

# March 2019

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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER  
THINGS**

are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely  
are of good report

PHILIPPIANS  
**4:8**

IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE  
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

"The church's absorption of the mores of the world does not alter the word of God. If wives would obey the Lord, they must be subject to their husbands as the Bible teaches" (Clinton Hamilton, **Truth Commentaries: 1 Peter**. 123)

(A friend and brother in Nigeria asked for the identities of our writers, so I have asked each writer to submit a brief autobiographical sketch. - KS)

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christistheway.com](http://christistheway.com).

## Questions from Nigeria

### Questions

1. Is it wrong for ministers to agree to visit a bereaved minister or the wife who lost her husband, mother, father and assist him or her? Is there any law that said it must be personal or visit individually?
2. 1 Cor.5:11, said we should not eat with a disfellowship brother/sister, what type of food is meant here, physical or spiritual (such as lords supper).

### Answers

(1) We should call on the bereaved for the purpose of providing what help and comfort we may (Romans 12:15; James 1:27). The passages do not specify whether a Christian does it by himself or with a group, so this is a matter of opinion. However, I will not call on a woman by myself, in order to protect my reputation and hers (Romans 12:17). I prefer to have my wife with me.

(2) The context of the passage that forbids us to eat with a Christian who has been disfellowshipped is social (1 Corinthians 5:11). We must not "keep company" ("associate" - **New American Standard Bible, English Standard Version**) with such a person. I believe Paul forbids us to associate socially with a

person from whom the church has withdrawn, not even to eat a common meal with that person.

### More Questions

- (1) Is it scripturally wrong for a Christian to celebrate birthday?
- (2) If not, Can a Christian bring his/her birthday cake to Church hall to share with other christians (not during worship)? Has that violated the holiness, (if any) of the church meeting hall.

### Answers

(1) The Connection between a birthday celebration and murder may be nothing more than an example of a joyous occasion being changed into tragedy by a sinful person. I believe Paul settles the matter in Romans 14:5: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." We should not keep special holy days (Galatians 4:9-11), but the secular remembrance of special days such as birthdays and national holidays is a liberty, something allowed but not required (1 Corinthians 8:8-9).

(2) The church hall, purchased with the money of the church, should be used for proper functions of the church, which are spiritual (Romans 14:17).

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## Abortion: Without Natural Affection

David Padfield | Zion, Illinois, USA

In the first chapter of Romans the apostle Paul listed the sins of the Gentiles. In this heinous list of crimes we find the phrase "without natural affection" (Romans 1:31, **KJV**). This refers to those who do not possess the love and attachment which nature teaches all mothers to have for their young.

*"This expression denotes the want of affectionate regard towards their children. The attachment of parents to children is one of the strongest in nature, and nothing can overcome it but the most confirmed and established wickedness. And yet the apostle charges on the heathen generally the want of this affection. He doubtless refers here to the practice so common among heathens of exposing their children, or putting them to death. This crime, so abhorrent to all the feelings of humanity, was common among the heathen, and is still. The Canaanites, we are told, (Psa. cvi. 37, 38) 'sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan.' Manasseh, among the Jews, imitated their example, and introduced the horrid custom of sacrificing children to Moloch, and set the example by offering his own, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. Among the ancient Persians it was a common custom to bury children alive. In most of the Grecian states, infanticide was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law" (Barnes' **Notes On The New Testament**).*

The practice of murdering small children was also common among the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Chinese and Hindus. The murder of children and the infirm is not isolated to antiquity. The Nazi Holocaust began with the elimination of almost 300,000 Aryan German citizens who were "defective." Before Hitler was finished, his Nazi machine had murdered six million Jews, plus another 6 million Gypsies, Poles and prisoners of war.

Any woman who could destroy the child within her womb would have to be judged as one "without natural affection." During the decade of fighting in Vietnam there were 58,655 American war casualties. Our country now kills more unborn babies than that every fifteen days. During the six major wars our country has fought (Revolutionary War, Civil War, WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam) we have sustained 1,160,591 casualties. Since abortion was legalized in this country in 1973, over 23 million unborn babies have been murdered by their mothers. The remains of these precious lives are destroyed in hospital incinerators or thrown into dumpsters behind the abortion mills. There is no national cemetery for the unborn, no flag draped coffins.

Abortion is sinful because it is the willful taking of human life. Under the Mosaic Law, God said, *"If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no lasting harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any lasting harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe"* (Exodus 21:22-25). If the accidental interruption of a pregnancy was to be punished, what about the one who deliberately murders the unborn?

The Psalmist David thought of himself as being alive while in his mother's womb. *"For You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth"* (Psalms 139:13-16). Though his body was not totally developed, David affirmed that the Lord knew him! The only real difference between an unborn child and a newborn baby is the way they feed and obtain oxygen.

People often ask what the mother should do if she knows the child will have birth defects. I remind them that no test is 100% accurate, and no child is 100% perfect! I get upset when abortionists tell me that life is not worth living if you have a handicap. As the father of a child born with multiple birth defects, I believe I have the right to exhibit a little righteous indignation.

Our oldest son, Daniel, was born about three months premature and weighed a little over three pounds. He was born a "blue baby" (i.e., not breathing). The doctor who delivered Daniel decided not to resuscitate him, but to let him die. The anesthetist in the delivery room, one of the deacons from church, insisted that the doctor revive our son. For this we will be eternally grateful. Though Daniel is deaf and partially blind, he is a wonderful son who enjoys life, and he made his parents very proud when he achieved the honor roll at school.

Some parents have told me they wished their children would have never been born. I have never heard this from the parent of a handicapped child, and I know a lot of them. In fact, these parents are the most militant anti-abortionists I have ever met. They believe life is worth living, even with physical impairments.

Though the Bible does not give an example of someone who aborted their child, it does tell us about an "unwanted" pregnancy: the case of David and Bathsheba (1 Samuel 11 and 12). David, the king of Israel, coveted his neighbor's wife, stole her from her husband and committed adultery with her. To avoid the embarrassment of an illegitimate child, David murdered Uriah the Hittite. David's solution to his problem was the same as many fornicators today: kill the innocent to protect the guilty!

According to **Editorial Research Reports** (1987, Vol. II, p. 537), 81.3% of all abortions are performed on unmarried women. This means that four out of five times the baby is murdered to hide the sin of its parents!

The Bible says the "way of the transgressor is hard" (Proverbs 13:5, **KJV**). Picture a young woman in her final year of college finding out that she is pregnant. Her plans for the future will be ruined if she has the child, so she decides to have it killed. Then later in life, she often cries herself to sleep while thinking of the child that might have been. Yes, the way of the transgressor is hard.

