let two good men, on different sides, meet and fight the matter out." I say, "No! Let the two good men meet and pray the matter out." He that will not submit his doctrine to the test of the mercy seat, I should suspect is wrong. I can say that I am not afraid to offer prayer that my brothers who do not see "believers' baptism" may be made to see it. If they think I am wrong, I wish that they would pray to God to set us right! But, I have never heard them do that; I have never heard them say to the Lord to convince us of the truth of infant sprinkling. I wish they would, if they believe it to be Scriptural—and I am perfectly willing to put it to the old test—the God that answers by fire, let Him be God! And whichever shall prevail, when prayer shall be the ultimate arbiter, let that stand! Carry your dear friends who are wrong in practice, not to the discussion room, or to the debating club, but carry them before God and let this be your cry, "Oh, You who teaches us to our profit, teach me if I am wrong, and teach my friend wherein he errs, and make us right."

This is the thing we ought also to do with our haughty friends. Eliphaz and Bildad were very high and haughty. Oh, how they looked down upon poor Job! They thought he was a very great

sinner, a very desperate hypocrite; they stayed with him, but doubtless, they thought it very great condescension. Now, you sometimes hear complaints made by Christians about other people being proud. It may not make them humble for you to grumble about that! What if there is a Mrs. So-and-So who wears a very rustling dress, and never takes any notice of you because you cannot rustle too? What if there is a brother who can afford to wear creaking boots, and will not notice you in the street because you happen to be poor? Tell your Father about it; that is the best way. Why, you would not be angry, I suppose, with a man for having the gout, or a diseased liver, or a cataract in the eye; you would pity him. Why be angry with your brother because of his being proud? It is a disease, a very bad disease, that scarlet fever of pride. Go and pray the Lord to cure him; your anger will not do it! It may puff him up and make him worse than ever he was before, but it will not set him right! Pray him down, brothers and sisters, pray him down! Have a duel with him, and have the choice of weapons yourself, and let that be the weapon of all—prayer; and if he is proud, I know this, if you prevail with God, God will soon take the pride out of His own child, and remake him humble as he should be! But, particularly, let me ask you to pray most for those who are disabled from praying for themselves. Job's three friends could not pray for themselves, because the Lord said He would not accept them if they did. He said He was angry with them. But as for Job, He said, "Him will I accept." Do not let me shock your feelings when I say there are some, even as God's people, who are not able to pray acceptably at certain seasons. When a man has just been committing sin, repentance is his first work, not prayer! He must first set matters right between God and his own soul before he may go and intercede for others. And, there are many poor Christians who cannot pray; doubt has come in, sin has taken away their confidence, and they are standing outside the gate with their petitions; they dare not enter within the veil. There are many tried believers, too, who are so desponding that they cannot pray with faith, and therefore, they cannot prevail. Now, my dear brothers and sisters, if you can pray, take their sins into court with you, and when you have had your own hearing, then say, "But, my Lord, in as much as You have honored me, and made me to eat of Your bread, and drink from Your cup, hear me for Your poor people who are just now denied the light of Your countenance." Besides, there are millions of poor sinners who are dead in sin, and they cannot pray; pray for them. It is a blessed thing—that vicarious repentance and vicarious faith which a saint may exert towards sinners! "Lord, that sinner does not feel; help me to feel for him, because he will not feel. Lord, that sinner will not believe in Christ; he does not think that Christ can save him, but I know He can, and I will pray believingly for that sinner, and I will repent for him. And though my repentance and my faith will not avail him without his personal repentance and faith, yet, it may come to pass, that through me, he may be brought to repentance and led to prayer."

IV. Now, lest I should weary you, let me come to the closing part of my discourse. And, O God, lend us Your strength now, that this duty may come forcibly home to our conscience, and we may at once engage in this exercise! Brothers and sisters, I have to EXHORT YOU TO PRAY FOR OTHERS. Before I do it, I will ask you a personal question. Do you always pray for others? Guilty or not guilty, here? Do you think you have taken the case

of your children, your church, your neighborhood, and the ungodly world before God as you ought to have done? If you have, I have not! For I stand here a chief culprit before the Master to make confession of the sin. And, while I shall exhort you to practice what is undoubtedly a noble privilege, I shall be most of all exhorting myself.

