



# April 2024

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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

PHILIPPIANS  
4:8

are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTUE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

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).

## Whose Responsibility Is It?

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

**Whose responsibility** is it to encourage those who are weak and discouraged, or help those who are in need of any assistance? The elders...the preacher...the deacons?

*"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation" (Romans 12:10-16).*

Then in Paul's letter to the church in Galatia:

*"Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2).*

"We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (I Thessalonians 5:14).

These words are addressed to whosoever is identified as "one another," "brethren," "you." The truth is, we all have a responsibility for one another. Please make a note of those in your number who are absent a

good bit, those who seem discouraged, those who need our love. If we don't do it, who will?

Suppose you had a loved one in a distant city who was down? Who would you look to in that city for help? Think about it brethren. Pray about it. Yes elders, deacons, and preachers have their responsibilities, but obviously they cannot fulfill all the responsibilities of all the members.

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## **"Justification" For Drinking?**

Greg Gwin | Columbia, Tennessee, USA

A study by Harvard researchers tracked 38,000 men, aged 40 to 75, for 12 years. The results revealed that "those who drank alcohol had 35 to 40 percent fewer heart attacks" and that "the best results came from drinking almost every day." The study was published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

We are certain that there will be some folks, even some of our brethren, who will quickly latch onto studies such as this and use the results as an argument to 'justify' the practice of 'moderate, social drinking'. This is anticipated, unfortunately, because there have always been some who desperately want to prove that drinking - at least moderate drinking - is 'OK'. Their arguments are flawed, and their conclusions are wrong.

For sake of argument, let's say that studies like the Harvard one mentioned above are correct. Never mind that such studies are routinely discredited by the next 'research' that comes down the pike. Also disregard the obvious and awful consequences of 'problem drinking' that wreck the lives of millions of people every year. Even if we ignore these things, the argument still fails to 'justify' the practice for those who seek to please God.

Consider this parallel example: Imagine that a "new study" finds that the adrenaline rush that comes from robbing banks is beneficial to one's health. It invigorates the nerves, expands cardiovascular function, and stimulates one's immune system - it may even provide a cure for AIDS (why not!?!). Now, if such research was true (obviously it's not!), would one be 'justified' to go out and rob a bank? Certainly not! Any health benefit, real or imagined, would not offset the plain condemnation of stealing found in the word of God.

Now, here's the point: God's Word clearly and absolutely condemns drunkenness and so-called 'moderate' or 'social' drinking (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Peter 4:3). Questionable 'studies' about health benefits notwithstanding, it is still a sin to drink alcohol. Think!

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## **Two Wrongs (Divorces) Don't Make A Right?**

Patrick Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

One of the more common arguments for the position that couples may continue living in marriages Jesus calls "adultery" in Matthew 19:9 is "Two Wrongs (Divorces) Don't Make A Right." The reasoning is – sure the first divorce was wrong (some say only regrettable), but if then a second marriage is contracted, divorcing that second spouse would be a second wrong. I agree two wrongs never make a right, but in this case, ending an unscriptural marriage is not a wrong; it is a right; it is actually required by repentance (Luke 13:3). Consider the following illustrations ...

After divorcing their previous spouses, would it have been a second wrong for Herod and Herodias to get a divorce? If you think so, please reconsider Mark 6:18 "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

Suppose I stole (Ephesians 4:28) a car to give to my son for his 16th birthday. Would it be a second wrong to "steal" it back from my son the next day and return it to its rightful owner?

What if I did wrong by marrying a second wife (polygamous – I Corinthians 7:2)? Would it be a second

wrong to repent and divorce the second wife, and go back to being monogamous with the first?

What if two homosexuals did wrong by getting married (Romans 1:26-27)? Would it be a second wrong for them to get a divorce from each other?

Just like it is required (not a second wrong) to terminate a polygamous or homosexual marriage, it is also required to terminate an adulterous marriage. Adultery (Galatians 5:19) is just as wrong as polygamy and homosexuality, isn't it?

The truth is texts like Matthew 19:6 ("Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" – **NKJV**) only forbid separating marriage unions God has joined, not marriages God didn't join (authorize). That is understood from that verse, right? So separating what God has not joined in this case would not be a wrong.

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## Why Be At All The Assemblies Of The Local Church?