Abortion is no worse than the other sins listed in Romans 1:26-32. All sin is terrible. But, thanks be to God, there is a remedy: repentance. David spoke of it so eloquently in the 51st Psalm when he prayed, *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners*

*shall be converted to You."*

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## **ABOUT DAVID PADFIELD**

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The Eastside Church of Christ in Bowling Green, Kentucky, allowed David to begin his life of ministry under the guidance and teaching of O. G. Simmons and Julian Cash, the elders of the congregation.

In 1981 Norbert Maudlin and Gene McNabb, the elders of the Northwest Church of Christ in Evansville, Indiana, allowed David to work with them and gave him the opportunity to develop his skills in preaching, writing, and debating. After five years at the Northwest congregation, he helped to establish a new group on the east side of Evansville, and Harry Lewis came to work with the Northwest congregation. David and Harry worked together on a weekly call-in radio program for seven years.

In 1993 the Padfields moved to Zion, Illinois to work with the Lewis Avenue congregation, where the brethren encouraged him to spend more time in the writing of Bible class literature and study guides. These books are used by brethren around the world and have been translated into many foreign languages and are distributed at no charge to those who want to study the Scriptures. The brethren in Zion have also been very gracious by giving David the time off to do research in the Bible lands.

Over the years Padfield has engaged in numerous public debates on a wide variety of topics. He has also authored several hundred church bulletin articles on Bible topics and has written class books and Bible study guides on nearly every book of the Bible (both Old Testament and New Testament class books are available for you to download for free). His trips to Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Greece, Italy, and Egypt have made it possible to post a large number of photographs of the Bible lands on this website. These photos are often used in college textbooks and other publications around the world.

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## **The Disobedience of Saul**

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

When the children of Israel left Egypt and were on their onward journey to the promised land, the Amalekites came "and fought with Israel in Rephidim" (Exodus 17:8). Because of this, the Lord declared He was going to "utterly put off the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven" (Exodus 17:14). He even swore to that effect (Verse 16; See also Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

One of the amazing things about God is that He neither forgets nor finds Himself unable to carry out any of His promises. He has promised to punish the wicked with unquenchable fire, everlasting destruction (Matthew 25:46). And it will be so some day! It is His promise that the righteous will be rewarded with eternal rest when Christ appears the second time (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). He has not forgotten that promise. Whenever He is ready for that great event, our God will bring it to pass!

After several years when Israel had become a nation with Saul as its king, the Lord was ready to deal with the Amalekites and Saul was going to be the human instrument. The Lord commanded Saul: "Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass" (1 Samuel 15:3). These are very clear, unambiguous terms. Indeed, the command of God to Saul couldn't just be misunderstood!

But what did Saul do? "Saul smote the Amalekites from Havillah until thou comest to Shur, that is over Egypt" (1 Samuel 15:7). However he "spared Agag and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly" (Verse 9). Saul was thoroughly satisfied with what he did. He was to go, and he went! He was to smite, and he smote the Amalekites! What else? As a matter of fact, Saul gleefully told Samuel when he came to him, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord"

(Verse 13).

Nevertheless, the Lord said, No! Since Saul did not carry out a scorched earth devastation of the Amalekites, God said “he is turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments (Verses 11-12). The end result was that Saul was rejected as king over Israel (1 Samuel 15:23).

One of the lessons we can learn from this episode is that partial obedience, as far as God is concerned, is tantamount to total disobedience! We are saved not by doing part of God’s Word but “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Paul was pure from the blood of all men because He declared the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

We are commanded, for instance, to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Often we point to our denominational friends that they are not worshiping in truth as they do things that are contrary to God’s Word which is the truth (John 17:17). That is true and correct! But when we who have the truth fail to worship in spirit, that is, with our whole heart, are we worshiping God acceptably? Consider the number of people who, like Eutychus (Acts 20:9) sleep off during services. What about those who write and read notes while the Lord’s Supper is being served? Some engage in side talks so much so that they distract the attention of other worshipers. It is good to worship God. But when we do so with idols in our hearts, the Lord says He is going to answer us accordingly (Ezekiel 14:3-4).

We are commanded to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). If we speak the truth but not in love; or we are so “loving” that we fail to speak the truth, in what way are we better off than Saul?

As we strive, we must do so lawfully (2 Timothy 2:5). But if in our obsession for the numerical growth of the church we resort to levying local churches to fund state-wide radio broadcast or TV, are we not following the example of Saul’s disobedience?

At the end, Saul was rejected. Similarly Christ says He is going to reject many people who have iniquitously done so many things in His name ((Matthew 7:21-23).

Let us endeavor to abide by every word of the Lord. And remember that “whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God ...” ( 2 John 9-11).

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## Why Do We Need Church Creeds? (2)

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

I do not claim that every false teacher is deliberately teaching false doctrine. I believe that some are, who are using their position to enrich themselves. But there are those who are simply mistaken in their understanding of the Scriptures or have been deceived. Consider a preacher named Apollos. He was a great preacher, but he was mistaken.

*“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:24-26).*

This man was mistaken in his understanding of the Scripture, and was not teaching the whole truth. But what a great and honest heart he had when corrected by this godly couple. I wish those preachers who were mistaken that I have tried to talk to had that same attitude. I remember some years ago when I was living in New Mexico there was a young Baptist preacher who lived across the street from me. We got to know each other, and one day I went to his house to see if we could sit down together for a Bible study. He told me he knew what I believed, and had no interest in studying with me. I said, “Would you answer one

question for me?" He agreed. I asked him, "Do you believe that we are saved by faith only?" He said he did. Then I opened my Bible to James 2:24 and asked him to read it. "You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone."

After reading it, he slammed my Bible shut and said, "That's not the kind of God I serve." He then walked away. Closed Bible, closed mind. As my father would say, his mind was like concrete, all mixed up and permanently set. If my memory is correct, he admitted he had never read that passage, and did not know it was in the Bible. But his mind was already set in concrete.

Now, back to the creed books. Why do we need them? There were no such official doctrinal statements other than the inspired Scriptures for hundreds of years after the establishment of the Lord's church in the 1st Century. God's revelation was completed then, and he has given no new doctrines, and has given no changes. If God thought that was good enough then, why isn't it good enough for us now?

Consider a statement in Jude 3:

*"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."*

The gospel, the system of faith, has been given once for all the saints and once for all time. No new revelations, no additions, no subtractions, no changes.

Christ told the disciples that all truth would be revealed to them.

