

Glad Tidings

FROM THE PRIMITIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

JULY & AUGUST 2026

Philippians 4:13

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

I Corinthians 15:19

HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

The hardening of Pharaoh's heart in the ten plagues against Egypt is a very interesting study in the intersection between God's sovereignty, God's will, and also man's responsibility and man's sin. We are told that God turns the king's heart whithersoever he will, and this is very clear with Pharaoh. "*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" (Prov. 21:1) Who is responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart – God, Pharaoh, or just the general disposition of stubborn men and the unregenerate in this world? The answer is "Yes". All three are true.

God is sovereign over the hearts of men, and the king's heart is in God's hand (Prov. 21:1). It was according to God's will to allow Pharaoh to follow his natural course of rigid, illogical, stubbornness to continue to refuse to make the best economic and political decision to just cut his losses and let the Israelites go. Pharaoh could have never refused this command to let Israel go unless the Lord allowed him to. If God wanted his people gone at the first request, he could have struck Pharaoh dead if he tried to refuse (like he did with Herod in Acts 12 and how the Lord struck many people dead for one sin), or he could have sent Pharaoh out to eat grass like an animal for seven years like he did with Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4). God's interactions with Pharaoh affirm the same conclusion Nebuchadnezzar eventually reached after the Lord humbled him – that God is sovereign even over the kings of this earth and no one can overrule his will. "*And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?*" (Dan. 4:35) Pharaoh also shows what he said a few verses later that "*those that walk in pride he is able to abase.*" (Dan. 4:37) Nebuchadnezzar was abased from his pride immediately by being sent out to act like an animal. Pharaoh was abased from his pride by watching his entire country, economy, agriculture, military, and his firstborn son all be destroyed before him over a period of time. Both an immediate humbling of Nebuchadnezzar and God allowing the hardening of Pharaoh's heart over time and multiple plagues to destroy Egypt were both according to his own will.

Pharaoh hardened his own heart (as we will see below), but the Lord was sovereignly in control over

his heart because he could have humbled his heart at any time. However, the Lord allowed Pharaoh to continue in the normal course of a wicked, unregenerate man who fancied himself a deity to continue to get more cut to the heart, more mad, more rigid, and more stubborn with each progressive plague that was forcing him to do what he didn't want to do, which was let the Israelites go. Any of us would get more and more and more rigid when we are asked ten times to do something we refused to do. In our nature, we progressively get more stubborn with each request that we deny. At any given time, after any of the plagues, the Lord could have overruled Pharaoh's natural stubbornness and hard heart, and let his people go, but he allowed Pharaoh to follow the normal course of his stubbornness to accomplish God's will to totally destroy Egypt that had persecuted and afflicted God's people for over four hundred years.

However, while this all happened according to God's will and Pharaoh's hard heart was directed by the will of God, Pharaoh was still held accountable for his sin of hardening his heart. "*And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.*" (Exod. 9:34) God did not cause Pharaoh to sin, but he allowed Pharaoh to follow the normal course of increased stubbornness that any person would follow instead of breaking down Pharaoh to let the Israelites go at the first request, or any subsequent request. The Lord asked Pharaoh before the eighth plague, "*how long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?*" (10:3). This again shows that God is allowing Pharaoh to continue to be pridefully stubborn to further destroy Egypt, when God could have humbled Pharaoh at any time. However, God holds Pharaoh accountable for his refusal to humble himself, even though God was suffering him to continue to walk in pride. To summarize, God is sovereign over Pharaoh's heart, his heart was in God's hand to turn whithersoever he will, and circumstances played out exactly according to God's will to destroy Egypt, but Pharaoh was still held fully accountable for his own sin of hardening his own heart. We see from Rom. 9:17-18, that God raised up Pharaoh for a purpose to show his power and to manifest his sovereignty in the hardening and softening of the heart of the most powerful man on earth and to show who truly rules in the kingdoms of men. If God is sovereign over Pharaoh's heart, he is also sovereign over our hearts

and our hearts are in his hand to turn whithersoever he will as well.

God tells Moses before he even arrives in Egypt that the Lord would harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the Israelites go (Exod. 4:21 & 7:3). Therefore, it was according to God's will beforehand to allow Pharaoh to harden his heart to follow a path that would destroy Egypt. For what purposes did God specifically state that he would harden Pharaoh's heart?

A) To totally destroy the nation of Egypt's economic, agricultural, and military might because of their persecution of God's people.

- *"that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments."* (7:4)
- *"that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt."* (11:9)
- This should be one more example to remind us that it does not turn out well for the enemies of God's people who persecute them. God will destroy the enemies of God who persecute God's people, just as is shown in God's destruction of Satan, the beast, the false prophet, and the Babylonian whore in Revelation who persecuted God's people. If you afflict God's people, the Lord will totally destroy you, and that's what God did to Egypt through allowing Pharaoh to continue to harden his own heart.

