

Psm. 11:3

Baptists For Liberty

Prov. 29:2

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

NEWS LETTER

Issue #30

May/June 2015

Oklahomans were hit with heavy rain, more tornadoes and flooding, and it's only May. Their tornado season is just starting.

HOW TO HELP A donation to Red Cross Disaster Relief can help provide food, water and shelter for someone who has had to leave their home. Help people affected by disasters like floods, tornadoes and countless other crises by making a gift to Red Cross Disaster Relief. Your gift enables the Red Cross to prepare for, respond to and help people recover from disasters big and small. To donate, people can visit www.redcross.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or text REDCROSS to 90999 to make a \$10 donation.

Read more about the storm and aid on page 10

Our thought and focus for this issue is **"Order"**

Order in the church, order in the family, law & order, what other realms does this seemingly small word touch? What kind of impact is left when there is no order or in the wrong order? There is of course so much more that we would have liked to cover in this issue however time and space constrains us.

Podcast: If you listen to the podcast during the month of May you would have (you can still listen to them at this link <http://baptistsforliberty.weebly.com/podcast-archive.html>) Heard Bro. Andrew Sullivan and Sis. Joanna works discussing order in the family, news, and in the Christian's walk. We have plans for episodes on Crisis Management and other interesting subjects during June!

Book Review: Sis. Regina Reynolds' review of "God Has Ordained Headship" written by Bro. Wm. Doyal Thomas will also be published this month!

"Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."

~ Psalm 119:133

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*We were going to ask about civil disobedience in our forum this month but the "Five Guys & a Bible" team posted a video touching on this subject before the question was sent out to our panel (which includes two of the five guys). We decided to go with a different question for our issue and instead heartily recommend you watching the Five Guys & a Bible's video. **"Should Christian's protest or riot?"***



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVtI8ClofrU>

Sermon: "The Pastor's Responsibilities To The Church"

by Bro. David M. Green



"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Timothy 3:1).

The call to pastor one of the Lord's churches is a higher calling than to be elected President of the United States of America. There is not enough fame and fortune out there to convince me that this is not true. It would be a step down for the man of God to be elected President of the USA or to be the CEO of some large company.

FEED THE FLOCK

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:1-3).

The responsibility of feeding has been called by some theologians as being the primary responsibility of the pastor. And, in studying the Scripture, I would tend to agree that this is his foundational responsibility to the church. Just as we need physical food, so we also need spiritual. Without either, we would be malnourished and starve. Just as a shepherd is responsible to feed his flock, so is the pastor responsible for the feeding of the church that the Lord has placed him in.

Let us expound a little on this text. We need to notice some very important things here: This feeding the flock should come willingly, not because the pastor is forced to do it, or because of the money....he ought to do it willingly and with a ready mind being a leader who is one who does by example!

Peter was a good one to write on this subject, since he had learned it from our Lord earlier:

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17).

Notice how Christ equates the feeding of the flock to Peter's love for the Lord. The pastor who does not feed the sheep does not have the proper love for the Lord.

Notice also, Christ says to feed His lambs (young ones) as well

as His sheep (mature adults). All need to be fed, both young and old! A pastor should not focus on the one so much that the other gets neglected.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" (1 Peter 2:2).

The lambs need the milk of the Word. Note that it is "of the word." Some churches and pastors get the idea to have all sorts of extra programs that have nothing to do with the word. Sunday School programs and Vacation Bible Schools are good, as long as the Bible is taught. As a child, I went to some Bible Schools and sat in some Sunday Schools (not at King's Addition) where the focus was food and crafts, fun and games. It's ok to have fun, food, games and crafts but those things should not be the main attraction. My grandfather and Brother Willard Pyle used to have Bible Schools and kids would come from all around....And you know what was taught? The Bible! And that's the way it should be.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14).

We find in the Scripture that spiritual feeding includes milk (for the young) and meat for the older. And the Bible has both! Think back to when you were first saved. You did not know very much. As you get older you grow and go from milk to meat. And we never get to the point of knowing everything. In fact, the more I study the more I learn and as I study I find more I don't know!

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:2).

The pastor feeds the flock when he preaches the Word of God. Some men will get up into the pulpit and never open their Bibles. And they call that preaching!?! The sad thing is, thousands enjoy that type. No, that is not preaching! I'd equate it to going to a restaurant to eat and finding only plates and forks at the table. Where is the food?

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:16).

The pastor is to take heed to himself and to the doctrine he preaches. By doing this he is saving himself as well as those who hear him from the pollutions of the world, from the errors and heresies of false teachers, and from all just blame in his ministry.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;" (1 Timothy 3:2).

One of the qualifications listed in this passage is that he be "apt to teach." He must be able to learn and then be able to communicate what he has learned to the people. Teaching can be difficult, and not everyone can teach but the pastor needs to be

able to teach. I have heard some men get into the pulpit and they obviously had a great knowledge of the King's English, as well as the Greek & Hebrew, but they were unable to teach. Pastor's need to teach!

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." (2 Timothy 4:5).

This teaching is not limited to the church members. A pastor should have a love and concern for the lost to the point that he will "do the work of an evangelist." The Great Commission demands it be done!

STUDY

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15).

The pastor of the Lord's church needs to study! The church ought to expect this from him, and make sure he has time to do it. If a pastor does not study in private, he will be of little use to the church in public. Scripture demands that he study!

Now, perhaps you have heard some men who actually brag about their lack of studying. Perhaps you have heard of men who actually say "If the Lord calls a man to preach, then He will give the man something to say." Yet, according to the passage we just read, God uses study as the means of filling the mouths of the men He calls to deliver His message. In order to teach and preach, he must study!

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:13-16).

Paul's advice to Timothy was to read. All of God's people need to read, but especially the pastor needs to read. If possible, he ought to read and study about many different subjects...especially those subjects people usually think about that are found in the Bible – church truths, doctrines of grace, eschatology, etc. And there are many sound books available for study. But there are others – history, astronomy, biology, geology, anthropology, paleontology, current events, etc. And the pastor needs to know something about each of these subjects. The pastor does not need to be an expert in every subject known to mankind, but he needs to know enough so that he can be safe from heresies which so frequently come up around us.

"The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring *with thee*, and the books, *but especially the parchments.*" (2 Timothy 4:13).

Not only did Paul advise Timothy to read, but he also read. Now, Paul was a great apostle. He was inspired to write much of the New Testament. He had seen the Lord. He had been caught up into the third heaven and seen things unlawful for a man to utter. Yet he wanted his books! If anyone could ever say he was above reading books, it could have been Paul. But he never said it and was not ashamed to let others know he read!

PRAY

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:1-4).

The office of the deacon came about as a result of the apostles desire to continually pray. They needed to pray that the Lord will bless their ministry, keep them from sin, watch over the people, etc etc. They knew the need of prayer. After all, the Lord taught them to pray during His ministry:

"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." (Luke 6:12).

Before our Lord called His apostles, He spent all night in prayer.

"And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray."

And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are possible* unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly *is ready*, but the flesh *is weak.*" (Mark 14:32-38).

Again, here we find Him spending the hours before the betrayal in prayer. If our Lord put so much importance on prayer in His ministry, how much more the Pastor ought to place prayer to be important in his ministry?!? Jesus was perfect and sinless.

We are far from perfect and sinful people. How much we need to pray!

"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you." (1 Samuel 12:23-24).

Now, I know there were no pastors in the Baptist sense of the word in the Old Testament, but this is true today as much as it was way back then. Pastors need to pray.

MINISTERING TO THE FLOCK

"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD." (Jeremiah 23:1-2).


The Lord holds the pastor responsible for the welfare of the sheep. It is the pastor's responsibility to minister to them at church services, but also in the places where they may end up: hospitals, homes, nursing homes, etc. To minister to them when they are sick, depressed, discouraged, etc. The Pastor cannot be everywhere at once, so the church ought to give him a break when he isn't able to be somewhere immediately. But a good Pastor will make every effort to be where the members need him to be.

CONCLUSION

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:27-30).

The responsibility of the pastor to the church is a MAJOR responsibility. And it is not his only responsibilities. He also has responsibilities to his family, secular job (if he has one), etc, which were not even considered in this sermon.

But in this passage we find out why his responsibilities to the church are so important. The Lord died for His churches. And the devil would love to harm the flock. By fulfilling his duty in feeding the flock, the church is better fit to glorify Almighty God.

<p>Devotion: <i>"I will run the way of thy commandments"</i> by Bro. Jeff Short</p>	
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"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." ~ Psalms 119:32

Having gotten in the way, David is hastening on the way, for running implies being in a hurry. He says, "I will run." The pace of life on this earth is ever increasing. Yet, despite the speed of life, there are few who are truly hastening toward Heaven. Many claim Heaven as their final destination, but, to all outward appearances, seem to be in no hurry to get there. They seem to want to take their time walking in the By-Path Meadow. They seem to relish the things of earth and wish to tarry here a little longer. Therefore, they move on with snails' pace toward the Celestial City.

David says, "I will run." Furthermore, running implies a freedom from hindrance. The writer of Hebrews instructed the Hebrew Christians to "lay aside every weight" and to "run with patience the

race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). The ancient Greeks would compete naked to eliminate any restriction of movement. They wanted their bodies to be free to perform. The Psalmist here indicates that he has laid aside the old man's garments to free the new man to "run the way." We find many Christians today with their bodies bound with the world's fashions and barely able to walk a little in the way.

Additionally, running implies an expenditure of energy and force and a firm resolve to move deliberately toward the goal. David says, "I will run." He is bringing his energies to bear upon his task. There is no doubt that the runner with his blood, sweat, and straining muscles is in the race. He is resolved and persevering until he reaches the finish line. David's striving is a real effort and means that there is a measurable progress in a period of time. David is making tracks and covering ground. There are too many professed Christians today who are pretty much in the same place spiritually they were years ago. For them, the race seems to be mostly a spectator's sport.

One must also admire here David's pragmatic approach to God's Word. He finds a "way" in the truths of Holy Scripture. The legalist runs after the law to "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne," in order to "lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4). The antinomian runs after grace to use his "liberty for a cloke of maliciousness" (1 Peter 2:16). The intellectual runs after knowledge to "reason with unprofitable talk" and "with speeches wherewith he can do no good" (Job 15:3).

Daniel prophesied of the last days saying, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). We have witnessed this with the religionists of this day. There is much running back and forth. Everyone seems to be going in different directions. It would also seem that knowledge has been increased. However, for all this running and increase of knowledge, we find no surge of practical godliness and personal holiness. We find many today that can teach systematic doctrine, who know little to nothing of holy living.

The Psalmist declares, "I will run the way of thy commandments." All of his struggle and effort is directed and regulated by God's Word. He finds here no book of mere intellectual stimulation, but rather words "to keep and to do" (Joshua 23:6). He confesses, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Psalm 119:60). The Psalmist loves God's Word and delights to walk in His way. He believes the words of Moses to the children of Israel, "For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deuteronomy 32:47).

Finally, David says, "When thou shalt enlarge my heart." God would enlarge his heart by shedding abroad His love and grace within it. He would enlarge his heart by filling it with wisdom from on high. He would enlarge his heart by marking in it the "remembrance of his holiness" (Psalm 97:12). For every growth in knowledge, for every

growth in grace, the Psalmist would accelerate his pace. He says, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." May God give us grace to desire an enlarged heart more than an enlarged head and to get on in the way to Heaven. Amen.

The Forum: / Peter 2:11-17

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."

I Peter 2:11-17 Keeping in mind our theme of Order what does the application of these verses look like in our world today, particularly in nations with dictatorships, sharia law, or theocracy?

Bro. Nilo del Mundo (Pastor & Missionary Riyadh, Saudi Arabia):

As long as a nation is in a democracy and a nation of laws, let us use the liberty given to us by God to worship God, serve the Kingdom of God, spread the Kingdom of God as much as allowed and fight against tyranny and abusive ordinances and governance.

But if a believer lives inside a dictatorship, sharia law like we do, then we work for the Lord and worship God to the extent that we are allowed to do. We honor the King here, and love the brotherhood. We are free to do both without conflict.