*"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."* (John 16:12-13)

If that promise was kept, then there is no new truth that has been revealed after the 1st century. Anyone who claims to have a new truth or revelation is just a false teacher, a deceiver, a minister of Satan, whether deliberately or mistakenly. Consider what John wrote in Revelation 22:18-19:

*"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."*

God's Word has always been sufficient, and even Moses was warned not to tamper with it. "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

I have heard the statement that if the Bible had been written today, there would be some changes made, as some want to allow homosexual behavior to be approved, or for women to become pastors. But such thoughts are claiming that God didn't have the power to look into the future and see the changes that would come in society. That would be considered as blasphemy, in that it is saying that God is not all-seeing and all-powerful.

Consider the apostle Peter's words in I Peter 1:23-25:

*"for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God. For, **'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord abides forever.'** And this is the word which was preached to you."*

Were there other doctrines, other gospels and creeds of men present in the early church, in the first

century? Certainly so. And Paul dealt with that in strong words to the churches of Galatia:

*"I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed"* (Galatians 1:6-9).

John dealt with the same problem in 2 John 1:9-10:

*"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into [your] house, and do not give him a greeting."*

Good reader, we have what God has given us—the Scriptures. God said they were sufficient for us. God said we must not add to, subtract from or change in any way. The creeds, catechisms, manuals and doctrines of men do all of that. If we want to please God and be found faithful to His Word at the end, we need to throw away all of the creeds, catechisms, manuals and doctrines of men and come back to God's divine Word—the Bible.

*"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

If it is true that the Scripture is adequate, and can furnish us unto every good work, then why do we need the creeds of men? If they are needed, then why didn't the Lord provide for them in his teaching?

That passage in Second Timothy three is in absolute and direct contradiction to a statement in one of the Jehovah's Witnesses publications, The Watchtower:

*"2. '...people cannot see the Divine Plan in studying the Bible by itself...if he then lays them [Scripture Studies] aside and ignores them and goes to the bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the Scripture Studies with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures"* (The Watchtower, Sept. 15, 1910, p. 298).

Notice that they claim one cannot understand God's plan without their "Scripture Studies." That means that for over 1,800 years since Pentecost, there was no understanding of truth until the 1800s when Charles Russell founded the Jehovah's Witness movement. Who can believe it? If the creeds agree with the Bible, then we don't need them. But if they disagree with the Bible, then we still don't need them. (To be continued)

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**ABOUT JEFFERSON DAVID TANT**  
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I am the 3rd generation of Tant preachers, beginning with my grandfather, J. D. Tant, born 1861. He was well-known as a pioneer preacher, and engaged in some 300 debates. My father was Yater Tant, also a well-known preacher and editor of two religious journals--the Gospel Guardian and Vanguard. After beginning preaching in my teens, I have worked with 5 churches, from Pushmataha County, OK (Chocktaw Indian territory) to Portales, NM, to the Atlanta area with three churches, Snapfinger Road, Embury Hills, and Roswell. We helped found the new work in Roswell in 1974, and continue there to date. My wife, Flora, and I have been privileged to do mission work in Jamaica beginning in 1987, and in Malaysia and the Philippines since 1997, as well as a few nations in Africa and Europe. God has blessed us with good

health, 5 children, 17 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

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## Let's Take A Walk, Ephesians 5:1-2

Patrick Farish | Wauxahatchie, Texas, USA

The words sprint, dash, job, trot, compare with the world "walk" as the speedy hare with the plodding tortoise. These words speak of greater-than-normal exertion, because "in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24). As the tortoise came on to beat the hare, so the one who walks "in love" will in fact be victorious in the pursuit of life eternal.

"Walk" is used in the Bible to (1) indicate normal moving around. This is the sense of the word used when Jesus was coming to the disciples (Matthew 14:25ff). When Paul tells the Ephesians to walk in love, and as children of light (5:8), "walk" refers (2) to the journey of life. On this journey, how are we to walk? We begin with the passage just cited: we must walk in love. If we truly walk in love we will obey Him; "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3).

If we walk in love of God, our walk with our fellow man is natural. So Paul writes, "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

We "walk ... according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4). Those who walk according to the Spirit arrange their lives as the Spirit directs, because "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

There is a choice we must make, between flesh and spirit - Romans 8:5-8:

*"For those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."*

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Understanding "walking in the light" is helped by considering walking in darkness. One does not have to do only sin, to be walking in darkness; he is just indifferent to the light, walking (living) as it suits him; and occasionally, maybe accidentally, doing something good.

By the same token, one does not have to be sinless to be walking in the light – his aim and preference is to be obeying God, and when he stumbles, if he repents and confesses his sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses him. People who are "in the light" are already acquainted with the blood of Jesus. There is no forgiveness of sins "without the shedding of blood" (Hebrews 9:22), but "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). The writer of Hebrews talks about the impossibility of goats' and bulls' blood for purification of the flesh, and then asks, "how much more will the blood of Christ, who though the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:13-14). The blood of Christ is the price of forgiveness for every sinner. It is therefore the price for forgiveness for a straying Christian.

This is what John is saying, in First John 1:7. We must watch where we walk. "Blessed is the man, who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly ...".

We should walk in "good works" (Ephesians 2:10), "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Do some have the idea that being a Christian simply requires abstaining from that which is evil, with no concern about doing good? When Scripture says we are created in Christ Jesus for good works? Jesus called us the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world", and said "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).



We read about the urgency of doing “good works” in Hebrews 10:24-25: “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ...”. Here is instruction looking squarely at our duty for good works, and for assembling with brethren to encourage them to good works. Good works include everything we may do, for our neighbor or our brother; Jesus said “And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).

Saints fail in their reason for being if they neglect this responsibility for which they were created in Christ Jesus.

We must “walk in wisdom” in our dealings with those who are not in Christ (Colossians 4:5-6; Ephesians 5:15-17). Carelessness in word or deed may slam a door that could have been opened. We need to give thought to know how to answer each person. Speaking “the truth in love” does not look at the message, the message is always to be “the truth.” Speaking the truth in love looks at the messenger, and his attitude and handling of the word, to speak that word in the most effective way possible.

**“Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”**

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**ABOUT PATRICK FARISH**  
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Patrick Farish was born July 20, 1936 in Columbus, Mississippi to Robert and Virginia Farish (the first and best looking of four sons). His father was a gospel preacher; his mother a sweet homemaker.

Farish preached his first sermon when he was eighteen years old; went into local work, in Concord, North Carolina in 1960. He married Frances Torricelli that year, on May 27. He attended Florida College, and graduated from the University of Corpus Christi in 1965. Frances and Pat moved to Corpus Christi Texas in 1962, then to Fort Worth, Mount Pleasant, Lancaster and Stephenville – all in Texas -- before returning to Lancaster in 2007, where he retired from local work in 2017.