I begin thus, by saying, brothers and sisters, how can you and I repay the debt we owe to the Church unless we pray for others? How was it that you were converted? It was because somebody else prayed for you! I, in tracing back my own conversion, cannot fail to impute it, through God's Spirit, to the prayers of my mother. I believe that the Lord heard her earnest cries, when I knew not that her soul was exercised about me. There are many of you who were prayed for when you were asleep in your cradles as unconscious infants; your mothers' liquid prayer fell hot upon your infant brows and gave you what was a true christening while you were still but little ones. There are husbands here who owe their conversion to their wives' prayers; brothers who must acknowledge that it was a sister's pleading; children who must confess that their Sunday school teachers prayed for them. Now, if by others' prayers you and I were brought to Christ, how can we repay this Christian kindness but by pleading for others? He who has not a man to pray for him, may write himself down a hopeless character! During one of the revivals in America, a young man was going to see the minister, but he did not, because the minister had avoided him with considerable coldness. A remark was made to the minister upon what he had done, and he said, "Well, I did not want to see him; I knew he had only come to mock and scoff; what should I ask him for? You do not know him as well as I do, or else you would have done the same." A day or two after, there was a public meeting, where the preaching of the Word was to be carried on in the hope that the revival might be continued. A young man who had been lately converted through the prayers of another young man was riding to the worship on his horse, and as he was riding along, he was overtaken by our young friend whom the minister thought so godless. He said to him, "Where are you going today, William?" "Well, I am going to the meeting, and I hear that you have been converted." "I thank God I have been brought to knowledge of the truth," he answered. "Oh," said the other, "I shall never be; I wish I might." His friend was surprised to hear him, whom the minister thought to be so hard, say that, and he said, "But why cannot you be converted?" "Why?" said the other, "You know you were converted through the prayers of Mr. K___." "Yes, so I was." "Ah," said the other, "There is nobody to pray for me; they have all given me up long ago." "Why," said his friend, "it is very singular, but Mr. K___, who prayed for me, has been praying for you, too! We were together last night, and I heard him." The other threw himself back in his saddle and seemed as if he would fall from his horse with surprise! "Is that true?" he asked. "Yes, it is." "Then blessed be God, there is hope for me, now, and if he has prayed for me; that gives me a reason why I should now pray believingly for myself." And he did so, and that meeting witnessed him confessing his faith in Christ. Now, let no man you know say that there is nobody to pray for him! But, as you had somebody to plead for you, you find someone to plead for!

Then, again, permit me to ask how are you to prove your love to Christ or to His church, if you refuse to pray for each other? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If we do not love the brethren, we are still dead! How can a man say he loves the brethren if he does not pray for them? What? It is the very least thing you can do, and if you do not perform the least, you certainly will fail in the greater! You do not love the brethren unless you pray for them, and then it follows you are dead in trespasses and sins. Let me ask you again, how is it you hope to get your own prayers answered if you never plead for others? Will not the Lord say, "Selfish wretch; you are always knocking at My door, but it is always to cry for your own welfare, and never for another's. Inasmuch as you have never asked for a blessing for one of the least of these My brethren, neither will I give a blessing to you. You love not the saints; you love not your fellow men—how can you love Me, whom you have not seen—and how shall I love you, and give you the blessing which you ask at My hands?" Brothers and sisters, again I say, I would earnestly exhort you to intercede for others, for how can you be Christians if you do not? Christians are priests, but how can they be priests if they offer no sacrifice? Christians are lights, but how can they be lights unless they shine for others? Christians are sent into the world even as Christ was sent into the world, but how can they be sent unless they are sent to pray? Christians are meant, not only to be blessed themselves, but in them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed—but how, if you refuse to pray? Give up your profession, cast down, I pray you, the ephod of a priest if you will not burn the incense! Renounce your Christianity if you will not carry it out! Make not a mockery and sport of solemn things, and you will do so, if you still refuse selfishly to give to your friends a part and a lot in your supplication before the throne of God!