Bro. Curtis Pugh (Missionary to Poteau, Oklahoma): The question for this forum is based upon the following text: "**Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king,**" (I Peter 2:11-17).

The question itself is this: "Keeping in mind our theme of Order what does the application of these verses look like in our world today, particularly in nations with dictatorships, sharia law, or theocracy?"

While some professing Christians do not believe in resistance at all, such as the Mennonites, Amish, etc., other think that there is a time and a place for fighting (literally) against evil rulers and

governments as well as individuals. Personally, I cannot see that a husband and father is providing for his own according to 1 Timothy 5:8 if he, for instance, allows a man or men to enter his home and rape his wife and daughters. And I raise the question: if it is right for him to defend his wife and family, what about his cousin's wife and family – or his neighbor's – or the man's in the next county or state?

It seems to me that the key to the text quoted above is found in the purpose of governments. This is revealed in the phrases: **"...the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."** If a ruler or a government ceases to punish evildoers and ceases to stand for what is right – if they begin as it were to praise them that do evil – that government is evil. Our colonial Baptist forefathers understood this and nearly every Baptist preacher in the colonies joined in the revolution against the tyrannical British government that was oppressing the colonies.

We have the example of the Lord Jesus. Although He did not retaliate, when smitten on the cheek because of what He had said, Jesus protested to the soldier who had hit Him. **"And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?"**

(John 18:22-23). From the last of those verses it seems clear that the Lord understood that it was the purpose of government to punish evil doers and praise those who do good. If resistance is futile or not possible and flight to another country impossible, Christians are enjoined to suffer persecution and unfair treatment for doing right. And it seems to me that such things may be soon coming upon the true children of God here in the United States.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:39 are these: **"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."** Some have insisted that these words prohibit self defense and the defense of others. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown in their commentary have this to say: *"Our Lord's own meek, yet dignified bearing, when smitten rudely on the cheek (John 18:22,23), and not literally presenting the other, is the best comment on these words. It is the preparedness, after one indignity, not to invite but to submit meekly to another, without retaliation, which this strong language is meant to convey."* A.T. Robertson, famous Greek scholar says of this verse: *"One thing certainly is meant by Jesus and that is that personal revenge is taken out of our hands, and that applies to "lynch-law." Aggressive or offensive war by nations is also condemned, but not necessarily defensive war or defence against robbery and murder. Professional pacifism may be mere cowardice."*

Regarding "dictatorships, sharia law, or theocracy" as mentioned in the question, they are all three evil. Under any one of them Baptists have and will suffer and we should be constantly in remembrance of that fact.

Matthew and Simon Character Studies

by Bro. Todd Bryant

I. Introduction

- a. I have recently brought you four character studies recently on four apostles
 - i. Peter, Andrew, James and John
 1. Much more is known of these than the other apostles
 2. These were the inner circle
 3. These most likely grew up knowing one another
 - a. They all lived in Capernaum and were all fishermen
 - b. Today, I'd like to do a couple more character studies on two apostles lesser known than the previous four
 - i. Matthew and Simon the Zealot

II. Matthew

a. **Matthew 9:9-10**

- i. Here, we see the first encounter with Matthew in the Bible
- ii. Matthew was from Galilee as were ALL of the disciples EXCEPT Judas
- iii. Matthew was a tax collector
 1. This tells us much about what type of person Matthew was prior to his conversion
 2. Generally, tax collectors were sinful and corrupt
 - a. It's possible Matthew was the greatest sinner among the group
 - b. **Mat. 21:32** puts them on the same level as harlots
 3. Tax collectors were hated by Jewish society
 4. He had bought a tax franchise from Rome
 - a. Most tax collectors made riches by collecting significantly more than was required by Rome
 - i. This was an unspoken agreement with the tax collectors and the Roman government
 - ii. There is little reason to believe that Matthew was any different
- iv. Other than the list of apostles in the next chapter, this is the only glimpse Matthew gives us of himself
 1. In fact, the second verse we read seemingly has nothing to do with Matthew, does it!?
 - a. **Luke 5:27-32**
 - i. Luke fills in the blank that Matthew does not
 - ii. Matthew seemingly invites all of his SINNER friends to a banquet to meet Jesus!!
 1. Most likely, these are the only kind of people he knew!
 2. Being a great sinner myself, I can relate to this
 3. How much would we approve of Jesus' ministry if He did the same things today that He did then?
 - a. Would we be like the Pharisees?
 - b. Just a random thought
 - iii. It is certainly wonderful that we get a glimpse of the missionary zeal of Matthew early on
 1. He seems to have a similar mindset to Andrew who we always see bringing somebody to Jesus
- v. Matthew's occupation made him a traitor to the nation of Israel
 1. This would also make him a religious outcast
 - a. Remember the tax collector who prayed with the Pharisee?
 - i. He stood far off...remember?
 1. This is because they were not allowed in the synagogue as they were traitors
 - b. This made him worse off religiously than a Gentile!!
 2. Zaccheaus was a "chief tax collector" which meant that he stayed mostly behind the scenes and hired the men who stood in the tax booth
 - a. Matthew was the one actually taking the money from people
 - i. He was the most hated kind of tax collector
- vi. Matthew immediately drops everything when Jesus tells him to follow Him
 1. He abandoned the tax office
 - a. This was a permanent decision as many would have immediately jumped at the opportunity for such a business
 2. Why?
 - a. Well, Matthew certainly knew the Old Testament
 - i. He quoted it 99 times in his Gospel
 1. This is more than the other 3 Gospels combined!!
 - b. He had been with John the Baptist
 - i. Perhaps he had come to see that Jesus was the fulfillment of those OT prophecies he knew
 - c. God seems to have been dealing with him spiritually

- i. This, no doubt, began after he chose his occupation
 - 3. His faith is evidenced by the banquet we have already spoken about
- vii. This is pretty much all we know of Matthew
 - 1. He knew the Old Testament
 - 2. He was looking for the Messiah and believed God
 - 3. He was in the Wilderness and learned from John
 - 4. He dropped all when Jesus called him
- viii. Matthew's calling is a reminder to us that the Lord often chooses and uses the most despicable people of this world
- ix. Tradition says he ministered in Israel and abroad to mostly a Jewish audience until his martyrdom
 - 1. The earliest traditions say he was burned at the stake
 - a. Matthew literally gave up all for Jesus and His cause

III. Simon the Zealot

a. Luke 6:15

- i. Not much more given to us about Simon the Zealot
 - 1. However, there is much in this description to consider
- ii. The Zealots were a political party in Israel
 - 1. They hated the Romans and anybody who sided with them
 - 2. They were pretty much terrorists of their day
 - a. They were involved in acts of violence in an attempt to overthrow the Romans
 - 3. They were extremists in ever sense of the word
 - 4. They were militant, violent outlaws
 - 5. They believed they were doing God's work by assassinating Roman soldiers, political leaders, and anyone else who opposed them
 - 6. They were hoping for the Messiah
 - a. However, their reason was not for salvation
 - i. They wanted Him to overthrow the Roman government and set up the kingdom from Jerusalem
 - 7. They believed that paying tribute to a pagan king was an act of treason against God!!!
 - 8. Many historians believe that this group Simon formerly belonged to actually were the root cause in the Romans destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70
 - a. This is how large and violent they were
- iii. It could be that Simon originally followed the Lord Jesus Christ for political reasons
 - 1. We are quite certain this is the reason that Judas did
 - a. Though, Simon became a believer and Judas never did
 - 2. It may be that some thought Simon to be the most likely man to betray Christ when He began to talk of His death rather than the overthrow of Rome
 - a. Certainly, his past would suggest this
- iv. At one point in his life, there is little doubt that Simon would have gladly killed Matthew
 - 1. They were at opposite ends of the political spectrum
 - a. Matthew had willingly bought a tax franchise to collect taxes for Rome
 - b. Simon was in the group that was assassinating Roman officials
- v. We know little more about Simon
 - 1. It's amazing that Jesus chose such a man
 - a. But certainly, when this zeal that Simon had was re-focused on the mission Jesus gave them, he was a useful tool!!
- vi. History says after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, Simon took the Gospel North into the British Isles
 - 1. All accounts say he was killed for his faithfulness to the Gospel
 - a. This former Zealot who was willing to be a killer before his conversion found a more fruitful cause to give his life for – the salvation of souls!!!

IV. Conclusion

- a. I chose these two with purpose

i. 1 Cor. 12:18

- 1. Both of these men were placed in the Lord's first church on purpose by God
- 2. God sets all in the church as He sees fit
 - a. You may have totally different likes and dislikes than the next person to join this church – just like Matthew and Simon
 - i. But, we are united by our faith in Christ

1. Philippians 2:1-3

"The Church's Responsibilities To The Pastor"

by Bro. David M. Green

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Timothy 3:1).

My previous article was on the subject of the [pastor's responsibility to the church](#). Now we want to look at the responsibility the church has toward the pastor. As with any relationship, both parties have a great responsibility. For a church to properly function, the Pastor and the church both need to understand their roles.

As I wrote in my last article, so I want to repeat it: The call to pastor one of the Lord's churches is the highest calling a man can have. It would be a step down for a man to leave the pastoral responsibilities to be the President of the USA. I also want to say that it is better, much better, to Pastor one of the Lord's churches (though they be small in size) than to pastor one of the huge Protestant congregations. I am sure they have a lot to offer their pastors - \$500 suits, new cars, etc. but those churches are not of the Lord. To pastor one of those churches would be a major step down from pastoring a true New Testament Baptist Church.

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15).

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21).

And adding to that statement, I would have to say that the local church is the greatest organization on the earth! It is the pillar and ground of the truth... We have been chosen to hold the truth and make sure it is spread from house to house, street to street, city to city, nation to nation, and continent to continent! It is the organization by which God has chosen to get honor and glory in.

The fact that God has chosen there be a man to pastor his churches is evidenced in Scripture. Let us take a look to see what the church's responsibility is toward that man.

PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR

"Brethren, pray for us." (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

A simple statement: "Brethren, pray for us." Yet, what powerful words these are! Pray for your pastor!

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Ephesians 6:18-20).

Pray that the Lord will bless the pastor so that he will be able to feed the flock properly. Preaching the Word of God is such a

HUGE responsibility. It might be compared to carrying a nuclear weapon - with the responsibilities that go with it - making sure that it is used properly, not abused, neglected, etc. But handling the Word of God is much more than that! But don't misunderstand me here, the rewards far outweigh anything else a man can do!

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith." (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

Again, we find the plea to pray for the Lord's men repeated here. Pastors and their families are often faced with peculiar difficulties, burdens, etc that come with the office. And why should that surprise us? The devil loves to attack the Lord's men and their families!

1. Pray for your pastor that he may be used of the Lord in ways that would be pleasing to God.
2. Pray that God will keep him from errors.
3. Pray that the Lord will give him sermons that will be edifying to the church.
4. Pray the Lord will give him physical and spiritual strength....
5. Pray that God will grant the Pastor boldness of speech, clarity of thought, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost.
6. Pray he will not become discouraged or burned out.
7. Etc. Etc. Etc.

Just pray for your pastor!

SHOW LOVE & RESPECT TOWARDS HIM

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

The Lord has placed the pastor in a place of leadership. He is to lead well, work with the church, and admonish (or teach) the church that the Lord has placed him in. The church ought to have a love and respect for her pastor. They ought to esteem him very highly. That word esteem, according to Webster's 1828 dictionary means "To prize; to set a high value on; to regard with high reverence, respect, or friendship." The Holy Spirit did not just say to esteem him, but to esteem him *very highly!*

Remember the pastor is a man. He will have some weakness somewhere. He might preach a bad sermon sometimes. He may say something wrong. He may forget to shake your hand at church. Too often, after a while some people only focus on his problems, and that is all they talk about. Some church members only listen to their Pastor so they can find something they disagree with. This ought not to be. This is not the way any church member should treat their pastor! Love him because God has given him a HUGE responsibility. Love him because God has brought the church and the pastor together.