They have three children: Sharon, Rob, and Scott; and five grandchildren: Patrick, Bradley, Makala, Danielle and Aidan.

He preached in meetings in the States, and in Germany, Ethiopia and the U. S. Virgin Islands. A significant part of his work has been writing. He was editor of *With All Boldness*, a monthly magazine. He wrote for several periodicals and is now writing an article each month for distribution by e-mail.

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## **Preach The Man, Not The Plan (4)**

Tommy J. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

After writing and posting the last article on Facebook as I do each week, I received a post back from a reader, asking a couple of questions about whether we put too much emphasis on doctrinal preaching. His questions made me realize I needed to clarify some things about gospel/doctrinal preaching. Before I print his questions, and my reply, I will first explain why preaching the gospel of Christ is also teaching the doctrine of Christ.

Preaching the gospel of Christ and teaching the doctrine of Christ is really doing the same thing. When you look up the definition of “gospel” and “doctrine” in Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament words, “gospel” is defined as the good news of the foundation facts of Christianity, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and doctrine is the interpretation of the facts of the gospel. Preaching the gospel is proclaiming the good news and teaching the doctrine is explaining what the facts mean. Both involve telling or teaching about Jesus and what He taught. You cannot logically separate

preaching the truth about Jesus while ignoring what He taught (His doctrine). As He said, "why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46)

Now to the readers' inquiry. "Tommy, I was wondering your thoughts. Because of the issue you reference: have we focused too much on doctrine that we neglect the spiritual? On the surface, the issue would be NOT preaching both "Jesus and Doctrine." Matt.23:23, weightier: justice, mercy and faithfulness. Gal.5 works of flesh and spirit. Here in \_\_\_\_\_ our studies have taken me through Gal.5 and I wonder if I just have not paid attention to preaching or do we spend infinitely more time on doctrine and not much on the "weightier" matters. See also Heb.5-6; 2.Pet.1:5-11 (lacking these are blind). Not that doctrine is not important, but how much weightier are the spiritual. Gal.5 really rebukes much of what I have personally seen over the years in the church. By no means do I mean this as a criticism, just curious as to your thoughts. Gal.5 makes me realize how weak "we" have been or in reality how weak "we" are as Christians.

My reply. "\_\_\_\_\_, you have hit on a good point, and it will be the one I will be covering in my lessons. I should have, at the very beginning of my series, explained that the word "doctrine" basically means teaching. And as Jesus pointed out in Matthew 23:23-24, many accept the easier teaching (who Jesus is), while neglecting the weightier matters (His more in depth doctrine, teaching). This has been a problem in so many places that people only skim the surface (the easy part) of a doctrine (teaching), but miss the deeper, more spiritual meaning underneath, that of properly applying the doctrine (teaching) to daily life. They remain in shallow water and never develop as they should, spiritually, because they haven't grasped the commitment that comes when one accepts and obeys the doctrine (teaching). This is what is condemned in Hebrews 5:12-14. They haven't grown up.

I wrote some things to illustrate what I replied to him. Since I wrote the reply in haste, and having a week to think about it, I am rewriting my reply, incorporating some new thoughts into what I wrote.

When one really believes the gospel of Christ (having heard the facts of what Jesus the Man did), one will submit to being baptized for remission of sins. But why would he do so? How did he come to realize he was a sinner who needed to have his sins forgiven? How did he learn that this could happen if he was baptized? By the facts about Jesus? No! Because he was also taught the doctrine of Jesus (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). Baptism is the doctrine Jesus taught. Remember, the gospel and doctrine go together. The gospel proclaims the good news, and teaching His doctrine is the interpretation and explanation of what the facts mean.

The problem today, as the reader noted, is that many people in being baptized (the easy part) do not fully comprehend the weightier matter (the deeper part) of what it means to submit to Jesus' command to be baptized. One who truly believes in Christ, and submits to baptism, knows that he/she is making a lifetime commitment by becoming a new creation, raised from the water to live a transformed life as taught in Romans 6:3-6. The person knows that really believing in Jesus Christ the Man, includes much more than just acknowledging Jesus as Lord and Christ. Many Jewish rulers "believed in Him" (the man), but would not accept His plan (the call to follow Him; John 12:42-43). Real belief means submission to His plan. Real disciples follow their Master's teaching (Luke 9:23). So one who truly believes submits to His doctrine (plan) on baptism, not to get wet, but to make a commitment to fully follow Him, not just in word, but in action (Romans 12:1-2). He offers his life in sacrificial service to the Master. The disciple's life is no longer his own, he now belongs to His Teacher, the Master (Galatians 2:20). The disciple's life is under the control of the Teacher he now believes in. He trusts the Master to direct his steps. The teacher's will (doctrine, teaching) comes first in everything (Matthew 6:33). Real belief draws "near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22). Can't you see how entwined Jesus' doctrine (the plan) is in the proclamation of the gospel (the man). There is no way you can scripturally separate the two. When a preacher properly understands and applies gospel and doctrine, he can say with all honesty, "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). And when the hearers accept and properly apply what has been heard, they will have been actually taught both gospel and doctrine.

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## ABOUT TOMMY THORNHILL

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This is Tommy Thornhill. There is nothing outstanding about me. Just a Christian since I was a teenager. I am a first generation preacher, who has been preaching since May 1965. Most of my work has been with small or country congregations. The first three while either going to school or working at secular jobs. At Sweetwater (a rural group, now disbanded) near Arcadia FL (1955-56). Cedar Key (fishing village in N FL (1956-57), Williston FL (1957-58). I began full time work at Spring Warrior a rural area near Perry FL (1958-1963), Trenton FL (1963-64), MacDill Ave, Tampa FL (1964-1966), (mission work in Norway for 1966-71). Antioch at Thonotosassa near Tampa FL (1971-73). Flomich Ave, Holly Hill, FL (suburb of Daytona Beach 1973-1980) to 65th St., Little Rock AR (1980-82. Jacksonville AR (1983-1989, back to MacDill Ave, Tampa (1989-92), Lake Wales, FL (my home county where I was raised-1993-1999). Buckhorn (rural church near Pontotoc MS 1999-2012). Presently at Etna (rural church near Ozark AR) 2012-present.

I have managed to raise three children who are faithful in serving the Lord. My daughter married a preacher, and their daughter in turn married a preacher laboring in Odessa TX. My oldest son is a preacher and has been in CA for 26 years. His older son does some preaching when asked, leads song leading, his youngest son is a preacher, now laboring at Johnson City TN.

Of our 5 grandchildren, 4 are Christians, and the 5th one has difficulty comprehending some things. Our 4 great grandchildren are not yet old enough to become Christians.