B) To prove to the Egyptians that Jehovah is the one true and living God

- *"the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them."* (7:5)
- *"For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth."* (9:14)
- *"4) And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so. 17) And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. 18) And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. (14:4,17-18)*

C) To execute judgment upon the Egyptian false gods with ten plagues directly targeting specific Egyptian false gods to show that Jehovah is the only true God

- *"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD."* (12:12)

D) To show God's power to all the earth (particularly to the Canaanites who were afraid of the Israelites after this) that the name of Jehovah God would be declared and revered throughout all the earth

- *"and in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."* (9:16)

E) To show God's power to harden and show mercy to whoever he sees fit, according to his sovereignty and according to his will

- *"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."* (Rom. 9:17-18)

God affirmed that he would harden Pharaoh's heart for his own purposes to show his power. However, what is the language used in the narrative regarding the cause of Pharaoh's hard heart?

A) **"the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart"** – 6 times – initial request (7:4) and plagues six (9:12), eight (10:20), nine (10:27), and ten (11:10), and then the final time where he decided to pursue after them again (14:4,8)

- In this language, God takes firsthand active responsibility for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart
- The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened by the Lord as well (10:1, 9:34), so the Lord ensured he had no one giving him common sense advice to hearken to the request to just let the Israelites go. Although even the servants were so overcome with the eighth plague of locusts, they later told Pharaoh to just let them go (10:7)
- It is worth noting that the Lord takes personal credit for the initial request, as well as 4 of the last 5 (including all of the last 3). This shows that the farther this went on, the Lord is purposefully making him more and more rigid, more and more stubborn, to fully cripple the enemy of God's people, Egypt.

B) **"he hardened his heart"** – 3 times – plagues two (8:15), four (8:32), and seven (9:34)

- This language indicates that Pharaoh made the choice himself to harden his own heart. It is confirmed it was his own sin to do this (9:34), even though God suffered him to harden his own heart.
- All of these were circumstances where there was a current grievous affliction (frogs, flies, and hail) that he wanted taken away, and he promised to let the people go if that was removed. Then, when it was removed, he changed his mind, hardened his own heart, and did not keep his word to let them go.

C) **"was hardened"** – 3 times – plagues one (7:22), three (8:19), five (9:7)

- This language indicates that Pharaoh's heart was just "generally hardened", not attributed to either the Lord or Pharaoh directly.

- (Note – it also says “was hardened” in plague seven (9:35), but since that was already attributed to Pharaoh in 9:34, this one was omitted)

Other notable numbers of the plagues:

- We are reminded 6 of 11 times (initial, and plagues 1, 2, 3, 6, 7) that Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not let them go “*as the Lord had said*”, showing the Lord is fully in control of this situation and working everything according to his will, as he had already told Moses beforehand that it would happen this way.
- Of the 10 plagues, 5 times (plagues 2, 4, 7, 8, 9) Pharaoh tells Moses he will let the Israelites go and then changes his mind and his heart is hardened and doesn't let them go. (3 of those are attributed to Pharaoh hardening his own heart, and 2 of those we are told the Lord hardened his heart when he changed his mind)

In the middle of the grievous eighth plague of locusts, Pharaoh even gives the pretense of confession of sin against God. “*Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. [17] Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.*” (10:16-17) However, he proves these words are not sincere as he changes his mind – the Lord actually hardened his heart after this statement (10:20) – and does not actually let Israel go. This proves that wicked men can sometimes say the right words, even if they do not mean them in their heart. Pharaoh is not truly repenting and confessing his sins, but he is just trying to say whatever is necessary to have the locusts removed, to do whatever is necessary to end his suffering. This is similar to the rich man in hell, who is not repenting of his sins, but he just wanted a cool drink of water to end his sufferings of hell's flame (Luke 16:23-31). Pharaoh is not displaying repentance of sin; he is just trying to say whatever will be most palatable to Moses to remove his suffering and remove the locusts. When the locusts are removed, the Lord hardened his heart again (10:20) – or the Lord allowed Pharaoh to harden his own heart again – to continue further judgment upon Egypt in the last two plagues.

When they finally arrived at the tenth plague – the death of the firstborn – the Lord announced to Moses beforehand that this would be the last one. “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.*” (11:1) This shows yet again that Pharaoh is not in full control of his own heart; the Lord is suffering his hardening of his heart only up to a certain point, according to his own will. There was no ability for Pharaoh to harden his heart again this final time and prevent the release of Israel on his own. No, the Lord ensured that this would

be the final plague to totally cripple Egypt, and Pharaoh could not choose to keep Israel any longer on his own. The Lord was directing his heart to be hardened up to this point, and while I don't think his heart was necessarily softened, the suffering and pain of the loss of his own son – even for an unregenerate man – was too much for him to continue to endure. Therefore, according to God's will and God's word, after the tenth plague and the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, Pharaoh relents and gives approval to let Israel go.