If the pastor labors in the Word of God, then he deserves the love, respect and esteem of the people he pastors.

"Rebuke not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; and the younger men as brethren;" (1 Timothy 5:1).

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." (1 Timothy 5:19).

I'll never understand the way some churches treat their pastors – always whispering behind his back, jumping him for every little thing, never showing him the love and respect he deserves. What a sad thing this is! There are way too many whispering campaigns against the Lord's men today! It's bad enough that the devil does it, how worse it is when the members of the Lord's churches do it! And what makes matters worse is these church members will go to people outside of the church with their gossip. Folks, it is no wonder the world mocks us! More damage is done that way than can be imagined.

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." (1 Timothy 5:17).

The elders that rule well are worthy of double honour! Think about how you should treat the President of the USA...the pastor ought to be treated double that. This could also be taken to mean that a church member should be twice as reluctant to disagree with the Pastor, than with any other person. And a church member should be twice as ready to defend the Pastor as he would defend his dearest relative!

FOLLOW & OBEY THE TRUTH HE PREACHES

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1).

The Pastor who is following the Lord by preaching the truth of God's Word ought to be followed. Now, we ought not to blindly follow any man, no matter how much we like him. But the church who has a faithful and obedient man as their pastor deserves to be followed and obeyed.

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation." (Hebrews 13:7).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17).

Some misuse these verses to make a dictatorship out of the pastorate, but that is not what is being taught here. These verses teach that the man of God who is faithful to God's word & faithful to the watch care of the church ought to be obeyed.

ATTEND CHURCH SERVICES

"Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for *he is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Attending the church services is the duty of all members, not just the pastor. Some folks show up to church every once in a while. We all need to be here every time the doors are open. You

ought to be here for a host of reasons:

1. Because God said to be here.
2. Because we need to be here.
3. To get encouraged and recharged.
4. To worship the Lord.

The church also has a responsibility to come because the pastor is God's man. And, as God's man, he is God's messenger. The message he has prepared for the service is a message from God. Listen when he preaches. You'll have time to trim your fingernails after church. You can talk to the person next to you later. You can read that fictional book you bought at Wal-Mart another time. Don't worry about what you are going to do Sunday afternoon...listen to the message the Lord has given His man!

SUPPORT HIM FINANCIALLY

"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are not* we rather? Nevertheless we have not used *this* power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of *the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:7-14).

A pastor ought not to become a pastor for the money. That being said, the church has a responsibility to support their pastor financially. There is a benefit both for the church and the pastor in doing this. The more the church is able to support him, the less he will be concerned with physical things. Let me tell you from experience, when a man works full time in a secular job and then tries to work full time for the Lord, something suffers: either the secular job or the church, but usually both. Add to that the Pastor's family and they suffer too.

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward." (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

The man of God needs to be counted worthy enough to be supported financially. This is in the best interest of the church. I know, not all churches can support their pastor's full time. That's ok – as long as the church is doing what she can then she will be blessed of God.

CONCLUSION

The church has responsibilities to the pastor. Every pastor is different. If you expect a new pastor to be like a former pastor, you will have major disappointments. Instead of expecting him to be a clone of former Pastor So-and-So, expect him to be the man God has sent your way!

God has set expectations in His Word for both the Pastor and the church. May God help us to follow Him!

“Storms and Relief”

by Sis. Joanna Works

Through the month of May Oklahoma has experienced storms and severe flooding. On Friday May 25th, Memorial Day weekend, a tornado passed through Poteau, OK.

Sis. Ruthie McLelan shared with us what happened: It was scary. What I could see the sky through the ventilation holes was green. A sound like a train rang thru the air. My husband asked, "What's that?" "That, I said, is a tornado." We grasped each other's hands tightly, me praying for God's mercy & grace when the straight winds hit. I remember thinking, "This is it!" while throwing my free arm over my head. Then I thought, "We are really going through this but I don't want to go through this!" Then we heard our neighbors' voices & Bob ran to the top of the stairs to let them in. The door blew open by itself and I was so relieved to see the whole family unharmed. After a time things got quiet. We emerged intact, without loss of life or property. God spared us. We had tree damage, but trees can be replaced. People can't. So many have suffered home damage, contaminated water, loss of possessions and injuries and May isn't over yet. We had to take cover earlier today also. (*May 28th*) I looked outside and saw rotation and to my horror a twister descend...mercifully it raised back up into the clouds.

Red Cross Posted May 26,2015

<http://www.redcross.org/news/press-release/Red-Cross-Responds-to-Storms-Flooding-in-Texas-Oklahoma>

Providing Shelter, Food, Relief Supplies

MEDIA ADVISORY – Red Cross spokespeople are available in the affected areas for interviews. Call the Red Cross media line at (202) 202-5551 for more information.

WASHINGTON, Tuesday, May 26, 2015 — The American Red Cross is helping people in Texas and Oklahoma where devastating floods and tornadoes pounded the states over the weekend.

More than 220 people spent their Memorial Day in Red Cross shelters in the two states. Governors in both states declared disasters in more than 80 counties after the extreme weather destroyed or damaged thousands of homes and left thousands without power. Schools are closed in several major metropolitan areas and people are being asked to avoid flooded areas.

“This deadly flooding comes on the heels of three consecutive weeks of severe weather in Texas. Some people have been hit repeatedly and we are assisting them for the second time,” said Richard Reed, senior vice president for Disaster Cycle Services of the American Red Cross.

Since early May, Red Cross workers have opened 30 shelters, served more than 23,000 meals and snacks, handed out 31,000 relief items and cleaning supplies. Nearly 700 Red Crossers are helping in Texas along with 22 emergency response vehicles. Additional volunteers and vehicles are on alert if needed.

“The Red Cross is expanding our relief efforts and mobilizing additional volunteers, vehicles, food and relief supplies to help the thousands of people impacted by these latest storms,” continued Reed. “We depend on financial donations to provide shelter and food, and we need the public’s help now. Our response in Texas alone is expected to cost more than \$3 million.”

Texas has been under the gun of a powerful storm system since early May, suffering repeated and ongoing severe weather and torrential rains. The situation worsened over the holiday weekend as more flooding hit the state, including parts of major cities such as Houston, Austin, San Antonio and Wichita Falls.

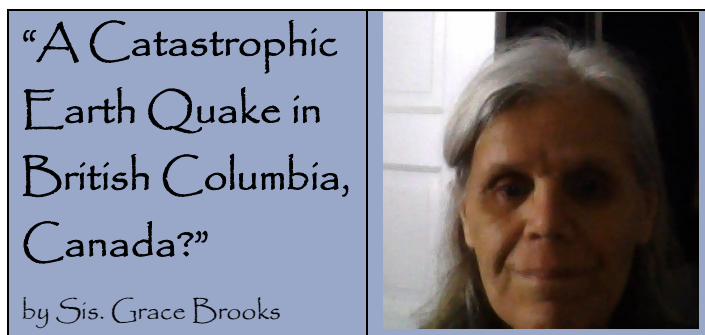
OKLAHOMA The Red Cross has been helping people in parts of Oklahoma since tornadoes hit the state in early May. Over the weekend residents were hit with heavy rain, more tornadoes and flooding. The Red Cross opened shelters and workers are providing meals and snacks and cleaning items to those affected. Additional flooding is predicted over the next several days and the Red Cross is monitoring the situation and working with local and state officials to determine what additional help may be needed.

HOW TO HELP A donation to Red Cross Disaster Relief can help provide food, water and shelter for someone who has had to leave their home. Help people affected by disasters like floods, tornadoes and countless other crises by making a gift to Red Cross Disaster Relief. Your gift enables the Red Cross to prepare for, respond to and help people recover from disasters big and small. To donate, people can visit www.redcross.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or text REDCROSS to 90999 to make a \$10 donation.

Google makes public announcement of donations: May 27, 2015 "Floods of historic proportions swept through Texas and Oklahoma on Memorial Day weekend and have continued into this week. Lives have been lost, a number of people are still missing, and property damage is extensive and widespread. Search and rescue efforts are ongoing, and cleanup has begun—but rains are still in the forecast.

In response, +Google is committing \$300,000 in Google.org and employee support to flood recovery efforts in the hardest-hit counties of Texas and Oklahoma. We'll continue to work with the many nonprofits and responders who are providing lifesaving resources on the ground and we're searching for additional opportunities for Googlers from the Austin office and our Mayes County Data Center to lend their hands.

In both Texas and Oklahoma we're devastated by the destruction but are inspired—and proud of—the courage of the first-responders and neighbors who have been braving the weather to support our communities. We hope these funds will help to ease the suffering of so many and to accelerate the rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the floods."



<http://o.canada.com/news/national/catastrophic-quake-and-tsunami-brewing-off-west-coast>

An earth quake occurs when energy is released when one portion of the earth's crust breaks away from another to which it had been stuck, or somehow blocked. These two plates have to be in the same passage. When such energy is suddenly released, an earth quake occurs.

Canada's western coast lies in the 1000 kilometer (621.371 miles) Cascadia Subduction Zone. Huge slabs of the earth's crust, called tectonic plates, have collided and are stuck, building pressure.

An enormous slab of solid rock is drifting towards Vancouver. This slab is causing much pressure on the Canadian west coast. The city of Vancouver is warped way out of shape. It's tilted much more than the normal. Each year finds the city squeezed a few more centimeters east.

This has been going on for over 300 years.

In the future, some say within the next fifty years, this pressure will release and Canadians, especially those on the west coast, will be dealing with an earthquake of the 9.5 scale. The coast all

the way to northern California will be involved. This will cause parts of the coast to sink into the ocean waters more than a meter and vault westward again 10-15 meters.

What causes this? The tectonic plates on the 1300 kilometer (807.7825 miles) Cascadia Subduction Zone slide past each other. The ground will shake so intensely that old buildings, not very sound in structure in the first place will crumble, roads will be buried, and people left without what they consider essential services such as running water, electricity, and telephones. In some places these services could be cut off for weeks.

Mega quakes seldom happen on the west coast, but the potential is there and there is one brewing.

Canada hasn't done much, if anything, to prepare for a disaster of such an enormous scale.

On the other hand, in the United States, Oregon has mapped out escape routes, created safe havens to escape to and are building strong bridges to withstand a tsunami

The Emergency Management in British Columbia, BC, has not made it a priority to deal with a with a quake of such a magnitude, and to think of a plan that will work. Emergency officials assure those living in the danger zones will be moved out of harm's way.

According to the emergency officials when one feels the ground starting to shake, this ought to be the warning to vacate to higher ground and safety, wherever that is, if one knows. People should remain in the safe zones until local emergency officials say it's okay to return home.

Japan was prepared when a devastating earthquake and the following tsunami hit that country on January 26, 1700. As if those disasters weren't enough, the coast can expect a tsunami.

What is a Tsunami?

A tsunami is a natural risk consisting of a series of long, surge like waves. Tsunami waves reach from 5-15 meters (16.4042 to 49.2126 feet) in height. This wave has tons of water behind it. These waves generate huge volumes of water and will sweep the coast, wiping out campground, resorts, rearrange shipping channels, and sever cables running along the ocean bottom. A tsunami can last up to twelve hours.

<http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/natural-disasters/tsunami-profile/>

Are earthquakes a natural disaster or warnings of coming judgement? Both.

Earthquakes occupy a prominent role in Bible prophecy. Read in Rev 6:12-17,8:5, 11:13& 19,, 16:16-21. <http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org>

The final earthquake is described in these chapters.

Isaiah 2;19-21. "19And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of Gold, which he made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and the bats. 21To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

If you have a reference Bible, these verses will refer you to different scriptures throughout the Bible on the same subject.

Jesus's words in Matthew 24:7 tells us that earthquakes will increase close-or in-the last days, in frequency and magnitude as well as other tumult. This will be the greatest troubled times mankind has ever gone through.

Jesus said these disasters will increase prior to His return.

What can we Christians do? Cling to PSALM 46.

"1 God is our strength and our refuge, a very present help in time of trouble.