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## "Do Not Lose Heart"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

We find the Greek word *"ekkakeō"* used six times in the Bible (Luke 18:1; 2 Corinthians 4:1,16; Galatians 6:9; Ephesians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:13). Four times it is translated do not "lose heart" and twice we are told not to "grow weary" in the **New King James Version**. This word is defined as "To turn out to be a coward, to lose one's courage. In the NT, generally, to be fainthearted, to faint or despond in view of trial, difficulty. Intrans. (2 Cor. 4:1, 16; Eph. 3:13). In the sense of to be remiss or slothful in duty (Luke 18:1; Gal. 6:9; 2 Thess. 3:13)" (**Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament**).

As we read these verses there are some things pointed out to us that can cause one to "lose heart." Care must be taken so our faith in the Lord is not destroyed nor do we become unfaithful in serving Him. There are several things mentioned in the text around these passages which are preventive, helping us to avoid growing weary.

Paul said, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). All the hardships the apostle had faced along with his age were now taking its toll on his body. As we grow older, the days are more difficult, tasks which were once easy to do now become such a chore. The strength and vigor that once filled our bodies have now disappeared and have been replaced with aches and pains. Our mental alertness has grown dull and our ability to remember is slowly fading away. It would be easy for one to lose heart while dealing with such problems.

When writing to those at Ephesus, this apostle said, "Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory" (Ephesians 3:13). One's emotions can certainly be stirred by seeing the sufferings of others, especially when it is one they love and care for very deeply. This man was being afflicted for them. Can you name a family that at some point in their lives have not had to deal with some tragedy? Such can be a challenge to one's loyalty to God.

We are warned, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not

lose heart” (Galatians 6:9). Why would one grow weary while doing good? Is it because he does not reap immediately what he had sown? Maybe it is because he thinks his harvest is not nearly what it should be in comparison to the effort put forth. The thoughts of some are on the physical and not the spiritual rewards of such a life. Whatever the reason the apostle understood the possibility of losing heart.

How can I prevent this from happening to me? One thing I can do is to focus on heaven. Paul knew the outward man was perishing, yet notice what he did, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthian 4:17-18). Recently we had a singing and one of the older members whose health is failing and mind slowly diminishing, requested that we sing “No Tears In Heaven.” Never lose sight of where the faithful are going and the reward awaiting us, eternal life (Galatians 6:8).

Secondly, what Paul did in mentioning the tribulations he was dealing with to those at Ephesus, he told them it was for their sakes (Ephesians 3:13). He wasn’t giving up, and he encouraged them not to lose heart as well. In the next chapter he said, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29). Words of encouragement from others can make a difference in the lives of Christians. Pay close attention to your fellow-servants. When you see someone struggling, offer words of encouragement and edification, gently reminding them of your love for them and the blessings promised by the Father to those who remain faithful.

Thirdly, we need to pray. Luke says, “Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). This earthly story with a heavenly meaning is stated with its explanation in verses 2-8. We refer to it as the Parable of The Unjust Judge. The Lord can provide the needed help and strength when troubling times are upon us. Peter said, “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7). May the Lord our God help us, so we never give up; never lose heart; never become weary while serving Him.

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**ABOUT JIM MICKELLS**  
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I was born in Whitwell, Tennessee in 1951, a small coal-mining town. My dad and both granddads were coal miners. We moved to Shelbyville, Tennessee in the 1960's, where my sister meet and married a young man who was a Christian. They taught my wife and me the gospel, and in 1974 we were baptized into Christ. Six years later I began preaching the gospel, working with a small church in Chapel Hill. Since then I have worked with the Hillview church in Nashville, the Westwood church in Tullahoma, and am now working with the Hickory Heights church in Lewisburg, all in Tennessee. My wife Sylvia and I will celebrate our 50th anniversary a little later this year, Lord willing. We have one son, Marshall, who is married to Leah and they have given us three beautiful grandchildren, Canaan (9), Rylann (6) and Hadley (2).

- Jim Mickells

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## **Let the Dead Bury the Dead**

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

There are times when Jesus' teaching appeared heartless and uncompassionate yet were filled with love and profound insight. This was the case when He responded to a man who asked for permission to go bury his father. Jesus said, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead” (Matthew 8:22). What did our Lord imply in that statement?

Obviously, Jesus neither forbade funerals nor did He consider it a loss of faith to mourn the passing of a

loved one. One of the most popular verses in the Bible is “Jesus wept” (John 11:35), which occurred when His friend Lazarus died. Lazarus’ sister, Mary, was having an especially hard time, which “when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled” (verse 33). The Son of Man was (and still is) moved with compassion by the suffering and emptiness that death brings us.

The point Jesus was making regarding burying the dead was that nothing is to come before following Him, not even human relationships. It is likely the man’s father had not yet died, but would eventually, and the man was putting off following Jesus until that occurred. If so, it shows how people will let the slightest excuse keep them from obeying Jesus. There is always one more thing to do before giving their lives to the Lord; always one more matter to take care of before becoming a faithful Christian. “I’ll go back to church when I don’t have to care for my family.” “I’ll put the Lord first when I am older.” “I’ll obey the gospel after I quit this job.” “I’ll start studying the Bible again after ball season.” On and on the excuses flow, but that “day” of obedience never comes. There is always something more important coming up. Furthermore, they have convinced themselves that intending to serve God is just as good as actually serving Him, which is a lie. The prophet Samuel made that clear when he told a disobedient king (who thought he could disobey God as long as he made up for it in valuable offerings), “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

The sad reality is most people are dead spiritually and will remain that way forever, which is why Jesus said to let the dead bury the dead. They are “dead” while they live because of their devotion to sinful pleasure (1 Timothy 5:6). Consequently, everything they do in life, even as profound as burying a loved one, is of little significance and value. All of those “important” matters that had to be done will evaporate into oblivion when compared to eternity. Or as Jesus asked, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36) Unfortunately, most people will not realize that truth until they depart from this life – when it is too late to change (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Dear friend, be wise and find spiritual life today while you still “walk before the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 116:9). The day is coming when your time to repent will be taken from you. If you have not obeyed the gospel, you are still in sin and separated from Him (Acts 2:36-41). If you are a Christian in rebellion, you are bound by iniquity until you repent, pray, and confess to God (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). Today is the day He has given you to walk by faith in Him. What in the world could be more important than finding eternal life? If Jesus would not let a man use the excuse of a funeral to keep him from obeying God, what could possibly be so important in your life to justify your disobedience?