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

Each week kthroughout the year the church of which I am member meets three times for the purpose of worship and Bible Study. When we come together those three times, we spend approximately four hours in our services to the Lord out of one hundred and sixty-eight hours given to us by Him. Do you think that is too much to expect out of people whom Jesus redeemed by His blood? Surely not! What a sacrifice God made for us. He continually blesses us, providing the things necessary to sustain life, both physically and spiritually. Let me suggest seven reasons I believe we all should be present at every assembly. I certainly know and understand there are conditions one might face where they cannot be present at all the assemblies, yet if we can be present we should.

1) We are commanded by the Lord to assemble. "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). If I could find no other reason in the Scriptures but what is said in this verse, should this not be sufficient to move me to exert whatever effort it takes to be present? God requires this of His people.

2) It is a wonderful opportunity afforded us to worship and serve our Creator, Redeemer, and Revelator. King David delivered a psalm of thanksgiving to Asaph and his brethren when the ark of the covenant had been brought to Jerusalem to express thanks to God (1 Chronicles 16:1-7). Notice one of the things said in this psalm, "Give to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!" (1 Chronicles 16:29).

3) An occasion is provided us to receive instruction and edification. Look at what Paul told those at Corinth, "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification" (1 Corinthians 14:26). I realize this was written to regulate the use of spiritual gifts. We do not possess such gifts today, but we still come together to be taught and to receive encouragement from the word of God and from each other.

4) There is an opportunity to help encourage and edify others as well. The writer of the book of Hebrews says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). This is a reason stated why we should not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (verse 25). If I am not present, instead of offering encouragement to my fellow saints, my absence has a tendency to discourage. As we gather to sing praises to God, we teach and admonish (encourage) one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16).

5) Think of the example we set before others. Jesus wants us to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14). If our children grow up and are just like us, how often would they assemble? In trying to teach our neighbor, do they see a Christian who is dedicated to the Lord and His service? Or do they behold one who on occasion speaks of serving God, yet many times when the people of God are at worship service they are either at home or out doing something they enjoy more?

6) The attitude we are told to manifest can be displayed when we assemble to worship the Lord. Jesus

said for worship to be acceptable it must be offered "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). There are several passages which in essence tell us we must serve God from a pure heart sincerely. We all should have the attitude of the Psalmist, when he said, "I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1). What a joy it should be for the Christian to come together with fellow servants to praise and honor our great God.

7) We manifest a love for God each time we assemble. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). We have already noticed He commanded us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). Is it really true we love Jehovah while living in rebellion to one of His commandments? Show your love for Him by keeping all His commandments and not just the ones you think are more important. Such a decision is not ours to make!

Can you give one good reason why you should not be at every assembly to worship with people of God? I just listed seven good reasons why all of us should be present. May God help us all to be more dedicated and determined to faithful love and serve Him the entirety of our life. Can He count on you?

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## **Gideon Samson's Parentts, etc.**

### **CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

#### **YOU HAVE NOT OBEYED MY VOICE**

After Isarel had settled in the promised land, but before the death of Joshua (Judges 2:6), the Angel of the LORD came to the children of Israel. He rebuked them,

*"I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.'" But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'" (Judges 2:1-3)*

The people of Israel were to purge the land of the inhabitants, but they failed to do so (Judges 1:19, 21, 27-35). It was not a matter of inability, but lack of effort and faith.

The LORD could have given this message through Joshua, or by sending a prophet; but He chose to bring it Himself, appearing to the people. In response to the word of the Angel of the LORD, the people wept, and made sacrifice to the LORD (v 4-5). Though troubles would come, the result of the LORD's rebuke was that Israel was faithful to the LORD through the rest of Joshua's life, and throughout the life of the elders who outlived him (Judges 2:7).

#### **APPEARING TO GIDEON**

Again, the LORD gave a message to the people of Israel about their failure to be faithful to Him, this time, by sending a prophet to them (Judges 6:7-10). After the prophet spoke to all the people, the Angel of the LORD came to speak with Gideon specifically. Notice their conversation:

*...the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!' Gideon said to Him, 'O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.' Then the LORD turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?' (Judges 6:12-14)*

Gideon focused on his weaknesses (v 15), the LORD wanted him to focus on the strength that was with him (2 Corinthians 12:9). He answered Gideon in the same way He answered Moses (Judges 6:16; Exodus

3:12).