While God caused Pharaoh to let his people go, the Lord comes back and hardens Pharaoh's heart again (14:4,17) to get him to pursue Israel to the Red Sea that his entire military would be wiped out. This shows so clearly that truly, “*The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.*” (Prov. 21:1) God suffered Pharaoh to follow the normal course of a wicked, stubborn man being continually told to do something he didn't want to do. He allowed Pharaoh to harden his own heart continually, getting more rigid, more stubborn, and more hard with each of the ten plagues that destroyed the economy, agriculture, livestock, and killed many firstborn citizens. Then, the Lord turns his heart to allow Israel to be let go. Then, the Lord comes back and turns his heart yet again and allows Pharaoh's rigid, hard heart to pursue Israel to totally destroy the entire Egyptian military at the Red Sea.

(Continued on page 10)

EDITORIAL OFFICE

If you would like to receive the Glad Tidings newsletter by email or through postal mail, send subscription information to gladtidingspb@gmail.com or mail to **113 Yeates Ext, Starkville, MS 39759**. Please send all articles, announcements, change of address, and correspondence to the email address noted above. We reserve the right to reject or edit any material. All published material must be received by the 1st of the month to be included in the following month's issue. There is no subscription price for Glad Tidings. We do accept contributions as Glad Tidings is reader supported. **Make checks payable to “Glad Tidings Publications” and send to the above address.**

Email Subscription – If anyone would like to receive an email copy of the newsletter, you can just email gladtidingspb@gmail.com to get added. Even if you primarily read the paper copy, having a digital version in your email is great to check info or read on the go.

An archive of past Glad Tidings newsletters can be found at this link:

<https://clearspringspb.com/category/glad-tidings/>

Elder Jonathan Wise & Elder David Wise, Co-Editors

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK
By Elder Larry Wise (1944-2024)

The church has always been persecuted and we can expect nothing else today. Satan is ramping up his attacks on Biblical principles and truth, and even religious leaders in areas are succumbing to the pressure to compromise. Even former President Jimmy Carter says that Jesus would have no problem with gay marriage. Carter says, "Jesus would approve of gay marriage." "I think Jesus would encourage any love affair if it was honest and sincere and was not damaging to anyone else, and I don't see that gay marriage damages anyone else." Carter fails to realize that people may be sincere and honest and be sincerely and honestly wrong, and he is definitely wrong on this. This flies in the face of the biblical truth that marriage is between a biological man and woman. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2:24). Wife in this text means a woman, a female.

When the church preaches against the ungodliness of such a union, it is labeled as a bigot. If that were true, God would be called a bigot; Jesus would also be called a bigot as well as the Holy Spirit. The Bible is plain on the union of anyone other than a man or a woman. Evidently people have not taken heed to the example set forth in scripture of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;" (II Pet. 2:6).

The church (people of God) desire to live a godly life to honor a heavenly Father who loved them and gave His Son to save them from their sins. What can the godly expect? We are told, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Tim. 3:12). Persecution can be expected and can come in many different forms. Paul goes on to tell Timothy that evil men shall wax worse and worse, deceived, and being deceived. (II Tim. 3:13). Timothy knew what to expect and we know what to expect; however, what are we to do as the church? Paul instructs Timothy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;" (II Tim. 3:14). Timothy is to maintain his course of following the scriptural teaching in spite of what other people might be doing.

Timothy has learned what God would have him do by the scriptures. He had known the scriptures from a child that makes him wise unto salvation. He had been taught from a child by his mother Eunice and possibly by his grandmother Lois who had faith just like Timothy. He had also learned from the apostle Paul himself. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 1:13). Timothy had been taught "sound" words of truth that Timothy was to hold fast. In

like fashion, Jude also admonishes the people of God, "...it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3).

The church is commanded to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Conformity to the world, even if it becomes the accepted norm, is not an option for the people of God. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2). Gay marriage may be in fashion; abortion may be in fashion; LGBT may be in fashion, but they will NEVER be in fashion with God who has commanded us to abstain from all appearance of evil.

It was the time that the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went into the temple. What did he find? He found the temple occupied by those who were selling oxen, sheep, and doves, and money changers. Did Jesus smile and show His approval? Absolutely not, as we read, "And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." (John 2:15-16). In Matthew's account of this, Jesus uses "house of prayer" for the temple. I sometimes wonder how much Jesus would throw out of the modern church services.

Peter and the apostles were before the council because they continued to preach Jesus. Peter and the other apostles told the high priest, "...We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). These apostles continued to teach and preach and counted it an honor to suffer shame for the cause of Christ. May the church continue in faith! (June 2019)

MOTIVATION

By Elder Jerry Wise
Pontotoc, Mississippi

What motivation do you need as one of God's children? What makes your day go much better and brighter? Can money make every problem disappear? Can money buy you health and happiness that endures? Does it take other people to constantly be around you for motivation? How is the old fleshly mind wired for our living? (not good) If we start with scriptures on this subject, we'll run out of space and time: scriptures coming through as if you didn't think so.

An employee of mine once told me he just couldn't get going in the mornings, and he admitted he lagged all day, as if I hadn't noticed, lol. His time card always

read a few minutes late each morning and early going out. He was the first in the break room for morning breaks, lunch, and afternoon breaks and last out.

I asked him about his wife and two children. He seemed surprised, as he thought, why I might change the subject to his family.