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**ABOUT MIKE THOMAS**  
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I was fortunate enough to have a mother who obeyed the gospel when I was 4 years old. Consequently, I was raised attending Pruett & Lobit Church of Christ in Baytown, Texas – where I met many tremendous saints, including Keith and Sandy Sharp, Bobby and Vera Thompson, Bill and Elaine Murff, Clifford and Virgie Bell, and many more. All of these people had a profound impact on me and influenced me down the path of truth. In 1991, after I graduated from Florida College, I immediately went into full-time work as a preacher by working with the Westside congregation in Tunnel Hill, Georgia (where my wife’s grandfather had labored for years). That tremendous experience was followed by several others when we went to work in Kentucky for 22 years: a two-year program in Bowling Green (at the Twelfth Street congregation), an 8-year work in Owensboro (at Westside), and then a nearly 12-year work in Beaver Dam. Last year, in 2018, we joined the work at Courtland Ave in Kokomo, Indiana. The Lord has blessed us richly in genuine relationships in every church we have had the privilege of working. What a grand privilege it is to have a godly companion (Stephanie) by my side and three children (Madison, 23; McCord, 21; Micah, 19) who

wear the name of Christ. The Lord has been merciful to me and for that reason I hope to proclaim His word as long as I have breath. - Mike Thomas

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## Show Me Your Faith

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

The doctrine of salvation by faith alone is exceptionally common in today's religious world. One modern day proponent of the doctrine has admitted James 2:14-26 "...*definitely seems to cause serious problems for the 'salvation by faith alone' concept.*" Undeterred, he tries to explain away James 2 by redefining the word "justified," citing marginal translations, and then falsely claiming, "...*any verse that ascribes salvation to faith/belief, with no other requirement mentioned, is a declaration that salvation is by faith alone.*"<sup>1</sup> Two things to note: 1) the only way this works is for the Bible student to ignore every verse ascribing salvation to something other than faith; but wait, 2) the writer just acknowledged in his statement that there are verses which ascribe salvation to faith but also mention other requirements. The sad fact is, many today simply do not believe what James wrote.

But salvation by faith alone is not a new doctrine. There was a great focus on this teaching in the days of the protestant reformation, as evidenced by the writing of John Calvin, Martin Luther, and others. Commenting on Galatians 3:6, Luther wrote, "*Do you now see how faith justifies without works? Sin lingers in us, and God hates sin. A transfusion of righteousness, therefore, becomes vitally necessary. This transfusion of righteousness we obtain from Christ because we believe in Him.*"<sup>2</sup> Luther's position contradicts James 2, so it is no surprise he calls into question the canonicity of the book. In his preface to the New Testament, Luther said James "...*is really an epistle of straw compared to the others; for it has nothing of the nature of the gospel in it.*"<sup>3</sup> In his preface to the book of James he belittles the inspired writer (and by extension the Spirit of God), saying, "...*he wished to guard against those who depended on faith without going on to works, but he had neither the spirit nor the thought nor the eloquence equal to the task.*" Worse still, Luther claims James had done "...*violence to the Scripture, and so contradicts Paul and all Scripture,*" and concludes, "*I therefore refuse him a place among the writers of the true canon of my bible...*"<sup>4</sup> The true conflict is not between James and Paul, but between James and Martin Luther. Luther did not believe what James wrote, therefore he rejected James.

The battle against this false doctrine stretches back to the apostolic age. That is why a text like James 2:14-26 exists. James provided a defense against the falsehood of salvation by faith alone. In verse 14, the writer inquires, "...*if someone says he has faith but does not have works...*" is his faith (alone) sufficient to save him? James affirms not once, not twice, but three times, "...*faith without works is dead...*" (v 17, 20, 26). He gives examples of those who have faith but no works (the demons, v 19), and conversely, those who are "*justified by works*" (Abraham and Rahab, v 21-25). He makes great affirmations, such as "...*faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect,*" and "*a man is justified by works and not by faith only*" (v 22, 24).

Despite all the antagonism and contempt James has endured through the ages, his teaching is no different from that of Jesus or the apostles. None of them taught salvation by faith alone. All the Bible writers taught the necessity of obedience to God. Jesus said one cannot enter heaven unless he "...*does the will of My Father in heaven...*" (Matthew 7:21). Paul said flaming fire awaits "...*those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...*" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Peter also differentiates between "*those who do not obey the gospel of God*" and "...*the righteous one who is scarcely saved...*" (1 Peter 4:17-18). The Hebrew writer referred to Jesus as "...*the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...*" (Hebrews 5:9). John said if we do not keep God's commandments, we are "...*a liar, and the truth is not in...*" us (1 John 2:4).

In James 2:18, a hypothetical dissident is introduced, a first-century advocate of the faith alone position. The "someone" of James 2:17 is the same "someone" who "...*has faith but not works...*" (James 2:14), and the "one" who says, "*Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,*" but does nothing to help the naked and destitute brother or sister (James 2:16). In verse 18, this opponent states, "*You have faith, and I have*

*works.*" As it reads, it seems odd. James has been contending for the necessity of works, so why would his challenger seemingly say James has faith and he (the opponent) has works? The pronouns in the text are likely intended to be generic. Essentially the assailant says, *"Come on, James. Some people have faith, some people have works. What's the big deal?"* In his response, James calls upon the faith only subscriber to demonstrate his faith. How do you show your faith when it is alone? You can claim it and declare it, but there is no evidence by which to validate it. An unadorned profession of faith may gather the endorsement of like-minded adherents, but the fact remains, *"...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead..."* (James 2:17).

In the final clause of James 2:18, the writer affirms, *"...I will show you my faith by my works."* Faith must be more than an academic exercise. The demons believe, but their faith does nothing to save them (James 2:19). Faith must be displayed; it must be demonstrated; it must be shown. Faith involves active obedience to the word of God. The patriarch Abraham was not justified simply because he believed God's promises; he was justified because he acted upon God's promises. He offered Isaac (James 2:21). Works and faith are not independent of one another. Faith works together with works, *"...and by works faith was made perfect..."* (James 2:22). Faith is consummated in works.

It seems the unwillingness on the part of the faith alone supporters to allow works is driven by a misguided notion that we (and James) are saying we are saved by works. James clearly affirmed that faith by itself cannot save, but his message is not salvation by works. The apostle Paul on more than one occasion renounced the idea of salvation by meritorious works (Romans 9:11; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5). James does not contradict Paul; nowhere does he exalt works as the means of salvation. He acknowledged works as evidence of salvation. His point is not we are saved by works, but we are lost without them. He affirmed, *"...as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"* (James 2:26). The simplest way to distinguish a dead body from a living body is movement. Dead bodies do not move. The body without the spirit is dead - it does nothing. Likewise, faith without works is dead - it does nothing.