2 There fore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains into the midst of the seas.

3 though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah"

and 11: "The Lord of Hosts is with us; The god of Jacob is our refuge."

So, is there really nothing to be concerned about?

According to Stella Peters, the natives living along the B.C. coast have heard about this mega earthquake for generations now.

Stella Peters a native of British Columbia has this to say, "Every year we hear the same thing, that, 'Oh, the big waves are going to come, the big waves are going to come,'" Peters says as she looks out on the Pacific Ocean. "I'm not really too worried about it actually happening. We're not ready for it, but in a sense we are. We seem to be on the ball when it comes to evacuating the place."

"Nobody (will be) left behind," says Peters. "All the elders, the kids, even the dogs are all taken out of here."

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/experts-vancouver-island-will-rip-open-like-a-zipper-when-overdue-earth-quake-hits/article22511493/>

No foretelling judgment day is coming upon us fast?. Likely it's the judgement we will all go through when the earth is destroyed by fire we should be concerned about.

Are earthquakes really on the increase? According to an article in Associates For Bible Research. No. The fact is, more earthquakes are being discovered and located due to modern trackers such as the Richter Scale and other modern technology.

Devotion: / Chronicles

29:11-14

by Bro. Stephen McCool



I Chronicles 29:11-14 "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reigest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee."

O what a glorious God we serve!!!

King David, in this prayer praises the Lord for all the blessings He has bestowed upon the nation of Israel. At the end of David's reign as king, as he is about to pass the keys of the kingdom over to his son Solomon, prays a prayer of thanksgiving and praise to God who has blessed the people and their king. My favorite part of this prayer is the last verse where David so humbly says: "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" Who are we? What gives us the right to come before the Almighty God and proclaim His name and to sing His praises? Where does this willingness come from? The willingness to want to worship God. The one and only true God. The one who sent His only begotten Son to die a horrible death so that our sins would be forgiven and washed cleaned. The one who gave us eternal life. A life in eternity with Him.

David answers these questions in the same verse: "For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." Praise God!!! Our worship and admiration for Him is not dependent upon us. For with out His Holy Spirit living within us we would have no desire to worship Him or to praise His name. David knew that all things come from God. The very will to worship God. The very will to want a personal relationship with our Heavenly Father. Is not our own will but His will bestowed upon us.

Historical Marker: “Our LORD’s Trial Before The Sanhedrin”

Delivered on LORD’s
Day morning, Feb. 5th,
1882, by C.H. Spurgeon,
at the Metroplotian
Tabernacle, Newington.

www.spurgeongems.org

“*And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death.*” Mark 14:64.

THIS one sentence is selected because custom demands a text. But in reality we shall follow the entire narrative of our Lord’s trial before the High Priests. We shall see how the Sanhedrin arrived at their unrighteous sentence and what they did afterwards, and so, in a sense, we shall be keeping to our text. We have just been reading three passages—John 18:12- 24; Mark 14:53-65 and Luke 22:66-71. Please carry these in your minds while I rehearse the mournful story. The narrative of our Lord’s grief, if it is carefully studied, is harrowing in the extreme. One cannot long think of it without tears. In fact, I have personally known what it is to be compelled to leave my meditations upon it from excess of emotion.

It is enough to make one’s heart fully break to realize the sufferings of such an One, so lovely in Himself and so loving toward us. Yet this harrowing of the feelings is exceedingly useful and the after result of it is truly admirable. After mourning for Jesus we are raised above our mourning! There is no consolation under Heaven at all like it, for the sorrows of Christ seem to take the sting out of our own sorrows till they become harmless and endurable. A sympathetic contemplation of our Lord’s grief so dwarfs our griefs that they are reckoned to be but light afflictions, too petty, too insignificant to be mentioned in the same day. We dare not write ourselves down in the list of the sorrowful at all when we have just seen the sharp pains of the Man of Sorrows. The wounds of Jesus distil a balm which heals all mortal ills.

Nor is this all, though that were much in a world of woe like this, but there is a matchless stimulus about the passion of the Lord. Though you have been almost crushed by the sight of your Lord’s agonies, you have risen from them strong, resolute, fervent, consecrated. Nothing stirs our hearts’ depths like His heart’s anguish. Nothing is too hard for us to attempt or to endure for One who sacrificed Himself for us. To be reviled for His dear sake who suffered such shame for us becomes no great affliction—even reproach, itself, when borne for Him, becomes greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! To suffer in body and in mind, even unto death, for Him, were rather a privilege than an exaction—such love so swells our hearts that we vehemently pant for some way of expressing our indebtedness. We are grieved to think that our best will be so little, but we are solemnly resolved to give nothing less than our best to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

I believe, also, that full often careless hearts have been greatly affected by the sufferings of Jesus. They have been disturbed in

their indifference, convinced of their ingratitude, weaned from their love of sin and attracted to Christ by hearing what He bore on their behalf. No loadstone can draw human hearts like the Cross of Christ. His wounds cause even hearts of stone to bleed! His shame makes obstinacy, itself, ashamed. Men never so plentifully fall before the great bow of God as when its arrows are dipped in the blood of Jesus. Those darts which are armed with His agonies cause wounds such as never can be healed except by His own pierced hands. These are the weapons which slay the sin and save the sinner—killing, at one stroke, both his self-confidence and his despair—and leaving him a captive to that Conqueror whose glory it is to make men free!

This morning I would not only preach the doctrines that come out of the Cross, but the Cross, itself. I suppose that was one of the great differences between the first preaching of all and the preaching after the Reformation. After the Reformation we had clearly ringing out from all pulpits the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and other glorious Truths of God which I hope will be made more and more prominent. But the first fathers of the Church set forth the same Truths in a less theological fashion. If they dwell little upon Justification by Faith they were wonderfully full upon the blood and its cleansing power, the wounds and their healing efficacy, the death of Jesus and our eternal life.

We will go back to their style for a while and preach the facts about our Lord Jesus Christ rather than the doctrinal inferences from them. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would so bring the sorrows of our Lord near to each heart, that every one of us may know the fellowship of His sufferings and possess faith in His salvation and reverent love for Him!

I. We will begin our narrative, this morning, by first asking you to think of THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND MASTER BY THE HIGH PRIESTS.

They brought in our Lord from the garden, bound, but they also kept fast hold upon Him, for we read of, “the men that held Him.” They were evidently afraid of their prisoner, even when they had Him entirely in their power. He was all gentleness and submission, but conscience made cowards of them all and they, therefore, took all a coward’s care to hold Him in their grasp. As the court had not yet gathered in sufficient numbers for a general examination, the High Priest resolved that he would fill up the time by personally interrogating his prisoner.

He commenced his malicious exercise. The High Priest asked Jesus concerning His disciples. We cannot tell what were the questions, but I suppose they were something like these—“How is it that You have gathered about You a band of men? What did they do with You? What was Your ultimate intention to do by their means? Who were they? Were they not a set of fanatics, or men discontented and ready for sedition?” I do not know how the crafty Caiaphas put his questions, but the Savior gave no reply to this particular enquiry. What could He have said if He had attempted to answer? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, what good could He have said of His disciples? We may be sure He would say no ill. He might have said, “Concerning My disciples, one of them has betrayed Me. He has still the blood-money in his hands which you gave him as My price. Another of them, down in the hall there, before the cock crows will deny that he ever knew Me and

add oaths and cursing to his denial. And as for the rest, they have all forsaken Me and fled.”

Therefore our Lord said nothing concerning His disciples, for He will not become the accuser of His own, whom He came not to condemn, but to justify. The High Priest also asked Him concerning His doctrine. I suppose he said to Jesus, “What new teaching is this of Yours? Are we not sufficient to teach the people—the Scribes so learned in the Law, the Pharisees so attentive to ritual, the Sadducees so philosophical and speculative? Why need you intrude into this domain? I suppose You to be little more than a peasant’s son—what is this strange teaching of Yours?” To this enquiry our Lord did answer and what a triumphant reply it was! Oh that we could always speak, when it is right to speak, as meekly and as wisely as He! He said, “I spoke openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple, where the Jews always resort and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask you Me? Ask them which heard Me what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I have said.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, no reply to slander can be compared with a blameless life! Jesus had lived in the full blaze of day, where all could see, and yet He was able to challenge accusation and say, “Ask them which heard Me.” Happy is the man who has no need to defend himself because his works and words are solid testimonials to his uprightness and goodness! Our Savior answered His interrogator very gently, but yet most effectually, by His appeal to facts.

He stands before us the mirror of meekness and the paragon of perfection, with slander like a wounded snake writhing at His feet. What a delight to have this triumphant Pleader for our Advocate, to urge His own righteousness in our defense! None can impugn His absolute perfection and that perfection covers all His saints this day! Who shall accuse us, now that Jesus has undertaken to plead for us? This overwhelming answer, however, brought the Savior a blow from one of the officers of the court who stood by. Was not this a most shocking deed? Here was the first of a new order of assaults. Up to now we have not heard of strokes and blows—but now it is fulfilled—“They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon His cheek.”

This was the first of a long series of assaults. I wonder who the man was that struck the Master? I could wish that the Master’s reply to him may have influenced his heart to repentance. But if not, it is certain that he led the van in personal assaults upon our Lord’s Person—his impious hand first struck Him. Surely if he died in impenitence, the memory of that blow must remain as a never-dying worm within him. Today he cries, “I was the first to smite Him! I struck Him on the mouth with the palm of my hand.” The old writers upon the Passion give us various details of the injuries inflicted upon the Savior by that blow, but we attach no importance to such traditions and, therefore, will not repeat them, but simply say that there was general belief in the Church that this blow was a very grievous one and caused the Savior much pain.

Yet while He felt that blow and was, perhaps, half staggered by it, the Master did not lose His composure, or exhibit the least resentment. His reply was everything it ought to be. There is not a word too much. He does not say, “God shall smite you, you whited wall,” as did the Apostle Paul. We will not censure the servant, but we will far more commend the Master. He meekly said, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well,

why did you strike Me?” Enough, surely, if there remained any tenderness in the heart of the aggressor, to have made him turn his hand upon his own breast in penitential grief! One would not have wondered had he cried out, “Forgive me, O You divinely meek and gentle

One, and let me, from now on, be Your disciple!”

Thus have we seen the first part of our Lord’s sufferings in the house of the High Priest. And the lesson from it is just this—Let us be meek and lowly in heart as the Savior was, for herein lay His strength and dignity. You tell me I have said that before. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, and I shall have to say it several more times before you and I have learned the lesson well. It is hard to be meek when falsely accused. It is difficult to be meek when roughly interrogated. It is hard to be meek when a cunning adversary is on the catch, or when smarting under a cruel blow which was a disgrace to a court of justice.

You have heard of the patience of Job, but it pales before the patience of Jesus! Admire His forbearance, but do not stop at admiration—copy His example! Write under this headline and follow every stroke. O Spirit of God, even with Christ for an Example, we shall not learn meekness unless You teach us! And even with You for a Teacher, we shall not learn it unless we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, for it is only at His feet; and under Your Divine anointing that we shall ever become meek and lowly of heart—and so find rest unto our souls. The preliminary examination is therefore over and it has ended in no success whatever for the High Priest. He has questioned Jesus and he has struck Him, but the ordeal brings nothing to content the adversary. The prisoner is supremely victorious, the assailant is baffled.

II. Now comes a second scene, THE SEARCH FOR

WITNESSES AGAINST HIM. “The chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none.” A strange court that meets with the design to find the prisoner guilty, resolved in some way or other to compass his death! They must proceed according to the forms of justice and so they summon witnesses, though all the while they violate the spirit of justice, for they ransack Jerusalem to find witnesses who will perjure themselves to accuse the Lord!

Every man of the council is writing down somebody’s name who may be fetched in from the outside, for the people have come from all parts of the land to keep the Passover and surely some may be hunted up who, in one place or another, have heard Him use an objectionable mode of speech. They fetch in, therefore, everyone that they can find of that degraded class who will venture upon perjuring themselves if a bribe is forthcoming. They scour Jerusalem to bring forth witnesses against Jesus—but they had great difficulty in accomplishing their design because they were bound to examine the witnesses separately and they could not make them agree! Lies cannot be easily made to pair with each other, whereas truths are cut to the same pattern.