He responded: they are ok and well, but with no enthusiasm in his voice. I told him he had at least three people at home for motivation right in front of him every single morning. I then asked him, did he think God had blessed him? He looked at me and paused and then said with a sigh, I guess so.

As tenderly as I could, I reminded him of what Christ had done for him and because of Christ, he could look forward to each day to be a light to his wife and children and everyone he was around, no matter their circumstances or situations, and be a motivation in someone else's life. "Wow what a brand new concept; living for Christ and letting your light shine!!" (not new; right)

Enoch knew of God's love for him and he delighted living in his light!! Noah was no doubt rich in the love of God!! Abraham believed God and trusted faithfully in him!! King David was surely motivated by his Lord's mercy!! Joseph in temptation turned not away from God's teachings!! Mary was blessed above all women and magnified her Lord!! The apostle Paul spent the rest of his life preaching and motivating others to stay the course of Christ!!!!!!

If Christ's love, suffering, and sacrifice isn't enough to motivate us for our existence, we are in a terrible spiritual condition and need to spend a lot of time praying for forgiveness of this awful attitude.

I realize there are times in life we are down and out, and the flesh is burning us up with, oh woe is me: And we require deep consideration on Christ's love and begin to look up and not around.

Some of us are fortunate enough to have strong family ties and a church family as well and blessed with some in those circles we feel will be there for us.

But what about those of you who don't have some of these people you can lean on. May I humbly suggest being in the assembly of the saints each Sunday morning, read God's word, praying and using the gift given you; the fruit of the Spirit!!! (Galatians 5:22)

I encourage in both those circumstances, first and foremost to: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Peter 5:6-7) Notice in due time: God's time.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (Proverbs 3:5)

"Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that

would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth." (Psalm 57:1-3)

No one can motivate like Christ Jesus, give comfort, and a blessed hope for each day to rest on him. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." -2 Corinthians 13:14

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS

By Elder Joe Nettles
Hamilton, Mississippi

Colossians 1:24: "*Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.*"

The beloved Apostle Paul suffered greatly for the cause of Jesus Christ his Lord. He was whipped, stomped, stoned, cut, buffeted, maligned, degraded, forsaken by friends, and ultimately martyred. He lovingly suffered such because he believed and taught flat-footedly that Jesus did everything necessary for the eternal salvation of the elect of all ages.

Paul declared that Jesus loved and purposed the redemption of the elect before the world began (2 Timothy 1:9); every holy characteristic necessary for a child of God to possess was imputed to us before we could ever display said characteristics by our actions (1 Cor 1:30); he taught that the full justification of the elect was handled within the Trinity with no middle man's involvement (Gal 3:20); Jesus did what he did according to the perfect harmony within the Trinity so that there could be no schism in their office work nor resultant deficiency (Colossians 2:9). Paul's inspired statements regarding the full and perfect redemption of the children of God go on and on (gloriously) in the New Testament.

Knowing this should then make plain that Paul was not writing to the Colossians that there were shortages ("that which is behind") in what Christ himself suffered, but that there was an overwhelming deficiency in Paul's body ("in my flesh for his body's sake") as compared to his Lord's suffering! In other words, if you could add up the sum total of sufferings experienced by Paul, then compare that to the sum total of what Jesus Christ took upon himself in Paul's stead, it would be like comparing one single atom to the fulness of the universe.

That deficit could never be filled up, but Paul declared he ought to strive to satisfy that astounding,

inconceivable deficit in appreciation for his salvation and love for the Lord. Payback, in other words, was what Paul worked toward. I've heard some preachers amongst our blessed church almost scoff at worshippers singing, "Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe", by saying that it is ludicrous to even intimate payback for what our Lord has done for us!

I do understand what they mean. They realize that salvation for the elect was purchased by the sinless life and blood of God himself, and that, even giving what He gave for us, the Lord has no deficiency in any sense to make up. True, very true, brethren.

However, I still believe that Paul would have no reservations in singing the aforementioned sentiment because he knew that payback for salvation couldn't enrich the Lord, but it could make a great difference to His church ("...and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church".) That's right; payback for our salvation should be directed to His militant bride. I recognize her today as bearing the name Primitive Baptist.

I pray the Lord will invigorate us all to hit the floor running every day to direct our energies, monies, devotions, prayers, peacefulness, humility, privations, focus, sufferings, and positivity to the benefit of the church in Jesus' name. In the vein of today's obituaries, don't place money into or place flowers atop the Lord's coffin (there is none, praise His name!), but direct all gifts as payable to the local church. She surely needs and deserves it in Christ's name.

The Great, Everlasting, Eternal God

Elder Rusty Wise
Tupelo, Mississippi

John 1:1-2: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

Our God. With existence that has no beginning nor end. With infinite ability. With knowledge never learned nor forgotten. With power beyond measure. In whom all righteousness dwells. By whom all things exist. In whom takes nothing and makes something. Whereby he is the only creator. The only giver of life, both physical or spiritual. In whom is an everlasting love for his people.

One God. Manifested In the three persons: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. These three are always in perfect harmony with one another. So the beginning is not a reference to theirs, but rather to ours.