*"Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."*

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1. [gotquestions.org/faith-alone.html](http://gotquestions.org/faith-alone.html)
  2. **A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, Martin Luther.** Translated by Theodore Graebner, Grand Rapids, MI : Christian Classics Ethereal Library.
  3. **Martin Luther : Selections from his Writings,** New York : Anchor Books, editor, John Dillenberger, 1962.
  4. **Luther's Works, vol. 35, Words and Sacrament I,** Philadelphia : Fortress, 1960.

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**ABOUT WILLIAM STEWART**  
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I was born and raised in Ontario, Canada. My wife (Shelly) and I have been married 26 years. We have a precious little one, Lynda, who will turn 5 year's old this summer. Neither my wife nor I grew up with Christian parents but were introduced to the gospel in our teenage years. In my last year of high school, I began preaching on occasion in Bancroft, Ontario and continued to do so through my college years. I began preaching full time in May 1996 and have been working in the Kingston area since that time.

You may have noticed my name in the header above. I have been blessed to participate with brother Sharp in the design and distribution of Meditate On These Things. I am zealous for the spread of God's word through online platforms and means. In addition to my efforts with MOTT, I also edit and design another online publication (GROW magazine), I also serve as webmaster for five Bible-focused web sites, maintain Facebook pages for two congregations, and use Youtube and Meetup to share God's word both locally and abroad.

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## Titles of Jesus - Lord (3)

David Cooper | Evening Shade, Arkansas, USA

The fact Jesus is Lord over all things can be seen in two instances. First, The lamb will conquer all the powers of the world. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14). Second, He is Lord over even the Devil and his demons. He proved many times his power over demons, devils. One such example is in Mark 1:34, "And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him."

"Lord" is the most often used term by the Apostles and is most used term for Jesus in the New Testament, (NT), as a whole. As used by the writers of the NT it means master in every thing for Christians. We are his servants, citizens, followers, students, and laborers. We as his servants must do as our lord commands.

Our submission begins at our conversion. Belief and confession for example define our submission to Jesus as Lord., "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). Repentance and baptism are, also in the name of Jesus Christ or by his authority. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

That submission continues as the servant, bondservant, of the Lord. Jesus said we should follow him in order to be honored by the Father (John 12:26). As the servant of Christ we must please God rather than man, as Paul did. "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). We have Jesus as a perfect example.

*"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).*

We as servants must be willing to give our life for our master.

Our submission to Jesus is furthered as citizens of His kingdom. Jesus is the sole King of His kingdom as the Father declared. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (Hebrews 1:8). As king all power was given to him. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). We are the servants of his kingdom. "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36).

In Christ's Kingdom we are the servants of God.

*"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:22-23).*

We are fellow citizens in the Kingdom of Christ and he is the all-powerful king.

As followers, Jesus is our teacher and example. As teacher, Jesus is our lawgiver, our one true prophet

*"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22-23).*



If we want to remain among God's people we must hear Jesus. We must also heed his example. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Those unwilling to suffer and follow Jesus are unworthy of him. "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:38).

Being a student of Jesus is our part of the teacher - student relationship. After his plea to the heavy laden he instructs them to learn of Him. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Paul tells Titus "for the grace of God that bringeth salvation" (Titus 2:11). Jesus teaches us how to live. "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

Finally, We are laborers for our Lord Jesus Christ. The Hebrew Writer says we must labor to enter the rest our Jesus offers, as opposed that of Joshua. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11). We are to be always abounding in the work of the Lord. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). As the previous passage states that our labour is not in vain in the Lord, John says our labours will be remembered and our rest is assured.

*"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).*

Our lord is Lord of All things and especially to those of us who follow Him. We follow him gladly now and praise him joyfully awaiting his arrival. Those that fail to follow him now will not be happy when he returns, but all will bow to him.

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## **Fornication**

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### **Author**

The apostle Paul, accompanied by Timothy, wrote Colossians (Colossians 1:1, 23; 4:18)

### **From Where Written**

The apostle penned Colossians from prison in Rome (Colossians 1:7-8; 4:3, 7-14; cf. Philemon verses 1,10-13,22-24; Ephesians 6:21; Philippians 1:13; 4:22; Acts 28:16,30-31).

### **When Written**

Paul wrote the letter during his first imprisonment in Rome, about A.D. 60-62.

### **To Whom Written**

Paul directed his letter in language almost identical to his epistle to the Ephesians by addressing "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse" (Colossians 1:2).

### **The City of Colosse**

Colosse was about 100 miles east of Ephesus, in the Lycus River valley, in the Roman province of Asia. It was approximately 12 miles upriver from Hierapolis and Laodicea (cf. Colossians 4:13). It had once been a large and important city, but had diminished to little more than a country village and had been surpassed by its neighboring cities in New Testament times. The city was located in a wealthy region dominated by

two kindred trades: wool production from the sheep that grew nearby for garment production in Laodicea and the dyeing of cloth. The chalky waters of the Lycus river were especially suitable for dyeing. The inhabitants were primarily native Phrygians and Greek colonists. A colony of ca. 2,000 Jewish families had been brought into the region by Antiochus the Great (223 -187 B.C.), and they had prospered. Thus, more Jews had joined them, and their influence was great.

### **The Church in Colosse**

There is no proof Paul ever preached in Colosse. He learned of their faith by report (Colossians 1:4). Apparently they had not seen him (Colossians 2:1). The gospel probably came here while Paul was preaching in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). They heard the gospel from Epaphras, Paul's fellow servant and a faithful minister of Christ (Colossians 1:7). At the time Paul wrote, Epaphras was with him, but he was a Colossian, prayed in their behalf, and was very concerned about them (Colossians 4:12-13). Apparently the church at Colosse was made up predominantly of Gentiles (Colossians 1:21,27; 2:13; 3:5-7). Archippus labored with them at the time Paul wrote (Colossians 4:17). Apparently the Colossians were being bothered by pagan philosophy (Colossians 2:4,8), which denied the preeminence of Christ (Colossians 2:9-10), denied his bodily incarnation (Colossians 1:22; 2:9) and taught the Colossians that fleshly sins were insignificant (Colossians 3:1-6). They were also troubled by Judaism (Colossians 2:11-17). These elements were combined in the second and third centuries to form the gnostic heresies. Paul and the Colossians were very interested in each other (Colossians 4:7-9).

### **Purpose of Book**

Paul's purpose in Colossians is to show the preeminence of Christ in all things (Colossians 1:14-22; 2:8-10; 3:4,11,17). Whereas Colossians shows the preeminence of Christ contrasted with both Jewish tradition and pagan philosophy, Hebrews portrays the preeminence of Christ compared to the law. Together they show that in Christ there is no room to borrow from either Judaism or human philosophy in order to serve Christ. Christ is complete, and we are complete in him.