It would seem that Gideon began to understand who this was before him. He asked that He not depart until he brought his offering out to set before the LORD. The Angel of the LORD received the offering, bringing forth fire from the rock upon which it was laid (Judges 6:20-21). Gideon was not certain who it was that had appeared to him (Judges 6:22), and was concerned that he would die (v 23). He named the place, "the LORD is peace."

### **MANOAH'S WIFE**

The wife of Manoah, a man from the tribe of Dan, was barren. However, in Judges 13:3, the Angel of the LORD appeared to her and revealed she would have a son, Samson. He would have a Nazirite vow upon him, and he would deliver Israel from their enemies, the Philistines.

As the woman spoke to her husband about the event, she said it was "a Man of God" who appeared to her, and she spoke of his countenance as being "like the countenance of the Angel of God" (Judges 13:6). Manoah prayed to the LORD, asking that this Man of God come to them again. God heard his prayer, and answered it. Once more, the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman. She ran to get her husband (Judges 13:9-10). Manoah spoke with the Man, but did not realize who He was. In fact, he asked that He waited, while they prepared a young goat for Him; not as an offering, but as a meal. The Angel of the LORD suggested it be given as an offering.

Then the man asked the LORD, 'What is Your name?' (Judges 13:17). In return, the LORD asked why he asked, "seeing it is wonderful?" (see Isaiah 9:6).

Manoah did as the LORD directed, and provided the young goat as an offering. With Manoah and his wife watching, the Angel of the LORD ascended into heaven in the flame from the altar. Now Manoah knew who it was that appeared to him (Judges 13:21).

In fact, he was afraid! He thought that they would die, for they had seen God (v 22). His wife reasoned with him, that if the LORD wanted them dead, He would not have accepted their offering, nor would He have given them the great news of a child to be born.

We've noted the Angel of the LORD appearing to Abram, Hagar, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, national Israel, Balaam, Joshua, Gideon, and Manoah & his wife. In these texts, He is equated with Jehovah, and the phrase Angel of the LORD is often used interchangeably with "the LORD."

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## **From Godly Fear to Protestant Error**

(A Review of **From Fear to Faith**) Part 2

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

### **Divine Power or Human Effort**

Brother Allen then asserts in bold, "Abraham was justified by divine power, not human effort." Brother Allen confuses divine blessing with the terms for justification. Doubtless, it was miraculous divine power that enabled Abraham and Sarah to have a son in their old age. But it was the obedience of faith that caused them to be justified and enabled Sarah to bear Isaac (Hebrews 11:8-12).

*"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:21-24).*

### **"Walking in Newness of Life"**

The chapter on "Walking in Newness of Life" (pages 68-79) is excellent, and I recommend it

highly.

### Flesh and Spirit

However, in the next chapter Brother Allen commits an egregious error throughout. The title of the chapter is "The Struggle with Flesh and Spirit," which by the way is real and spiritually crucial and should lead to a discussion of Galatians 5:16-26. That is the apostle Paul's discussion of the real struggle in the Christian's life between the flesh and the spirit, and Paul commands us, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (verse 25).

Instead, Brother Allen ignores Galatians five and presents Romans seven as a picture of "spiritual warfare inside our lives" (80). He acknowledges the difficulty of applying "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24) to the same person described in Romans 6:17-18:

*"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).*

The truth is, it is not the same person. Romans six is the Christian redeemed from the slavery of sin. He is commanded, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts" (Romans 6:12). In Romans 7:9-24, the apostle cries in frustration, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24) That's not the picture of a Christian!

In Romans 7:9-24, Paul presents himself before he was saved, when he was still Saul of Tarsus, as an example of an honest, sincere Jew seeking to be justified by the law. He was dead in sin (7:5, 9, 11); Christians are alive in Christ (6:8,11). He was carnal (7:14); Christians are spiritual (8:5-9). He was sold under sin (7:14,23); Christians are redeemed (6:12,14,16-22). He used his members as instruments of sin (7:18,20); Christians do not (6:13). Sin dwelt in his body (7:18); but it must not in the Christian's (6:12,19; 12:1; 1 Corinthians 6:13,15,19-20; 1 Thessalonians 2:10).