Moreover, many sorts of witnesses that they could readily find, they did not dare to bring forward. Witnesses were forthcoming who could testify that Jesus had spoken against the tradition of the elders, but in that, some who were in the council, namely, the Sadducees, were agreed with Him to a large extent! It would never do to bring forward a charge about which they would not be unanimous. His denunciations of the Pharisees could not be

the charge, for these pleased the Sadducees! Neither could they allege His outcry against the Sadducees, for in this the Pharisees were agreed with Him! You remember how Paul, when brought before this Sanhedrin, took advantage of their division of opinion and cried, “I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question”—and in this manner created a dissension among the conclave, which, for a time worked in his favor.

Our Lord took higher and nobler ground and did not stoop to turn their folly to His own benefit. Yet, they being conscious of their internal feuds, cautiously avoided those points upon which they were not in harmony. They might have brought forward their old grievance that the Lord Jesus did not observe the Sabbath after their fashion, but then it would have come out more publicly that He had healed the sick on the Sabbath. It would not do to publish that fact, for who would think of putting a person to death for having opened the eyes of one born blind, or having restored a withered arm on the Sabbath? That kind of witness was, therefore, set aside.

But might they not have found some witnesses to swear that He had talked about a kingdom that He was setting up? Might not this readily have been made to mean sedition and rebellion? Yes, but then that was rather a charge to allege against Him before Pilate’s civil court, whereas theirs was an ecclesiastical tribunal. Moreover, there were Herodians in the council who were very restive under the Roman yoke and could not have had the face to condemn anyone for being a patriot. And besides, the people outside would have sympathized with Jesus all the more if they had supposed that He would lead them on a rebellion against Caesar. Therefore they could not urge that point.

They must have been greatly puzzled to know what to do! Especially when even on those points which they decided to bring forward the witnesses, they no sooner opened their mouths than they contradicted each other! At last they had it. There came two whose evidence was somewhat agreed and they asserted that on a certain occasion Jesus Christ had said, “I will destroy this Temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.” Here was blasphemy against the holy and beautiful House of the Lord! This would serve their turn. Now, the Savior had said something which was a little like the testimony of these false witnesses and a misunderstanding had made it more like it. But still their statement was a lie and none the less a lie because a shadow of truth had fallen upon it, for the worst kind of lie is that which is manufactured out of a truth—it does a great deal more mischief than if it were a falsehood from stem to stern.

The Savior had not said, “I will destroy this Temple.” He said, “Destroy this Temple,” that is to say, “You will destroy it and you may destroy it.” He had not referred to the Jerusalem Temple at all—this spoke He concerning the Temple of His body which would be destroyed. Christ has never said, “Destroy this Temple which is made with hands, and I will build another without hands.” In His language there is no allusion to hands at all. These refinements were of their own inventing and His language gave no color for them. He had not said, “I will build another.” He had said, “I will raise it up,” which is quite a different thing! He meant that His body, after being destroyed, would be raised up, again, on the third day. They had altered a word here and a word there, the mood of one verb and the form of another—and so they

made out our Lord to say what He never thought of.

Yet even on that charge they did not agree! One said one thing upon it and another said another, so that even this paltry accusation could not be brought against the Savior. Their patched-up falsehood was made of such rotten stuff that the pieces would not hold together! They were ready to swear to anything that came into their perjured imaginations, but they could not be gotten to swear, any two of them, to the same thing! Meanwhile the Lord Himself stands silent. Like the sheep before her shearers, He is dumb and opens not His mouth. And I suppose the reason was partly that He might fulfill the prophecy, partly because the grandeur of His soul could not stoop to contend with liars, but most of all because His innocence needed no defense!

He that is in some measure guilty, is eager to apologize and to extenuate—his excuses usually suggest, to men of experience, the belief that there may be some ground for the accusation. He that is perfectly innocent is in no haste to answer his slanderers, for they soon answer one another! Our Lord did not desire to get into a vain jangle with them and so to lead them on to utter still more falsehoods. If speech can do no good then, indeed, silence is wise! When the only result would have been to provoke His enemies to add to their iniquities, it was magnanimous compassion which led the slandered Savior to hold His tongue. We must not refrain from noticing the comfort which, in some degree, had been ministered to our Lord by the accusation which came most to the front. He stands there and He knows they are about to put Him to death, but they, themselves, remind Him that their power over Him has no longer lease than three days. And at the end of that short time He will be raised up again, no more to be at their disposal! His enemies reminded Him of the Resurrection! I say not that His memory was weak, or that He would possibly have forgotten it and His sorrows, but yet our Lord was human and modes of comfort which are valuable to us were also useful to Him. When the mind is tortured with malicious falsehoods and the whole man is tossed about by pains and griefs, it is good for us to be reminded of the consolations of God.

We read of some who were “tortured, not accepting deliverance,” and it was the hope of Resurrection which sustained them! Our Lord knew that His soul would not be left in the abodes of the dead and neither should His flesh see corruption—and the false witnesses brought this vividly before His mind. Now, indeed, could our Redeemer say, “Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up.” These ravens have brought the Savior bread and meat! In these dead lions our glorious Samson has found honey! Sustained by the joy that was set before Him, He despises the shame! Strange that out of the mouths of those who sought His blood there should come the memory of one of His greatest glories!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, here, again, we learn the same lesson as before, namely, let us gain meekness and by it our power to hold our tongues. Eloquence is difficult to acquire, but silence is far more difficult to practice. A man may much sooner learn to speak well than learn not to speak at all. We are in such a hurry to vindicate our own cause that we damage it by rash speech! If we were calm, gentle, quiet, forbearing as the Savior was, our pathway to victory would be much easier. Observe, again, the armor with which Christ was clad—see the invulnerable shield of

His holiness! His life was such that slander could not frame an accusation against Him which would last long enough to be repeated. So frail were the charges that, like bubbles, they vanished as soon as they saw the light! Our Lord's enemies were utterly baffled.

They hurled their darts against Him, but, as if they fell upon a shield of blazing diamond, every arrow was broken and consumed!

Learn, also, this other lesson that we must expect to be misrepresented. We may reckon that our words will have other meanings to ungracious ears than those which we intended. We may expect that when we teach one thing which is true, they will make us out to have stated another which is false. But let us not be overwhelmed by this fiery trial as though it were some strange thing! Our Lord and Master has endured it and the servants must not escape it! Therefore endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ and be not afraid! Amid the din of these lies and perjuries, I hear the still small voice of a Truth of God most precious, for like as Jesus stood for us at the bar and they could not cause an accusation to abide upon Him, so when we shall stand in Him at the Last Great Day, washed in His blood and covered with His righteousness, we, too, shall be clear!

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" If Satan should appear as the accuser of the Brethren, he will be met by the voice, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!" "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" Yes, Beloved, we, too, shall be cleared of slander. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! The glorious righteousness of Him who was falsely accused shall deliver the saints and all iniquity shall stop her mouth!

III. But I must not dwell too long even on such themes as these and, therefore, I pass on to THE PERSONAL INTERROGATION which followed upon the failure to bring forward witnesses. The High Priest, too indignant to sit still, rises and stands over the Prisoner like a lion roaring over his prey and begins to question Him again. It was an unrighteous thing to do. Should the judge who sits to administer law set himself to prove the prisoner guilty? Or, what is worse, shall he try to extort a confession from the accused which may be used against him? It was a tacit confession that Christ had been proven innocent up till then.

The High Priest would not have needed to draw something out of the accused One if there had been sufficient material against Him elsewhere. The trial had been a dead failure up to that point and he knew it! And he was red with rage.

Now he attempts to bully the Prisoner that he may extract some declaration from Him which may save all further trouble of witnesses and end the matter. The question was forced home by a solemn adjuration and it effected its purpose, for the Lord Jesus did speak, though He knew that He was, thereby, furnishing a weapon against Himself. He felt under bond to answer the High Priest of His people when He used such adjuration, evil man as that High Priest was. And He could not draw back from a charge so solemn lest He should seem, by His silence, to deny the truth upon which the salvation of the world is made to hinge.

So when the High Priest asked Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" How distinctly and outspoken was the Master's reply. Though He knew that His death would thus be compassed,

He witnessed a good confession. He plainly said, "I am," and then He added to that declaration, "You shall see the Son of Man"—so He brings out His humanity as well as His Deity—"sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of Heaven." What a majestic faith! It is wonderful to think that He should be so calm as to confront His mockers and assert His Glory while He was in the depths of shame! He did as good as say, "You sit as My judges, but I shall soon sit as your Judge! I seem to you to be an insignificant peasant, but I am the Son of the Blessed! You think that you will crush Me, but you never will, for I shall speedily sit at the right hand of the power of God and come in the clouds of Heaven."

He speaks boldly, as well became Him. I admire the meekness that could be silent. I admire the meekness that could speak gently, but I still wonder more at the meekness that could speak courageously and still be meek! Somehow or other, when we awaken ourselves to courage, we let in harshness in the same door, or if we shut out our anger, we are very apt to forget our firmness. Jesus never slays one virtue to make room for another. His Character is complete, full-orbed, perfect, whichever way we look at it. And surely, Brothers and Sisters, this must have brought another sweet consolation to our divine Master's heart. While smarting under that cruel blow; while writhing under those filthy accusations; while enduring such contradiction of sinners against Himself, He must have felt satisfied from within in the consciousness of

His Sonship and His power—and in the prospect of His Glory and triumph!

A well of water springs up within His soul as He foresees that He shall sit at the right hand of God and that He shall judge the quick and the dead and vindicate His redeemed. It is a wise thing to have these consolations always ready to hand. The enemy may not see their consolatory power, but we see it. To us, from beneath the altar, there issues forth a stream whose gentle flow supplies our spirits with a quiet gladness such as all earth's waters can never rival. Even now we also hear the Father say, "I am your shield and your exceeding great reward."

Notice, before we pass away from this point, that, practically, the trial and the interrogation ended in our Lord's being condemned because of His avowal of His Deity. They said, "You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned Him to be guilty of death."

I cannot make out at all those people who call themselves Unitarians and deny our Lord's Deity. Unitarians we also are, for we believe in one God, and only one God—but they tell us that this blessed Christ, our Master, is not God! And yet they admit that He was the most excellent of men, the most perfect of human beings! I cannot see it myself. He seems to me to be a blasphemer and nothing else, if He is not God—and the Jews evidently held that opinion and treated Him accordingly. If he had not said that God was His Father, they would not have been so enraged against Him. They put Him to death because of the assertion of His Deity—and the declaration that He would sit at the right hand of power and judge the world.

Today multitudes are willing to take Christ as a teacher, but they will not have Him as the Son of God. I do not doubt that the Christian religion might be received in many places if it were shorn of its Strength—if, in fact, its very soul and heart were torn out of it by setting forth Jesus as one of the Prophets and nothing

more. Hear how our wise men talk of Him as one of a line of great reformers, such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah—and they often add Confucius and Mohammed. Do we give place to this? No, not for an instant! He is verily the Son of the Blessed. He is Divine or false! The accusation of blasphemy must lie against Him if He is not the Son of the Highest!

IV. We must now pass on and linger for a second or two over THE CONDEMNATION. They condemned Him out of His own mouth—but this, while it wore the semblance of justice, was really unjust. The Prisoner at the bar has affirmed that He is the Son of God. Whatnext? May He not speak the truth? If it is the truth, He must not be condemned, but adored! Justice requires that an enquiry be made as to whether He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, or not. He has claimed to be the Messiah. Very well, all those in the court are expecting the Messiah—some of them expect Him to appear very speedily. May not this be the Sent One of the Lord? Let an enquiry be made into His claims! What is His lineage? Where was He born? Have any Prophets attested Him? Has He worked miracles? Some such enquiries are due to any man whose life is at stake! You cannot justly condemn a man to die without examining into the truth of his defense, for it may turn out that his statements are correct. But, no, they will not hear the Man they hate! The mere claim condemns Him—it is blasphemy and He must die. He says He is the Son of God. Come, then, Caiaphas and council, call for witnesses for the defense! Enquire whether blind eyes have been opened and the dead raised up! Ask whether He has worked miracles such as no man ever worked in the midst of Israel throughout all time! Why not do this? O no, He must be taken from prison and from judgment—and none shall declare His generation. The less enquiry the more easy to condemn Him unjustly!