O brothers and sisters let us unite with one heart and with one soul to plead with God for this neighborhood! Let us carry "London" written on our breasts, just as the high priest of old carried the names of the tribes. Mothers, bear your children before God! Fathers, carry your sons and your daughters! Brothers and sisters let us take a wicked world and the dark places thereof which are full of the habitations of cruelty! Let us cry aloud and keep no silence and give to the Lord no rest till He establishes and makes His Church praise in the earth! Evoke, you watchmen upon Zion's walls, and renew your shouts! Wake you favorites of heaven, and renew your prayers! The cloud hangs above you; it's yours to draw down its sacred floods in genial showers by earnest prayers! God has put high up in the mountains of His promise, springs of love—it is yours to bring them down, by the divine channel of your intense supplications! Do it, I pray you, lest inasmuch as you have shut your heart of compassion, and have refused to plead with God for the conversion of others, He should say in His wrath, "These are not My children! They have not My spirit! They are not partakers of My love, neither shall they enter into My rest." Why, there are some of you who have not prayed for others for months, I am afraid, except it is at a prayer meeting. You know what your night prayer is. It is, "Lord, take care of my family." You know how some farmers pray, "Lord, send fair weather in this part of the country; Lord, preserve the precise fruits of the field all round this neighborhood; never mind about their being spoilt anywhere else, for that will send the markets up." And so there are some,

who make themselves special objects of supplication, but what care they for the perishing crowd? This is the drift of some men's wishes, "Lord, bless the Church, but don't send another minister into our neighborhood, lest he should take our congregations from us. Lord, send laborers into the vineyard, but do not send them into our corner, lest they should take any of our glory from us."

Let us have done with that kind of supplication! Let us be Christians! Let us have expanded souls and minds that can feel for others; let us weep with them who weep, and rejoice with them who rejoice; and as a Church and as private persons, we shall find the Lord will restore our losses when we pray for our friends! God help us to plead for others! And as for you who have never prayed for yourselves, God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus!

Views From Canada

Of old hast thou
laid the foundation
of the earth: and
the heavens are the
work of thy hands.

Psalms 102:25

with Sis. Grace Brooks



The Commonwealth of Nations

The Commonwealth is an association of sovereign nations with 2.2 billion citizens supporting each other and work together towards international goals. With their common heritage in language, culture, law, education and democratic traditions, among other things, Commonwealth countries are able to work together in an atmosphere of greater trust and understanding than generally prevails among nations. This website, developed by Nexus Strategic Partnerships, the leading publisher of Commonwealth affairs, is designed to ensure that the international community has a one-stop-shop guide to the governments, businesses, civil society, travel, statistics and personalities in the 53 member countries of the Commonwealth. To find out more about the intergovernmental Commonwealth, visit the Commonwealth Secretariat's website [here](#).

The symbol of this free association is Queen Elizabeth the Second, head of the Commonwealth. The commonwealth covers over 29,958,050 km² or 11,566,870 square miles.

This organization has 53 members. Most nations are former members under the control, or colonized by the former British Empire. The British empire was decolonized way back in the middle of the 20th century. This happened as a result of its territories, Canada included, becoming able to govern themselves.

Objectives and activities:

The mission, first outlined in 1971 Singapore Declaration, commits the Commonwealth to world peace, promotion of representative democracy, and liberty for all. The pursuit of equality for all and is against racism, fights against poverty, ignorance, disease, and free trade. Currently their highest aim is to promote democracy and development. You can see this outline at the Aso Rock declaration.

This raises two questions:

1.) How has the Commonwealth effected Canada in particular?

One answer is, we have good relationships with other Commonwealth nations.

We share educational exchanges and student exchange programmes. The education exchange offers the current information in our ever-changing markets. Instructors expert in their fields, teach these classes.

Then there's the student exchange where commonwealth members exchange students enroll in this programme and exchange schools with another student in another country for the school year. We share languages, English mostly, and similar backgrounds. Canada is not part of the major building blocks which includes, health reform, newer hospitals and other buildings (impressive but expensive), built throughout the commonwealth, and additional immigrant privileges. Immigrants are expected to live within the laws of Canada. And of course, there are the friendly Commonwealth games. *(Sorry, I could not access this internet page for added information)*

In summary, the Commonwealth of Nations is a social gathering place for a group of friendly nations with the same patronage and background. Involvement in the Commonwealth of Nations does not provide much if any prestige. Canada's membership in other organizations such as NATO, the UN, NORAD, and G7 gives her more leverage.