Whereby, he made man good but also subject to vanity. Placed him in an environment perfectly suited for his needs. Gave him three instructions: 1) Be

fruitful and multiply, 2) Dress and keep the garden, 3) Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The end result. Man left alone, regardless of his goodness, regardless of the very best surroundings, regardless of instructions, will succumb to temptation. He is always thinking that the grass is better on the other side of the fence.

So is the beginning of man's failures, without God. And thus is man's deliverance through the perfect, complete and finished work of Jesus Christ.

By whom we have been foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. By whom righteousness has been imputed unto us. Of whom our sin has been atoned. Whereby we are now able to stand before God. Just, Holy, and Righteous.

Romans 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" A God who loves us without reservation. May we be blessed to shout his praises this glorious Lord's day.

Comfort in Sorrow

Elder Buddy Abernathy
Reform, Alabama

The word of God acknowledges that it is normal for Christians to mourn the loss of a loved one, but it also teaches that our sorrow is not as great as those who have no hope (see 1 Thess. 4:13). The sense of loss is much greater if it involves the loss of a small child or young adult. Nevertheless, a correct understanding of the word of God can be of help. Notice the experience of King David when he lost his small child. As long as the sick child was alive, David refused to eat or get up (2 Samuel 12:16-17). However, notice what David said after his young child died: "*But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*" (2 Samuel 12:23). "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." He experienced a mixture of joy and sorrow. He sorrowed over the fact that he would never see his son again in this world. However, he anticipated the day when he would be with him forever in that world to come.

I refer you to three scriptures which clearly illustrate this truth. First of all, the Psalmist wrote, "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.*" (Psalm 90:10). After stating the average lifespan and the difficulties which accompany old age, the psalmist Moses says life "is soon cut off and we fly away". In other words, at the moment of death, we leave the body and go somewhere else. The apostle Paul identified the place God's children go when he wrote, "*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*"

(2 Cor. 5:8). Obviously, when a child of God dies, their soul is immediately in the presence of the Lord. They are in a conscious state of contentment, peace, and rest as they await the resurrection of their body.

Notice also the happy reunion to be experienced by the Lord's people when He returns: *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."* (1 Thess. 4:14). This scripture teaches that when Jesus returns, He will bring with him the souls of His children who have already passed away from this world. Paul then writes, *"...the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."* (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

A Sinner's Thoughts

Elder Ernie Bryson
Colbert, Georgia

We are experiencing a significant drought in our area. Just this morning I attended a call for prayer at our local agricultural center. Another local pastor did an excellent job of admonishing us about our walk before God and the symbiotic relationship between prayer and repentance. He referenced a popular verse during times like these found in 2 Chronicles 7:14. As he did, I encourage you to look at verse 13 as well. God blesses a nation when his people are faithful. We should spend more time looking in the mirror than out the window.

During his remarks, the pastor mentioned the history of human efforts concerning rain making. There is quite a bit of superstition and ritual that all make remarkable claims about producing rainfall. My uncle was very adamant about hanging a dead snake in a tree. I never understood the science behind it but he insisted with a dead snake in a tree the rain would come.

The pastor got a humorous response when he mentioned that one Google result recommended washing your car. We've all heard or maybe even experienced the seemingly immediate rain that followed a good visit to the car wash. Again, not sure that's backed up by science but maybe there is something more to consider.

Didn't Elijah wash his car? Elijah the prophet lived around 900 to 800 B.C. Pretty sure they didn't have cars then, but hear me out. During the standoff with the prophets of Baal, Elijah did something extraordinary. As the skeptics watched him on the top of Mt. Carmel, he ordered that 4 barrels of water be poured upon the altar of God 3 consecutive times. The incredible context of that act was that the land was suffering a horrible time of drought. Elijah himself had

prayed that it rain not and had witnessed the suffering caused by that answered prayer. Now, as the suffering crowds watched in horror, Elijah poured out gallon after gallon after gallon of the precious substance. What was he thinking?

Was Elijah being wasteful in the greatest time of need? Was he ignorant to the suffering of a land and people desperate for rain? I don't believe he was. Elijah's act of water dumping was a tremendous act of faith. He believed that the same God who paused the rain could send it in like manner. By the way, God did exactly that. No doubt the onlookers thought this prophet had lost his mind, but he was the most sane among them.

I don't know when our local drought will end. I don't know if you're in one. But, I think it might be a good idea to wash your car. Just as a brother remarked this morning that we should all be holding umbrellas as we prayed for rain, we should walk by faith and not by sight. We should not wash our cars in arrogance or idolatry but let us wash them in faith. Elijah didn't waste water. He trusted the One who makes the water fall. I hope in whatever drought you're in, you'll wash your car and have trust and faith in the Same. Selah.