He has said He is the Christ and the Son of God—He is therefore guilty of death. Alas, how many there are who condemn Christ's doctrine without making due enquiries into it—condemn it on the most trivial grounds! They come to hear a sermon and perhaps find fault with the mannerism of the preacher, as if that were sufficient reason for denying the Truth of God which he preaches! Or else they say, "This is so strange—we cannot believe it." Why not? Are not strange things sometimes true and is not many a truth wondrously strange until you get familiar with it? These men will not condescend to hear Christ's proof of claim—they will make no enquiry! In this, like the Jewish priests, they practically cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him!" He is condemned to die and the High Priest tears his clothes. I do not know whether he wore, at that time, the robes in which he ministered, but doubtless he wore some garb peculiar to his sacerdotal office—and this he tore. Oh, how significant! The house of Aaron and the tribe of Levi had their garments torn and the Temple, within a few hours, tore its veil from the top to the bottom—for priests and temple were, alike, abolished! They little knew it, but in all they did there was a singular significance—those torn garments were an index of the fact that now the Aaronic priesthood was forever torn—and the great Melchisedec priesthood had come in, for the true Melchisedec, then and there, stood before

them in all the majesty of His patience!

Observe that they were all agreed. There was no dissention—they had taken care, I have no doubt—not to let Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea know anything about this meeting of theirs. They held it in the night and they only rehearsed it in the early morning for the sake of keeping their old Rabbinical Law that they must try prisoners by daylight.

They hurried up the trial and any that might have spoken against their bloodthirsty sentence were kept out of the way.

The assembly was unanimous! Alas for the unanimity of ungodly hearts against Christ! It is amazing that there should be such quarrels among Christ's friends and such unity among His foes, when the point is to put Him to death! I never heard of quarrels among devils, nor did I ever read of sects or denominations in Hell—they are all one in their hatred of the Christ and of God! But here are we split up into sections and parties and often at war with one another. O Lord of Love, forgive us!

King of Concord, come and reign over us and bring us into a perfect unity around Yourself. The sentence was "death." I say nothing of it but this. Death was the sentence due to me, the sentence due to you—and they laid it upon our Substitute. "Worthy of death"—they said—all of them. All hands were held up. All voices said, "Yes, yes" to the verdict. Yet there was no fault in Him! Say rather, there was every excellence in Him! As I hear Jesus condemned to die, my soul falls at His feet and cries, "Blessed Lord, now have You taken my condemnation. There is, therefore, none for me. Now have You taken my cup of death to drink, and from now on it is dry to me. Glory be to Your blessed name, from now on and forever."

V. I am almost glad that my time is so far advanced, for I must set before you the fifth and most painful scene. No sooner have these evil men of the Sanhedrin pronounced Him guilty of death, than the servants, the guards and those that kept the High Priests' hall, eager to please their masters, and all touched with the same brute-like spirit which was in them, straightway began to abuse the Infinite Majesty of our Lord. Consider THE ABUSE. Let me read the words—"Some began to spit on Him." "Began to spit on Him!" Thus was contempt expressed more effectively than by words. Be astonished, O heavens, and be horribly afraid! His face is the Light of the universe! His Person is the Glory of Heaven—and they "began to spit on Him!"

'Alas, my God, that man should be so base! Some went further and they, "covered His face." It is an Eastern custom to cover the face of the condemned, as if they were not fit to see the light, nor fit to behold their fellow men. I know not whether, for this reason, or in pure mockery, they covered His face so that they could not see it, and He could not see them. How could they thus put out the sun and shut up bliss? Then when all was dark to Him, we read that they began to say, "Prophecy, Who is he that struck You?" Then another did the same and many were the cruel cuffs they laid about His blessed face. The mediaeval writers delighted to talk about the teeth that were broken, the bruises on the checks, the blood which flowed, the flesh that was bruised and blackened—but we dare not thus imagine.

Scripture has cast a veil and there let it abide. Yet it must have been an awful sight to see the Lord of Glory with His face stained by their accursed spit and bruised with their cruel fists. Here insult and cruelty were combined—ridicule of His prophetic

claims and dishonor to His Divine Person. Nothing was thought bad enough. They invented all they could of shame and scorn—and He stood patient—though a single flash of His eyes would have consumed them in a moment! Brothers, Sisters, this is what our sin deserved! A shameful thing are you, O Sin! You deserve to be spit upon! This is what sin is constantly doing to Christ! Whenever you and I sin, we do, as it were, spit in His face. We also hide His eyes by trying to forget that He sees us and we also hit Him whenever we transgress and grieve His Spirit.

Talk not of cruel Jews. Let us think of ourselves and let us be humbled by the thought! This is what the ungodly world is always doing to our blessed Master. They also would hide His eyes which are the Light of the world. They also despise His Gospel and spit upon it as an utterly worn out and worthless thing. They also do despite to the members of His body through His poor afflicted saints who have to bear slander and abuse for His dear sake. And yet over all this I seem to see a light most blessed. Christ must be spit upon, for He has taken our sin. Christ must be tortured, for He is standing in our place. Who is to be the executioner of all this grief? Who shall take upon himself the office of putting Christ to shame? Our redemption was being worked out this way—who shall be the judge to perform this miserable work?

Fling in the clusters richer than the grapes of Eshcol!

Fling them in, but who shall tread them out and laboriously extract the wine, the generous wine which cheers God and man? The feet shall be the willing feet of Christ's own adversaries—they shall extort from Him that which shall redeem us and destroy all evil! I rejoice to see Satan outwitted and his malice made to be the means of his own overthrow! He thinks to destroy Christ and by that deed he destroys himself!

He pulls down evil upon his own head and falls into the pit which he has dug. Thus shall all evil always work for the good of the Lord's people! Yes, their greatest good shall often come out of that which threatened their ruin and worked in them the utmost anguish. Three days must the Christ suffer and die and lie in the grave. But after that He must bruise the serpent's head and lead captivity captive! And that by the means of the very suffering and shame which He is now enduring! In the same manner shall it happen to His mystical body and Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly.

I leave this subject, hoping that you will pursue it in your meditations, Here are three observations. First, how ready should we be to bear slander and ridicule for Jesus' sake. Do not get into a huff and think it a bad thing that people should mock you. Who are you, dear Brothers and Sisters? Who are you? What can you be if compared with Christ? If they spat upon Him, why should they not spit upon you? If they buffeted Him, why should they not buffet you? Shall your Master have all the rough of it? Shall He have all the bitter and you all the sweet? A pretty soldier, you, to demand better fare than your Captain!

How earnestly, next, ought we to honor our dear Lord. If men were so eager to put Him to shame, let us be 10 times more earnest to bring Him glory! Is there anything we can do, today, by which He may be honored? Let us set about it! Can we make any sacrifice? Can we perform any difficult task which would glorify Him? Let us not deliberate, but at once do it with all our might! Let us be inventive in modes of glorifying Him, even as His

adversaries were ingenious in the methods of His shame. Lastly, how surely and how sweetly may all who believe in Him come and rest their souls in His hands. Surely know that He who suffered this, since He was verily the Son of the Blessed, must have ability to save us! Such griefs must be a full atonement for our transgressions! Glory be to God, that spit on His face means a clear, bright face for me! Those false accusations on His Character mean no condemnation for me! That putting Him to death proves the certainty of our text last Sunday morning, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life."

Let us sweetly rest in Jesus and if ever our faith is agitated, let us get away to the hall of Caiaphas and see the Just standing for the unjust, the Faultless One bearing condemnation for sinners! Let us, in the High Priest's hall, judge and condemn every sin and every doubt—and come forth glorying that the Christ has conquered for us—and that we now wait with delight for His appearing! God bless you, Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake. Amen.

"The Christian And The Law"

by Bro. Doyal Thomas

What is a Christian? What is meant by the term, "the law"?

A Christian is one who has been "born from above", (John 1:13), and has, by this transaction of God, been made to be a "new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17).

A Christian is a believer, or follower, and as such, has been rendered teachable by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit when He regenerated and made new that which had been slain by sin, and is responsible to so act in accordance with the new man that now exists and did not exist before.

It is acknowledged that one can indeed be a Christian, and yet lapse into a mode of conduct that is, to say the least, most unbecoming to the state into which he has been placed. Thus, a disobedient Christian is here in view; but still a Christian, and one who has subjected himself, or herself to the disapproving frown of our Holy God.

By the term, "the law", we mean, "That standard that God has declared to be the mark of acceptable behavior and conduct before Him, in holiness".

I would also remind myself, and you, that man has NEVER been allowed to be apart from the law of God, but has ALWAYS been responsible to his Maker to obey Him, and is fully accountable for every failure in doing so.

It was deliberate, pre-meditated rebellion that Adam exhibited when he chose to be with, that is, to be in harmony with his wife,

now deceived by Satan, in the Garden of Eden. He had been commanded to obey God, but he violated God's law, and the consequent penalty fell upon him. Was Adam free from the "law of God"? If he was, then why did the penalty come upon him? If he was not free from the "law of God", then it is EVIDENT why the penalty fell upon him.

In studying this stupendous subject, "The Christian and the Law", we will divide our examination into two parts. Part I will deal with the Christian and his responsible conduct toward God. Part II will deal with the Christian in his responsibility to the laws of the government under which he lives, before God.

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye, know what commandments we give you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." (I Thessalonians 4:1-7).

According to the teaching of Scripture, as set forth in the text of verse 4, specifically, as well as throughout all of Holy Writ, the Christian is to walk in a manner that is worthy of God who has called him to walk. Thus, the walk is to be both acceptable and pleasing to God. It is to God that man is responsible. There is not, nor can there be any other meaning of this Scripture. God's people are to walk before Him in an acceptable and pleasing manner.

We now pose four questions, which become the criteria by which we will ascertain the quality of our walk before God, as His professing, believing children. Everything that we do should allow us to answer in the affirmative each of these four questions.

- Is our walk God honoring?
- Is our walk Christ magnifying?
- Is our walk Holy Spirit sanctioned?
- Is our walk good for us?

IS OUR WALK GOD HONORING?

Our text has clearly enunciated the requirement that God has levied against us that our walk honor Him. Of this fact there can be no doubt. "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more" (I Thessalonians 4:1).

A careful exposition of this text, in the setting of the context that is established through verse 7 of this chapter will reveal some remarkably clear instructions, and any deviation from these plain teachings will, without fail, render the ones here addressed as "brethren" without excuse before God. There will be no possibility of misunderstanding, nor any violation of these directions acceptable to God who has commanded these things. And He has commanded. He has not presented an optional package from which "brethren" can pick and choose that which appeals to his or her personal, carnally influenced preferences.

Take note, "... ye have received ..." referring to instructions given in the form of commands. These commands are God given, and are so designed by Him as to produce "pleasing" to Him when obeyed and observed by those He addresses. In this case, "brethren", which I believe also implies "Christians". So, the commands are directed to Christians, for their instruction and obedience. Are Christians, in any way, at any time, free to disregard these commands? When? Under what circumstances?

Verse 7 of these texts declares that God has not called His people to a life, even temporarily or momentarily, to be lived in an unclean or impure manner. Rather, and quite contrary, the Christian has been called unto holiness. So, he is required to walk.

Peter, in his writings, was led by God to so teach as well. When you read the words that God the Holy Spirit "breathed" (theoneustos), you are reading the exact, specific, and unerring words that were directly sent forth from the mind and will of a Holy God. Note carefully what Peter said: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy; for I am holy." (I Peter 1:13-16).