2.) As a citizen of Canada do you believe it to be a good or negative entity?

As the average Canadian, would likely answer this question, I don't really care one way or the other. Canada is a peace-loving nation, why shouldn't she hold onto social membership with the Commonwealth of Nations and play our games? My personal concern is, who will Canada turn to for allied forces in the time of war?

Reference links:

[Commonwealth Network web site](#)

[Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration on Development and Democracy](#)

[The Commonwealth of Nations is committed to gender equality, and equally sharing globalization benefits.](#)

Bible Jocks

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

1 Corinthians 9:24



What has changed in sports?



Bro. Troy McGahan

I have been actively involved in sports whether playing or coaching for approximately 35 years. The changes I will be talking about is not the rules changing like the "softening up" of football because of all the head injuries and the like but,

dealing with the people involved (the coaches and players).

When I started playing you didn't argue and fuss with a coach. When you were told to do something, you did it or at least you died trying. Coaches were looked at as second dad's or at least favorite uncles. Coaches were loud, rough and tough. Granted they weren't always paragons of virtue. Some were hard living, rough talking men that would just as soon hit you in the mouth than say good morning. Some were gentle giants that meant business but, could get their point across with a pat on the back rather than a smack on the helmet. I have played for men that fit both of those descriptions and everything in between. The players back then (for the most part) were yes sir and no sir, hardworking and wouldn't quit until the final whistle no matter the score. It was all about the name on your chest (your school or team) not about you. Oh my how times have changed. I can't help but think about 2 Timothy 3:2 "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy....." Watch a game on TV and what do you see? Chest thumping and constant attention grabbing dances and celebrations that say more about a person's emotional maturity than about their ability on the field. What has changed from the 23 years I played my last game till now?

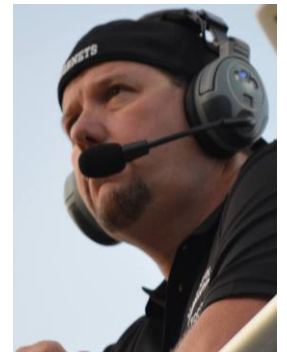
There's a lot of things I could point to whether it be socio-economic or just a lack of discipline. Certainly, both of those arguments have their merits but, I think it is more a problem with the raising up of generation of "me first". Let me illustrate, Little Johnny wants to be a Quarterback but Johnny can't walk and chew gum at the same time. Johnny's parents tell him he's going to play QB in the NFL one day. Johnny's Coach didn't get the memo about Johnny's NFL future. When Johnny is told he's an Offensive Lineman he throws a fit and mommy and daddy tell

him the Coach is an idiot so he doesn't try as hard and whines and pouts. Let me sum it up, we have raised a generation of self-important, entitled brats. I am on the front lines seeing this everyday whether coaching or substitute teaching. So, what can we as parents/coaches/Pastor's etc do about it? Teach our kids that the world does not (wait for it) revolve around them. What are some simple ways to do this?

- 1) Tell them no. Just because they ask nicely for something doesn't mean they have to get it.
- 2) Make them work for it. It may be chores, getting grades or community service. Don't give it to them make them earn it. Remember this Bible principle, "If you don't work, you don't eat." If you don't do A,B or C you don't get X, Y or Z, pretty simple.
- 3) Emphasize the things of the Lord. Keep the main thing the main thing. Priorities should always be Faith (God), family and then whatever after that. Church and the things of God is more important than sports and family is right behind God's work. Remember the Lord gets glory through the NT Church (Ephesians 3:21) not the local sports team.

I don't want to sound like a grumpy old has been. To be honest with you I wasn't very good but, no matter who we played or who I went against I gave it everything I got. That was instilled in me by my family, friends, Pastor's, coaches and anyone else I was influenced by. Let's influence the generation behind us for the better.