God's Answer

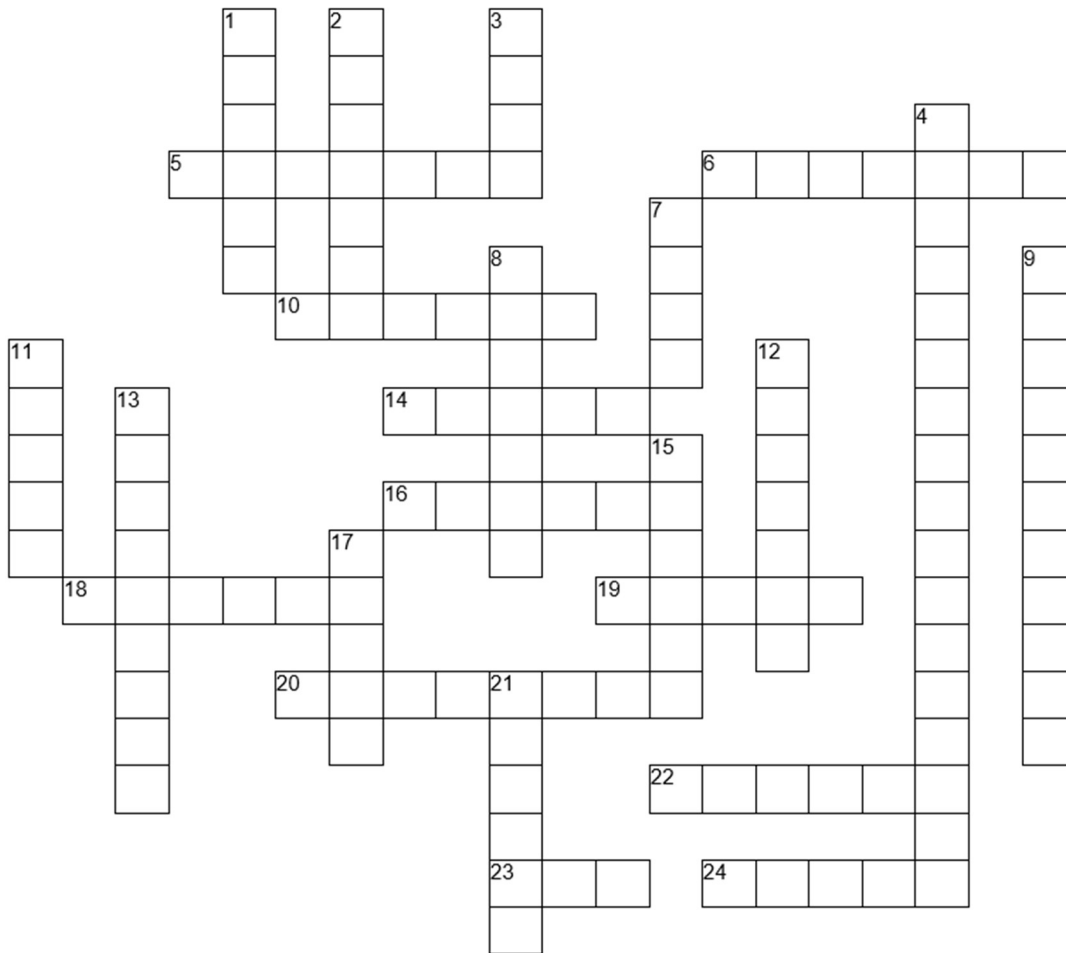
By Maltbie Davenport Babcock

Let us not forget the emphasis and miss the comfort of the words "know how" in the verse, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children..." (Luke 11:13). Are the honest, earnest prayers of God's children always heard? Always. Are they always answered? Always. In the way that we expect? Not always. If a hungry child asks for a scorpion, will his father give him a scorpion? Not if He knows how to give His children good things to eat. If He is asked for a stone, for "that which is not bread," by a child driven by hunger but deceived by appearances, will He mistake the child's inner need and real meaning?

Because our Heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts, we may ask with perfect confidence for what we want. He will give what is best. We often know how to ask more intelligently the next time because of the answer we get. The promise is kept, and we have learned something new about God's purposes and resources.

James 1:17 - *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."*

SISTER CHRISTINE'S CROSSWORD CORNER
 (Produced by Sister Christine Monroe from Vicksburg, MS)



Across

- 5. Peter, Andrew, James, and John fished in what sea?
- 6. Sarah is known as the mother of what?
- 10. What river did the Israelites cross before entering the Promised Land?
- 14. To what country did the Midianites take Joseph to sell him?
- 16. A mass departure
- 18. Whose mother brought a robe to the temple each year?
- 19. While the disciples slept, how many times did Jesus go away and pray?
- 20. What was the name of the mountain on which Aaron died?
- 22. What was the man called who made vessels out of clay?
- 23. The shortest verse in the Bible consists of how many words?
- 24. How many days was Jesus fasting in the wilderness?

Down

- 1. King Ahab was ruler of what country?
- 2. The good Samaritan helped the beaten man on the road to what city?
- 3. How many books of the Bible are in the Law?
- 4. How many years did the Israelites live in Egypt?
- 7. Which one of the disciples stood at the foot of the cross?
- 8. To what place did King Nebuchadnezzar take many Jews into captivity?
- 9. Which two gospels were not written by one of Jesus' disciples?
- 11. Who was a man after God's own heart?
- 12. Which prophet saw a vision of The Valley of Dry Bones?
- 13. "The Lord is my light and my _____, whom shall I fear?"
- 15. The longest verse in the Bible appears in what book?
- 17. The first plague turned the Nile River into what?
- 21. At what age was Jesus baptized?