In the heavenly scene described by the Apostle John, we read words that declare that God is holy, and that His creatures are to recognize Him as such, and are to honor Him because He is so. And they, being His creatures, must worship Him who is holy. "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." (Revelation 4:8)

God is holy. He is also just, and righteous, and merciful, and omniscient, and omnipotent ; and every other attribute by which He presents Himself. But he is essentially, eternally holy. Note: In this text, it was not said of Him that He is Omniscient,

omniscient, omniscient; nor that He is Omnipotent, omnipotent, omnipotent. BUT, that He is Holy, holy, holy.

And Peter had instructed believers, or Christians, to "be ye holy, for I am holy". Thus, without possibility of honest misunderstanding, God's people are taught to walk pleasing to Him, in all manner of conversation, striving to live a holy and honorable life. This kind of life is God honoring, and therefore is the answer to our first question as we, in this life seek to live qualitatively before Him.

Christian, you and I are enjoined to examine our walk, and to make self-judgement of that walk so as to put off those thoughts and actions that are motivated by self-will, and to put on those thoughts and actions that truly adorn us with that which is well pleasing in His sight. We are instructed to "walk in the Spirit", and the result is, you "shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh". (Galatians 5:16). For every moment that you are walking in the Spirit, for that same moment at least, you are not fulfilling the lust of the flesh. And as you seek His mercy and divine enablement to walk more pleasingly, you will indeed be experiencing His sanctifying power progressively leading you to become more and more pleasing and acceptable in your walk.

It is scripturally undeniable that when Christians walk as God commands them to walk, then they honor Him. Obedience on our part is what honors Him. As Christians, we are required to obey Him, and to so honor Him. Christians are without excuse when they do not so obey and so walk. And at the Bema of Christ, all these wayward excursions will be revealed, and there will be suffered loss of reward for the wood, hay, and stubble that was so produced.

Let me take a moment and tell you what responsibility really is in this matter. God, in His wondrous creative work has given us intellect, sensibility, and will. He has endowed us with the element known as conscience which is in man, the power of judgment. Conscience evaluates our acts and declares them to either conform, or not to conform to the law of God, as He made it known. Those acts that conform become obligatory. Those acts that do not conform are forbidden. What is responsibility then? To obey God so as to walk pleasing, or in conformity with the law of God. That is responsibility, and nothing short of that kind of a walk before God is acceptable to Him.

IS OUR WALK CHRIST MAGNIFYING?

Does the quality of the walk of a Christian magnify the Name, Person and work of God's Christ and our Saviour?

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus, praying to the Father said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the

earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word". (John 17:3-6).

Our dear Lord, as expressed here, has so wonderfully interceded with the Father in behalf of the elect, and His words are so very much instructive to us. Listen to Him! He says that He has manifested the Name of God before men. How did He do it? One way that stands out is this: He, though He were God, "... humbled Himself and became obedient, even unto the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8). By becoming obedient, Jesus Christ magnified God, the only Lawgiver, by becoming submissive to the Eternal Will by keeping the law of God, nothing lacking.

Do the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ kept the law of God? Listen to Isaiah as he speaks prophetically of the Lord's Messiah. "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable." (Isaiah 42:21). Isaiah is declaring (theoneustos) the LORD (Yahweh) is well pleased with the work and accomplishments of "His Righteousness". This is clearly a representation of the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ. And why is Yahweh well pleased? Here's why. His Righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ will "magnify the law, and make it honourable".

Did Christ accomplish this prophetic end? "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth". (Romans 10:4). All that the law of God demanded of men was met in the Person of Jesus Christ when He, in perfect obedience fulfilled all requirements, so that judicially speaking, the elect were successful in meeting these requirements, but in their Substitute, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Now, as a Christian, the obedience that Jesus accomplished is shown to be the expected conduct of each one that is found to be in Him. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:" (Philippians 2:5). Clearly, Christians are instructed to be obedient to the commands and instructions of God. And when this occurs, the Name, Person, and work of Jesus Christ is magnified in the life of that obedient child.

Would you magnify Him? Then walk in accordance with His ways and give heed to observe and do all that He has told you to observe and do. Would you bring to Him great glory, honor, and praise? Then walk in His precepts, principles, and ways. You can not honor Him while you walk contrary to His ways.

IS OUR WALK HOLY SPIRIT SANCTIONED?

When men act in accordance with the "lust of the flesh, the lust of

the eyes, and the pride of life", (I John 2:16) are they acting with Holy Spirit sanction? Obviously, they are not, for the Scriptures teach that these things are not of the Father, but of the world. And further, these things are condemned by God to pass away along with the world. There is no honor shown to Christ when this is the nature of the walk. Rather, great dishonor is shown by this mode of conduct.

This being established, we need to look at the manner of life that Jesus lived that brought forth the manifestly declared and displayed sanction of God the Holy Spirit. When we can ascertain from the Scriptures what things the Holy Spirit sanctioned in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can also see how we ought to live if we expect to receive the sanction of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Upon preparation arrangements that Jesus submitted to as He set out to enter public ministry (service), we see notable example in the book of Matthew. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him: And, lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17).

In this remarkable narrative, we can discern much spiritual truth, and thus, much spiritual instruction. Obedience is here taught. And Jesus Christ, God Himself, in His humanity is the Perfect Example of obedience and humility. When He said to John, "... for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness", He was declaring that servants must be motivated to walk pleasing to the Father. By submitting thusly, He did that which not only God the Father had directed, and then declared His satisfaction with the Son's performance, but that also which God, the Holy Spirit sanctioned. Witness the appearing of the Spirit of God in the form of the dove that descended and lighted on Him. Would God have sanctioned this act of perfect obedience had it not been an act of perfect obedience?

We also learn that the work that Jesus accomplished during His sojourn among men was always that which "pleased the Father" (John 8:29). In this same discourse, Jesus also said that the Father bears witness of Him. Likewise, He teaches us that the Holy Spirit never bears witness of Himself, but rather, the Holy Spirit always bears witness of the Son. (c.f. John 16:13-15).

When the Lord Jesus had fully kept the law of God, and had magnified it before men. He was then subjected to the greatest

passion that was ever, or shall ever be exhibited. He was brought under the judgment of lying, sinful men who brought all manner of false accusation against Him, and proceeded to crucify Him as a common criminal. And God permitted this to be so, for it was the eternal purpose of God that this innocent One would die in the room and in the stead of guilty, depraved, but elect sinners. And God, the Holy Spirit, in eternal covenant stipulation had fore sanctioned this awesome work.

But in addition to what God had permitted wicked men to purpose in their evil hearts to do, He had also determined that the perfect obedience that His Son had accomplished in keeping the law of God, magnifying it, and declaring it to be holy. He would also bring His holy, righteous judgment to bear upon His Son. Sin must be punished, and Jesus was now openly manifested, the Lamb of God. God would now, in His Person, punish sin to the full extent of divine justice.

When, therefore, the judgment and wrath of Holy God fell upon the Person of Holy God, it was still God, the Holy Spirit that sanctioned the death, and manifested that eternal propitiation had been extracted. He did this by raising from the dead the Lord Jesus Christ and openly putting Him on display before witnesses that it might be affirmed that God was satisfied. Praise the Lord, the Holy Spirit has sanctioned the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His keeping the law of God! It is done, and God has published abroad the purpose, intent, and result of it all. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." (I John 5:6-8).

IS OUR WALK GOOD FOR US?

My dear one, at every mention of those benefits that accrue to Christians, we have scriptural affirmation that it is and has always been in the best interest of God's elect that they walk pleasing with the stipulations of the law of God. Not a single instance can be found, and not a single suggestion contrary, can be produced that will indicate that it would be better for Christians if they did not walk according to the demands of the law of God.

Can you and I not come to the position that allows us to see that the only alternative to walking as a God fearing, law of God believing Christian is to walk as a complete and utter outlaw? Think of this. If you and I do not walk as an obedient child, being guided, led, and directed by the Holy Spirit into a manner of life that is lawful, then we are, without doubt, and outlaw. And this designation, "outlaw" is not too severe. If you and I are not a law-abiding person, then you and I are outlawed! What saith the

Scriptures? "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9).

Is our walk good for us? If one is born of God, then that one has the Spirit of God, and that one has the good benefits that come by and through the work of the Holy Spirit who is in that one. It is good for them then to walk in harmony with the leading and teachings of the Holy Spirit who guides and directs a life that is in keeping with the law of God.

On the other hand, if one is still unregenerate, then the Holy Spirit does not dwell within that one, and old things are still old things. Nothing is newly created, and consequently all thoughts, motives, and actions flow from the old fallen, sinful man. In this awful state and condition, nothing that comes forth is good for the individual so afflicted. Nothing good can come out of a cesspool of sin and corruption. From an evil heart still proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, blasphemies, etc. It is not good to be a dead sinner in whom there can be no steps taken that even resembles a lawful and pleasing walk before God.

But for the Christian, in whom God the Holy Spirit dwells, there is now godly, honorable motive that produces in the re-created being a walk in lawful pleasing. Admittedly, the walk is often times feeble and faulty, but nevertheless, it is a walk that is being more and more conformed to that perfect walk of accomplished sanctification that God has begun, and will most surely complete.

Remember, no man can keep the law that God wrote down and gave to Israel. That law does not give life, neither was it intended to give life. Rather, that law condemns men for not doing all that it demands of them. But Christ kept that law for us, and has placed us under the perfectly completed righteousness that He accomplished for us. And now He has insured that we be under the law of God to walk by the Spirit's leadership so as to exhibit and manifest that He has placed us there so that under leadership of the Holy Spirit we can be led to walk step by step in a way that will please God. Being His people, He enables us now to walk as He directs. And it is good for us to do so.

God said to Israel, as His representative people, "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee." (Psalms 128: 1,2). "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." (Proverbs 29:18).

And to the Lord's saints during the age of the New Testament Church, even now, He said, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,

righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:11-14).

And Peter wrote to present day saints and he said, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Peter 3:11-13).

What about Christians and the law?

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." (I Thessalonians 4:1).

Labor In Love: The Law

One thing that comes to my mind when I think of the word Order is "Law & Order" both the concept and the long running television series, so I was happy to correspond with Sis. Rhonda Gilbreath of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Decatur, AL on her work as a paralegal and Bro. Jacob West a member of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Northport, AL regarding working in the District Attorney's office.

Sis. Rhonda Gilbreath:

When did God save you and what did the LORD use to bring you to repentance and salvation?

"God saved my never-dying soul when I was 11 years old. My dad was in the Air Force, and so we moved around several times in my young life. We occasionally went to church but never settled into a church until we began actively attending an independent Baptist church in Texas when I was 8 years old. I had heard the gospel preached many times, but that particular day, I "heard" the gospel for the first time!"

How long have you been in your line of work? What first brought you to it?

"27 years ago, I started working for my first attorney. What began as a receptionist job turned into my "niche" – what I really enjoyed and wanted to continue doing. I learned more and more and continued to advance until I obtained my paralegal credential 12 years ago."

What kind of law firm do you work for?

"I have been employed at Lanier Ford Shaver & Payne (largest law firm in North Alabama) for 8 years. I work with 2 partners who are tax attorneys (1 is also a CPA) and who assist clients

with estate planning, probate, and State and Federal tax matters. We also handle corporate and non-profit matters, from entity formation to mergers and acquisitions. Other attorneys in the firm handle every legal aspect except domestic matter and criminal defense."

Is there much of a difference between being a secretary and being a paralegal?

"Sometimes the two job designations are interchangeable, but other times paralegals are assigned more complex tasks that require analysis of information, such as depositions, interviewing and prepping witnesses for trial, and organizing information into spreadsheets or timelines, and specific transactions, such as transfers of stock and bonds, drafting documents or pleadings for filing with the courts. I regularly write wills and trusts, prepare powers of attorney and health care directives for estate planning clients. I often prepare the required documents to probate estates in the Probate court. I also prepare corporate formation documents, as well as the appropriate State and Federal tax documents for new and existing entities."

Does your work environment provide opportunities to tell people about Jesus?