### Romans Eight

Brother Allen correctly presents Romans chapter eight as the great chapter in which the apostle "Paul moved to establish how Christians have assurance in their salvation" (90). But then he adds "We stand and live by grace" (Ibid). I certainly affirm salvation by grace (albeit not grace alone) and so does Paul (e.g., Ephesians 2:8-10), but not in Romans eight. Paul never employs the term "grace" in Romans eight. Brother Allen has read his theology into the chapter in this and other ways.

Brother Allen contends, "Inside Chapter 8, there are seven ways the Spirit works to assure us of our position in God's kingdom" (91) He first cites 8:2-3 and states "The spirit sets us free from sin and death" (Ibid). The passage says no such thing. The apostle affirms:

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin. He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:2-3).*

There are three laws in this passage. First "the law of the Spirit of life" (i.e., the gospel, Romans 1:16), which frees me "from the law of sin and death" (i.e., the rule of sin over the sinners' life that leads to death, that caused Saul the unsaved Jew to cry, "O wretched man that I am!" (Romans 7:24) "The law", the Mosaic covenant (Romans 2:17-20), could not deliver "from the law of sin and death," in that it lacked a sacrifice that could remove the guilt of sin (Hebrews 10:4). It is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the gospel, that "sets us free from the law of sin and death."

Then Brother Allen affirms "8.4 - The Spirit enables us to fulfill the law." The passage states, "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." We walk according to the Spirit, not by following a subjective, inner light, but by producing the "fruit of the Spirit" taught in the word revealed by the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25).

In fact six of the seven works Brother Allen attributes to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit manifestly accomplishes by “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” i.e., the gospel. Romans 8:2 establishes the sense in which the Spirit is working in chapter eight. It is through “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” the gospel. It is the gospel that bears witness **with**, not **to**, my spirit that I am a child of God. The gospel tells me how to become a child of God (Galatians 3:26-29), my spirit testifies I have done this, and I have the witness of the two spirits (Romans 8:16). I am led by the Spirit through the gospel to become a child of God (1 Peter 1:22-23).

The spirit helps our infirmities by interceding for us in prayer (verses 26-27). This passage is indeed difficult. Some think the “Spirit” is the Holy Spirit; some think it is the human spirit. Regardless, the point of the passage remains the same. When we are so troubled in spirit that we can’t put our pleas to God into words, He hears and answers our prayers, even though they be but groanings. This is from man to God, not from God to man. The capitalization is irrelevant; it was placed there by the translators and has no basis in the original text. Our own spirits do indeed help the weaknesses of our flesh (Matthew 26:41; Romans 8:6, **NASB**). Can our spirits intercede for us? (1 Corinthians 2:11) It is by means of our spirits that God knows us (Proverbs 20:27). In the phrase “Spirit Himself” (verse 26), the Greek term underlying “Himself” is “autos.” In this occurrence it is “auto,” which is neuter gender (**The Analytical Greek Lexicon**. 60). It is literally translated “itself”(George Ricker Berry, **The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament**. 419). The groanings are our groanings (2 Corinthians 5:2-4). “He who searches the hearts” is Christ (Revelation 2:13, 23), Who also intercedes for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:24-25). He is perfectly fitted to represent us to God (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1-2).

Then Brother Allen definitely goes into the subjectivism of Protestant theology. He affirms, “there is also subjective assurance” (91). He reassuringly states, “The Spirit leads the Christian **through the word of God**” (92), but then asserts, “The Spirit of God will illuminate the word” (93).

In Hebrews 10:32, the inspired writer advises, “But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings” (**NKJV**, so **KJV**). The term is translated “enlightened” in the **NASB**, **ESV**, **ASV**, and **ISV**. The apostle John attributes this work to Jesus Christ (John 1:9). The apostle Paul prayed concerning the Ephesian Christians,

*“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power”* (Ephesians 1:17-19).

This is the heart the Master described in the Parable of the Sower as “good ground” (Matthew 13:8, 23). It describes, not a direct, subjective work of the Holy Spirit but a good attitude. The Bible nowhere attributes illumination of the Scripture to Christians as a direct work of the Holy Spirit. Christians have been enlightened (John 1:9; Ephesians 1:18; 3:9; Hebrews 6:4; 10:32) by the preaching of the gospel (Ephesians 3:18-19).