### **Theme**

The theme of Colossians is Christ, the fullness of God (Colossians 1:19; 2:8-10). As Christ is "the fullness of the Godhead bodily"(Colossians 2:9), all God has for us spiritually is in Him. In the parallel books of Ephesians and Colossians, the apostle unveils the eternal plan of human redemption, hidden in the mind of God from all eternity, fulfilled in Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit, and manifested in the church. Colossians presents Christ as the fullness of God (Colossians 1:19). Ephesians presents the church as the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23).

### **Outline**

(adapted from an outline by Homer Hailey)

- I. Salutation - 1:1-2
- II. Introduction - 1:3-13
  - A. Thanksgiving for the Church at Colosse - 1:3-8
  - B. Prayer on Their Behalf - 1:9-11
  - C. Thanksgiving to God for His Part in Redemption - 1:12-13
- III. Christ, the Fullness of God - 1:14 - 2:23
  - A. Christ, Preeminent in All Things- 1:14-23
    - 1. Relationship to Sin: Redeemer - Verse 14
    - 2. Relationship to God: Image - Verse 15
    - 3. Relationship to Creation: Creator - Verses 16-17
    - 4. Relationship to Church: Head - Verse 18
    - 5. Relationship to Godhood: Fullness - Verse 19

- 6. Relationship to Mankind: Reconciler - Verses 20-23
- B. Paul's Ministry of Christ - 1:24-29
- C. Christ, the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge - 2:1-3
- D. Christ, the Fullness of the Christian - 2:4-23
  - 1. Beware of Philosophy. - Verses 4-8
  - 2. We Are Complete in the Complete Christ. - Verses 9-12
  - 3. Do Not Be Judged by the Law. - Verses 13-17
  - 4. Do Not Be Beguiled from Christ by the Rudiments of the World.- Verses 18-23
- IV. Do All in the Name of Christ (The New Life in Christ). - 3:1 - 4:6
  - A. Seek Things Above - 3:1-4
  - B. Put to Death the Old Man and Put on the New Man - 3:5-11
  - C. New Character in Christ - 3:12-17
  - D. New Relationships in Christ- 3:18 - 4:1
    - 1. Wives to Husbands - Verse 18
    - 2. Husbands to Wives - Verse 19
    - 3. Children to Parents - Verse 20
    - 4. Fathers to Children - Verse 21
    - 5. Servants to Masters - Verses 22-25
    - 6. Masters to Servants - Verse 1
  - E. New Life of Prayer - 4:2-4
  - F. New Relationship to People of the World - 4:5
  - G. New Speech - 4:6
- V. Conclusion - 4:7-18
  - A. Information by Tychicus and Onesimus - 4:7-9
  - B. Various Salutations - 4:10-15
  - C. Directions - 4:16-17
  - D. Paul's Salutation - 4:18

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**ABOUT KEITH SHARP**

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Keith Sharp was born September 27, 1945, the second of two sons born to Harold F. And Pearl Sharp. His dad was a preacher and an elder, his grandfather was an elder, and his great grandfather was an elder. He started preaching every Sunday in May, 1965. He married Sandra "Sandy" Hawkins September 4, 1965, and they still remain happily married. They have four children - Brent, Michelle, Bryan, and Timothy - all of whom are Christians. They have three grandchildren - Colton, Lexie, and Jesse - all of whom are Christians. Keith has done local work with ten congregations in five states in America, has preached in 31 states in America, one U.S. territory [American Samoa], and 9 countries outside the USA. He has been preaching in Mountain Home, Arkansas since 2009 and has been an elder there since 2011. You may order his books What Must I Do to Be Saved?, What It Means to Be a Christian, The Christian and Sin, The Son, Unfading Beauty, The Sharp-Needham Debate, and Calvinism on Trial from Faith & Facts [317-257-3000] and download his book, Bible Survey, from [www.padfield.com](http://www.padfield.com).

## Uncleanness

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

On my initial trip to Africa, I was shocked as we got to the church building where I was to first preach. Across the dirt street was a shallow pool with a concrete bottom, enclosed by concrete blocks, and sheltered by a tin roof held up by four poles. An open, dirt drainage ditch supplied its water. People waded in the pool to fill buckets for domestic water use. No wonder deadly diseases are endemic! But there is a kind of uncleanness far worse that affects many of us who would cringe from using such filthy water.

The apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesian Christians:

*This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Ephesians 4:17-19).*

Let's learn how to avoid this spiritually lethal filth, uncleanness.

The New Testament idea of "uncleanness" has an Old Testament background. Uncleanness under the Old Covenant was rooted in physical filth but went far beyond this. For example, there was to be no uncovered human waste in the camp of Israel (Deuteronomy 23:12-14). Laws of uncleanness pertained to clean and unclean foods (Leviticus chapter 11), purification following childbirth (Leviticus chapter 2), leprosy (Leviticus chapters 13-14), purification following bodily discharges (Leviticus chapter 15), and touching a human corpse (Numbers 5:2). Animal sacrifices and ceremonial washings purified them from outward impurity (Leviticus 16:18-19; 22:3).

But the prophets pointed to the New Testament by emphasizing moral purity (Isaiah 6:5) and pointed to the time when all the people of the Lord would be clean (Isaiah 35:8; Zechariah 13:1).

In Christ moral purity is required, not physical or ceremonial. Sin that proceeds from the heart defiles, not food or uncovered human waste (Matthew 15:10-20). Every kind of food is clean (1 Timothy 4:4-5). The Lord's disciples shocked the scribes and Pharisees because they didn't wash their hands before they ate (Matthew 15:1-2). The Lord wants clean hands and hearts (James 4:7-8), the morally upright conduct that proceeds from a pure heart.

In the New Testament "uncleanness" denotes every kind of unlawful sexual practice.

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).*

The opposite of uncleanness is holiness. Uncleanness includes "fornication" (Ibid) and "lewdness" (Ephesians 4:7-9), but is broader, encompassing all sexual sins. Dirty movies, TV shows, magazines, web sites, words, etc. are all unclean, morally impure, and we must keep ourselves clean from such filth.

The unclean sinner must be purified to serve God. The alien sinner must be baptized to be cleansed (Ephesians 5:25-27). This must be preceded by faith (Galatians 3:26-27), repentance (Acts 2:38), and confession of faith (Romans 10:8-10). The child of God who sins must confess his sins (1 John 1:9). This must be preceded by repentance and followed by prayer for forgiveness (Acts 8:22).

The ceremonial uncleanness of the Law of Moses that excluded Israelites from the congregation and from service to the Lord is a shadow of the moral filth that the holy Lord God will not allow in His presence. "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints" (Ephesians 5:3).



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