"While opportunities aren't present every day to witness, there are times those opportunities do come. I find many occasions to witness about the Lord and His grace, often during telephone conversations and especially when working with probate clients who are dealing with the death of a loved one. Opportunities do present themselves upon occasion when discussing estate planning matters, which sometimes involve making end-of-life decisions."

What have been your biggest challenges, spiritual or other wise, how do you over come those challenges?

"The biggest challenges come when clients, and many times co-workers, take the Lord's name in vain. So often, it is not considered appropriate or "politically correct" to correct these offending people. But I try to make a point of phrasing my responses so as to accentuate my reliance on God in my life. There is also an occasional challenge when incorrect or even illegal behavior is involved. Not to say I am always successful, I try to conduct my own behavior before whoever I come in contact with in such a way as to demonstrate my faith and trust in God."

How has God blessed you by providing this job?

"The most obvious blessing is a good pay check to help meet my family's needs. Another blessing of working for a large firm is the benefits we earn, such as vacations, paid holidays, personal time off, bonuses, company-provided insurance and the retirement and profit-sharing plan to prepare for the day when I can retire. (Yes, I think about it almost EVERY day!) There's also the blessing of the satisfaction of knowing that I have helped clients with resolving their problem or taking care of their needs. I have had many clients thank me (and be so grateful) for handling their matter in a way that made them feel comfortable."

Bro. Jacob West

Would you please share your testimony on how the LORD saved you?

"The LORD chose to save me at a very early age of 5 years old. I was living in Monks Corner, South Carolina and attending church where my Grandpa West was the pastor. I don't remember a lot about the day overall but I remember pretty clearly the moment I realized I was a child of God. Grandpa had just finished his sermon and had asked if there was anyone who felt like the LORD had saved them and if so to come forward. I remember feeling the tug to tell everyone I was saved, leaning over and whispering to my mom that I was saved then telling my dad. I then walked up to the front of the church and told my Grandpa what I told my parents. He asked me a few questions to be sure that I realized the magnitude of what I was saying. The church extended the hand of fellowship, then I was baptized a week later!"

When and how did you decide to go into the law?

"I think I was in 9th or 10th grade around the time I decided I wanted to pursue a law degree. I never really wavered about that decision until around the time I graduated undergrad and started preparing to apply to law schools. I still wanted to practice law but I also knew that practicing law was often very time consuming and could be a burden on life with your family. I've never wanted my job to take away from my family life and I was afraid being a lawyer would do that. At that time God had not brought my wonderful bride into my life, but I was already in my mid-twenties and in my mind the clock was ticking for having a family. I knew I'd have 3 years in law school then who knew what I'd have to do after that to be successful with my degree. I decided to just pray about it and let the LORD lead me. By the time I started receiving replies from my law school applications, God had given me peace about continuing my pursuit of a law degree so I moved forward in that peace."

Did you always intend to work in the District Attorney's office, what did it take to earn a place in the DA's office?

"I actually never really had intentions of working at the DA's office. My original plan was to go after a job in sports law or advocate for Christian rights. As I entered my final year of law school and started really looking into my options, I realized that both of those fields were extremely competitive and very hard to get into straight out of law school so I knew I should probably entertain other ideas. Admittedly, I could have made a better effort to find an opening in one of those areas but I know now that God had other plans for me. I had interned with the DA's office for two summers while in law school so I was already familiar with the job and the people there but there were no permanent positions available when I graduated. So at the time I took the BAR I had no real job opportunities. Long story short, God gave me a temporary job about two weeks after taking the

BAR at a commercial real estate firm in Tuscaloosa where I worked for about nine months. Toward the end of that tenure, a position opened up at the DA's office and I knew God was leading me there so I took the job."

I'm surprised Christian rights advocate is such a competitive field to get into. Can you elaborate on this, why is it competitive?

"I was shocked to find that out as well! It is competitive in a different way than you might think though. Whereas sports law is competitive because there are so many people who want to pursue a career in that field, positions at firms that concentrate on advocating for Christian rights are competitive because there are so few firms out there that are dedicated to that area of law. But, from my understanding, a position in those firms is highly sought after by Christian attorneys across the nation."

What are your primary responsibilities in the D.A. office?

"My responsibilities include a variety of things but I help in the prosecution of criminal cases, both misdemeanors and felonies, traffic cases, and child support cases. There is quite a bit that goes into that but in short, that is what I do."

Still being a young lawyer can you share any differences of what you learned in college and your experiences so far?

"The biggest difference between law school and my actual experiences so far is the practical side of the law. When you're in school, whether it's law school or studying for your finance or history degree, you primarily learn theory. You are learning what books say about your intended profession, but only on rare occasions do you actually get to practice what you are learning. It is not until you get out into the actual work force that you are really able practically apply what you have learned. That in itself has a steep learning curve and I have discovered that you do not really learn your profession until you actually start working. I have also found the blessing of having a good work environment and working with good Godly people. I am blessed to have that now, but prior to being hired at the DA's office I did not have that luxury. Work is much more enjoyable and peaceful when you share it with children of God."

You describe the D.A. Office as working with Godly people, are you able to talk with co-workers about the gospel and Biblical matters?

"The man I work for is a former Sovereign Grace Baptist preacher so we have Biblical discussions from time to time. The office is comprised of Christians primarily and honestly many of the people working in the court system here are Christians so I always feel like I'm able to speak freely about my faith."

What are some of the big differences between the reality of working for the D.A. and tv shows like Law & Order?

"I'd say one of the main differences is the drama you see played out in the courtroom on TV as opposed to real life. There are a lot of rules that we have to go by in court that kind of slow the process or minimize some of the dramatic effect you see on TV. There aren't really those moments where some case altering evidence is presented at the last moment in a trial that makes the whole courtroom gasp and the real criminal admits guilt on the stand. Also, 95% of the cases that we handle are settled based on a plea and never actually make it to trial."

Can you talk about any past cases you've worked on?

"The list of cases that I have worked on is vast in ways and very limited in ways. Most cases I handle are smaller profile cases like DUI's, small theft cases or semi-serious assault or domestic violence cases. I am not experienced enough yet to handle the higher profile cases as of yet although I help in the investigation and preliminary stuff with many of them. Generally though, my goal is to pursue what is best for the community, defendant, and victim if and when there is a victim. Justice is truly a double-edged sword many times. I don't know that I could really tell you of a case I've been a part of that would both be interesting and reader friendly. I would just say that there are many cases I see on a regular basis that breaks my heart for all involved. Victims, families of the victims, and the defendants in those cases all need prayer."

Politics and practicing law:

Have you ever had a case you believed the law was wrong, how did or would you handle that situation?

"As of right now I have not had to handle a case in which I believed the law was wrong. At the moment, there are very few cases that would pop up in Alabama, and more specifically in the small counties I work, which are criminal in nature that I disagree with off the top of my head. If one were to come to fruition, my response in such a situation would depend on many factors. If it was something that went directly against Scripture, then I feel my response would be to refuse to prosecute."

Do you support or oppose jury nullification?

"Tough question...as a general rule I would say I'm in favor of it. A jury's conscience in any particular case is so subjective to so many factors. A lot of times, their decision is based on less actual law and evidence and more their feelings/perception about the crime being prosecuted/the defendant being prosecuted/and/or the victim in the case. There are times when a jury can do what a DA cannot (or is not supposed to) and that is ignore the black letter of the law and base a decision strictly on their conscience. This can be a bad thing but it can also be a good thing."

Do you believe abortion will ever be completely outlawed in the U.S.? From a legal standpoint are there any measures in your state that are moving in that direction?

“Do I think abortion will ever be illegal? Honestly it's hard for me to believe it will. The Supreme Court's original interpretation of the law is wrong morally obviously, but also obsolete scientifically in my opinion. They reasoned that a child was not a "human" basically until the point where the fetus was viable, or able to exist independently from the womb. The point of viability for a fetus, with our vast improvements in the medical field, is far earlier now than it was those many years ago. Children are born and survive earlier in the pregnancy and there are children that are being aborted which could survive outside the womb. I would like to think that the law would start to revert based on this if nothing else, but instead I see new laws are being passed in states like NY where children can be aborted later in the pregnancy.”

Would you prosecute a woman for aborting her child?

“Absolutely if the law called for it. The punishment should probably vary depending on the circumstances in my opinion but as a general rule should fall under the same punishments as a state's murder laws.”

“I don't know of any current laws or actions that are being taken to combat abortion in Alabama, but there may be some that I am not aware of at the moment. I know Texas passed a law recently giving more rights to the child and less to the mother so there are some states out there that are actively trying to combat the issue.”

Sometimes abortionists such as Kermit Gosnell are tried for practicing abortion outside of the law, are mothers ever tried as well under current laws?

“I have never worked or been involved with a case like this and I'm not particularly familiar with the law surrounding it, but I know that prior to Roe v. Wade most States that made abortion illegal refused to prosecute the woman. The doctor who performed the abortion was prosecuted but not the woman.”

Alabama has a judge that gained notoriety a few years back for refusing to have the 10 commandments removed from his court room. Does the 10 commandments really have any bearing on our legal system or is it just a symbolic gesture?

“This could be a very involved question and answer if I let it be so I'll try to not ramble... Judge Moore is the judge you're referring to I believe. I think a simple answer to your question is yes to both. The 10 commandments, as well as many other laws which God gave to Israel, are strikingly similar to many laws which we follow in America both in the civil and criminal sectors. Honestly, God put a conscience in all of us which is a mirror of His law and all civilizations naturally have laws that mimic the 10 commandments. That being said, technically our laws did not come from the 10 commandments. They technically

grew primarily out of British law. As far as Judge Moore and his stance, I believe it was more symbolic and political than anything. I believe he was standing for a principle. But our Founding Fathers didn't take the 10 commandments and make them the center of our legal system.”

Scripture for both side: Sexual immorality

*"Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:
remove thy foot from evil."*

Proverbs 4:27

For Left:

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." I Corinthians 6:9&10

For the Right:

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." I Corinthians 6:11

**God's Word clearly states what is sin.
God's Word also clearly states their is
salvation to those who repent.**

**"And saying, Repent ye: for the
kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

Matthew 3:2

*“Nobody Believes In
Predestination
Anymore”*

by Bro. Curtis Pugh



justification: the judicial act of God in declaring the believer righteous. After justification comes glorification. Notice all these are in the past tense in Romans 8:30. The salvation of those predestinated is so sure that God views these persons as already glorified – i.e. they are in His mind and purpose already in possession of their eternal glorified bodies. The Bible says, **“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,”** (Acts 15:18). This is the God with whom we have to do. The teaching of predestination will promote the fear of the Lord and humility in those predestinated. But, alas, almost nobody believes in predestination anymore.

Baptist For Liberty website: <http://baptistsforliberty.weebly.com>
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A relative once asked this preacher about the differences between two Presbyterian groups. His answer mentioned that the two Presbyterian groups held somewhat different views of predestination. His relative's reply was, “Predestination! I didn't know anybody believes in predestination anymore!” This relative was an active member of long standing in a Protestant denomination. Perhaps because she never heard any teaching in her church on the subject, she thought that nobody in this modern era still believes in predestination. Actually, the truth of a thing does not depend on whether it is believed or not. The truth of a religious teaching depends on whether or not the Bible teaches it. Since the words “predestinate” and “predestinated” are found in the Bible, if you believe the Bible you must believe in predestination. The aforementioned words are found as follows: **“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren,”** (Romans 8:29). **“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified,”** (Romans 8:30). **“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,”** (Ephesians 1:5). **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,”** (Ephesians 1:11).

A careful reading of these four verses along with an examination of their context should convince any unprejudiced person that there is indeed such a thing as predestination. That predestination involves certain individuals is clear for it is **“whom he [God] did predestinate.”** That predestination took place sometime in the past is obvious. That predestination or pre-determination has been accomplished by the God **“who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,”** is stated. God accomplished this predestination **“according to the good pleasure of his will.”** It is sad that many professing Christians spend their time either in outright denial of the teaching of predestination or in trying to explain it away.

Predestination is the initial step in God's plan of salvation. Following predestination comes the effectual calling to Christ by which the lost sinner is brought to Christ. Next comes