(Answers on page 14)

CHURCH NEWS

Hopewell Primitive Baptist Church, Randolph, MS. July 17–19, 2026. Hopewell Primitive Baptist Church, Randolph, MS, will host a meeting the 3rd weekend in July 2026 (July 17–19). Services Friday night at 7:00p.m.; Saturday at 10:30a.m. with lunch, with no afternoon services; and Sunday at 10:00a.m. with communion, followed by lunch. Elder Jonathan Wise is the invited minister. Elder Braden Rogers is Pastor of Hopewell.

Laodicea Primitive Baptist Church, Lafayette Springs, MS. July 24–26, 2026. Laodicea Primitive Baptist Church, Lafayette Springs, MS will have its annual meeting the 4th weekend in July 2026 (July 24–26). Friday night, July 24, worship at 6:00p.m., with finger foods afterward. Saturday, July 25, at 10:30a.m. with lunch and afternoon services. Sunday, July 26, at 10:30a.m. with communion. Elder Mark Quarles is the invited minister. Everyone is invited to come and fellowship with us. Elder Steve Weaver is Pastor of Laodicea.

Little Flock Primitive Baptist Church, Burnsville, MS. Aug. 8–9, 2026. Everyone is invited to the annual meeting at Little Flock Primitive Baptist Church, Burnsville, MS the 2nd weekend in August 2026 (Aug. 8–9). Services will be Saturday night, Aug. 8, at 7:00p.m., with supper at 6:00p.m. Sunday morning worship at 10:30a.m. Elder Rickey Taylor is the invited minister. Elder Jonathan Wise is Pastor of Little Flock.

Mt. Pisgah Primitive Baptist Church, Duck Hill, MS. Aug. 7–9, 2026. Everyone is invited to the annual meeting at Mt. Pisgah Primitive Baptist Church, 1840 Hwy 404 East, Duck Hill, MS. The meeting will be the 2nd weekend in August 2026 (Aug. 7–9). Beginning Friday at 6:00p.m. with supper and service to follow. Saturday service will begin at 10:00a.m. with lunch to follow and there will be an afternoon service starting at 1:30p.m. Sunday service will begin at 10:30a.m. with lunch to follow. This will be an open meeting, and all are invited. Elder Eddie Hollowell is Pastor of Mt. Pisgah. We look forward to fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Pleasant Hill Primitive Baptist Church, Mantachie, MS. Aug. 15–16, 2026. Everyone is invited to the meeting at Pleasant Hill Primitive Baptist Church, Mantachie, MS the 3rd weekend in August 2026 (Aug. 15–16). Services Saturday, Aug. 15, at 10:30a.m. with lunch, and afternoon services at 1:00p.m. Sunday at 10:30a.m. Elder Mike Roberts is the invited minister. Elder Darren Owens is Pastor of Pleasant Hill.

Chewalla Primitive Baptist Church, Potts Camp, MS. Aug. 21–23, 2026. Everyone is invited to the

meeting at Chewalla Primitive Baptist Church, Potts Camp, MS the 4th weekend in August 2026 (Aug. 21–23). Services Friday night, Aug. 21, at 7:00p.m. Saturday, Aug. 22, at 10:30a.m., followed by lunch. Sunday at 10:30a.m., followed by lunch. Elder Ronald Lawrence is the invited minister. Elder Jerry Wise is Pastor of Chewalla.

Bethany Primitive Baptist Church, Ecrú, MS. Aug. 30, 2026. Bethany Primitive Baptist Church, Ecrú, MS will host the 5th Sunday night fellowship meeting in August 2026 (Aug. 30). Worship at 5:30p.m. with supper to follow. This meeting rotates between New Prospect, Laodicea, Bethany, and Hopewell Primitive Baptist churches.

NEW MEMBER AT BETHANY PBC

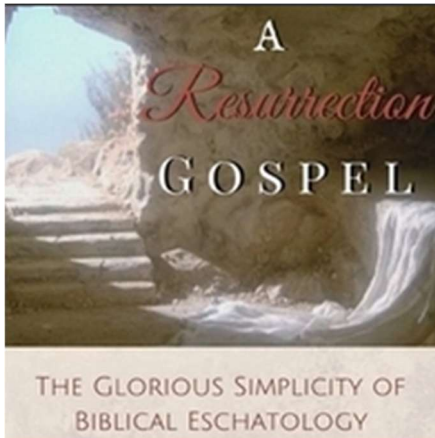


Bethany Primitive Baptist Church near Ecrú, MS rejoiced when Bro. Terry Harlow (right) came forward asking for a home in the church. He was joyfully received and baptized on May 10 by his pastor Elder Jeremy Wise (left).