So where can we find this doctrine? *“Illumination is that doctrine that describes the work of the Holy Spirit in helping the believer to understand God’s Word.... Rather illumination describes how the Spirit comes to us as believers opening up the Bible”* (<https://rcsprouljr.com/what-is-the-doctrine-of-illumination/>). “Robert Charles Sproul was an American Reformed theologian and ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church in America” (Wikipedia). R.C. Sproul was one of the leading American, Calvinistic scholars of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The doctrine that the Holy Spirit directly illuminates Christians to understand Scripture is Calvinism, based on the doctrines of inherent depravity and regeneration by a direct, supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit.

The simple fact is we are capable of understanding the Scriptures by studying them with proper motives and diligence, and the Lord commands us to do so (Ephesians 5:17). We may at times need help from those who understand it better (Acts 8:30-31), but with such human help we can understand the Word of

God.

### External Rules

Again, Brother Allen flatly asserts, "Our works never contribute to our salvation; they are a reflection of the saving work that Jesus has already done by the cross" (110). In 1981, I debated Baptist preacher Lyndon J. Whitledge. Mr. Whitledge asserted, "Man does nothing in his own salvation; God has done it all." What's the difference between Lyndon Whitledge and Matthew Allen? The pronouncements of both men flatly contradict the Scriptures (cf. Philippians 2:12; Galatians 5:6; James 2:14-26).

Brother Allen then asserts in bold, "**External rules do not make people spiritual**" (111). Certainly not, but "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name" (Hebrews 6:10).

The author specifically denigrates a check list requiring,

*"Attendance at all services every Sunday... Attendance at mid-week Bible study... Regular contribution... Partaking of the Lord's Supper... Attendance at Bible classes and other special congregational events... Attendance to the 'correct' set of beliefs, i.e. doctrinal compliance on a cappella singing, the one true church, and the work and role of the church, etc.... Attempting to evangelize friends and family members."*

I do not make such a check list, but I exhort members to attend every service of the church (Acts 2:42), to contribute to the church generously each first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7), to partake of the Lord's Supper from the heart on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29), to attend the Bible classes and even study ahead for them and attend gospel meetings (Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:2; James 4:17), to believe and know the truth (1 Timothy 4:3), to sing without instrumental accompaniment (Ephesians 5:18-19), to believe in one true church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23), and the proper work and role of the church (Colossians 3:17; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2 John 9), and to try to win our friends and loved ones to Christ (Mark 1:16-18). Tell me, are those who go fishing on Sunday, watch TV Wednesday night, fail to observe the Lord's Supper with the church, stay home from Bible classes and gospel meetings, fail to believe and know the truth, sing with instrumental music in worship, allow the church to practice the social gospel and support human organizations, and never try to win lost friends and loved ones to Christ on the road to heaven or hell (Matthew 25:14-30)?

### Cannot Meet God's Standard

Brother Allen concludes with a chapter on "**Comfort in Christ**" in which he asserts, "We will wrestle with our conscience because we know we have not and cannot meet all God's standards" (122). Are we able to meet God's standard? "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). "Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Matthew 19:21). ... till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:13). "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). "Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12). "But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4). "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).

James commands us to "be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4). We are capable of understanding the will of God (Ephesians 5:17). God never gave us a command we cannot obey (1 John 5:3). We can repent of all our sins, even those committed in ignorance (Acts 8:18-24). When we do all this, we have earned nothing. "So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Luke 17:10). Salvation is still by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10), but saving faith is obedient faith (Galatians



5:6).

### Conclusion

The late Edgar J. Dye stated concerning the doctrine of continuous cleansing, "If I hadn't known better than that, I wouldn't have left the Baptist Church." Brother Matthew Allen is a middle aged preacher of high ability and is studious. There are several such men who are influential but have turned toward denominational doctrine. I don't see how any of them could meet a Baptist preacher in debate, since they are teaching Baptist doctrine, but maybe they are uninterested in contending for the faith (Jude verse 3). I hope they can be called back to the New Testament pattern. As it is they are leading large numbers of Christians to sectarianism. I pray they will see their error and turn to the truth.



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