Bro. Mark Campbell



Sports in the beginning were something to do in ones spare time. Involvement in sports was used to teach discipline, teamwork and hard work. Many young men were only allowed to participate if they would finish their chores when they returned home from practice. Sports was not seen as a future career. It was only a release from the humdrum of life.

Today, sports are not viewed that way. Today, everyone expects to be an all star. Today, everyone thinks they are potentially professional athletes. Today, a sports season never ends. Young people specialize in one sport so they can practice that sport. Their parents spend huge amounts of money for private lessons, special equipment, and traveling with teams. Yes, there are many opportunities for scholarships and such, but I'm not sure the sacrifice is worth the chance.

You see, families now spend weekends and summers running across the country to participate in sports activities. Sometimes, mom is in one city with the daughter, while dad is in another with the son. And for what? A chance to earn a scholarship or to play professional sports. In my community, there has never been a player play professionally. There has never been a student

receive a full ride to a D1 school. Yet, families run their children across the country chasing a dream.

What is the outcome? Well, kids are not allowed to be kids anymore. They aren't allowed to go out and play pickup games in the offseason. There is no off-season. They don't have time to skip rocks, ride bikes, catch frogs or many other childhood activities. They miss the opportunity to just be a kid.

Also, many lessons are learned in pickup games, without supervision. Yes, some of them are hard, like being picked last every time. Or, sometimes, teams aren't fair. Yet, they are lessons you learn yourself, without parents. You learn how to take up for yourself. You learn, if I'm getting beat, maybe I want to work harder. Not because my parents are paying a coach, but simply because I want to get better.

So, what would I change? I would change the win at all cost mindset. Discipline would come first. Participation in sports would be a privilege not an entitlement. Also, I would like to go back and make sports seasonal. I would make it as much about the fun as it is about the win. Finally, I would focus on the lessons to be learned from sports and not the wins in the column. Do I love sports? Yes, I wrote this article riding a school bus with the varsity football team from my community. I coach. I am a high school basketball official. But, I use my involvement in sports to share Christ with those I am around. This year, 50 boys have been exposed to the Gospel, one of which is from Taiwan. He may never have heard it before. Never heard the Gospel. The opportunity to share the Gospel with these young men is why I help coach.

With everything, it's not the activity that is the problem. It is the excesses to which people take it. Sports are good. We just need to use them for good. In everything we do, bring glory to Christ.



The Grace To Restore

by Bro. M. J. Seymour, Sr.

If we were honest with ourselves for a moment, we all would agree that none of us are the embodiment of our Lord's perfection. Sin crouches at each of our doors as a lion ready to devour his prey. Far too often religious folk cloak themselves as pompous self-righteous judge, jury, and executioner. Too many falsely presume they would never commit such atrocities against God. They feel much too lofty in their holiness for their toes to stoop so low as to be caught in the quagmires of the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. Yet surely as their noses are in the clouds, their throats and souls are clutched in the jaws of the roaring lion.

We are exhorted by the Word of God: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, **ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself**, lest thou also be tempted. **Bear ye one another's burdens**, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." (Gal. 6:1-3) It is the high and holy love of God and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ through the new birth that makes us brethren and secures us as brethren. Can we find enough in this to restore our brethren that stumble and fall into sin?

We can hypothesize a whole world of imaginations of "Why's?" The fact is, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. 5:17) Sin has a way of blinding, numbing, and deceiving that can have one hooked before he knows it. One brother's strong area may be another's weakness, and vice versa. "Ye which are spiritual" know how deceitful the heart can be especially when the lion is at the door. Our brethren are our brethren by the electing grace of God, and it is our business to bear one another's burdens on this pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem. If we cannot help pull them from the quagmire, clean them off, and ease them of their load, then at least we must be kind enough to get out of the way, keep our judgmental opinions to ourselves, and allow those whom God has graced with love, kindness, and meekness work to restore the brethren. At the foot of the Cross we became brethren; at the foot of the Cross we remain brethren, and at the foot of the Cross we will love, cherish, and restore our brethren!!!

Baptists For Liberty

"And I will walk at liberty: for I
seek thy precepts." Psalm 119:45

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