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

After a Sunday service recently, my son Eli came to me and told me I “lied,” because I had said I was about to be done but kept preaching. (Jonathan Wise)

FEATURED BOOK

**A Resurrection Gospel, By Joe Holder**

The Christian gospel is good news precisely because it proclaims Christ's victory over death. A resurrection motif runs through every part of the apostolic gospel, like a golden thread that ties a garment together. As he works his way through the primary "resurrection" passages in God's word, Joe Holder explains how the literal, historical fact of Christ's resurrection underpins not only the Biblical doctrine of salvation, but also the doctrine of the end times, as well as its teaching on Christian ethics. He offers pastoral counsel and biblical comfort to real people with real problems, helping them to navigate the path of suffering with calmness of soul and peace that passes understanding. In a word, Biblical eschatology does not have to be as complicated as some teachers make it. Biblical teaching on the end times, in fact, is marked by a refreshing simplicity, by virtue of the centrality of the bodily resurrection of the dead. The good news of the gospel is "Because He lives, we shall live also!"

You may purchase this book at the link below:

<https://www.sovgrace.net/product/a-resurrection-gospel/>

You may visit the websites below to find an extensive library of Primitive Baptist books:

<https://www.sovgrace.net/shop/>

<https://marchtozion.com/book-table/>

<https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/dm00769/>

1 John 3:2-3 "[2] Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. [3] And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

**Defending the Biblical Account of Creation
Study Guide & Sermons
David Wise**

We recently concluded a Gospel of Grace Radio Broadcast series on Defending the Biblical Account of Creation, that I think is vitally important in our current culture and age. We also produced a 22-page study guide covering the major topics, with 8 sermons explaining each section. We hope this study guide and sermons can help equip you in defending God's word and defending the Biblical account of creation.

<https://clearspringspbc.com/defending-the-biblical-account-of-creation/>

HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART

(Continued from page 3)

Could you imagine hearing – which the Canaanites did which is why they were afraid of the God of the Israelites – about what was happening to the most powerful country in the world from the outside? Water turned to blood; infestations of frogs, lice, and flies; all their choice cattle and beasts are killed; then, grievous boils on the remaining cattle and the Egyptian people too; hail destroys their crops and then locusts eat anything that is left, leaving the land totally barren; then darkness, the death of the firstborns, and the destruction of their entire military. Egypt was totally destroyed from an economic, agricultural, and military perspective, and even had a good portion of its male population wiped out. God raised up Pharaoh and allowed him to harden his heart repeatedly and chose not to humble him each time to publicly manifest his power to all the Egyptians, to all the Israelites, and to all the world that there is only one true and living God, and his name is Jehovah!

Also, considering that Pharaoh is many times a type of the devil and Egypt a type of the world, it shows us that the devil can do nothing else, can do no more than what God allows him to do at the boundaries of his providential hedge. Even though Satan thinks he is in control, he is actually being suffered according to God's will to arrive at and create his own destruction, just like Pharaoh and Egypt led themselves to their own destruction by God's will in suffering Pharaoh's hardness of heart. Let us remember that God will many times give the wicked, give Pharaoh, and give the devil, just like Haman, God gives them just enough rope to hang themselves. Pharaoh's hard heart led him to his own destruction of his family and his country, and even though he thought he was hardening his own heart, the Lord was working everything after his own will the whole time to deliver his people and to destroy the enemies of God in the process. Praise God for his overruling providence that we see played out in this account of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart! (David Wise)

Thoughts from 1 Timothy 4:10

By Elder Michael Ivey
Ocean Springs, Mississippi

“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” -1 Timothy 4:10

By beginning with “For therefore ...” Paul refers readers back to the assertion made in verse 8 that “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,” which is based on an implication made in chapter 3 verse 16 that Christ Jesus is “the mystery of godliness.”

The flow of the argument is: The promise of profitable godliness that arises from the “mystery of godliness” who is Christ Jesus is why we labor and suffer reproach in that it draws us to trust in the living God who is the Savior of all (manner) of men and especially is the Savior of believers, for in addition to being the Savior in the life which is to come, He is by godliness the Savior of believers “in the life that now is.”

With the phrase “we both labour and suffer reproach” Paul intends himself, Timothy and by preservation of the word all other faithful preachers who labor and suffer reproach to preach the gospel of the “mystery of godliness” by freely spending themselves so they and others may profit from the promise of godliness in “the life that now is.” Laboring in the gospel and suffering reproach are indications of godliness since the promise of godliness is why preachers do so.

By labour Paul intends the idea of growing weary to exhaustion from burdensome, hard work and yet continuing to labor. In Matthew 11:18-19 Jesus acknowledges those who labor against sin will find rest in Him. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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.” An example of God’s notice and compassion for those who toil for the cause of Christ is given to us in Mark 8:30. After the Apostles returned from preaching and healing and told Jesus what they had done and taught the Savior said to them “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”

“To suffer reproach” is to be harshly or unfairly criticized, jealously spoken against or shunned for vigorously practicing godliness, and worse, to be reviled, defamed or persecuted by enemies of Christ. In Matthew 5:11-12 Jesus instructs believers, and especially ministers of the gospel to count such attacks as evidence God is blessing their labors “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against

you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Thus, the reaction produced by godliness when believers endure such harsh treatment is to rejoice, as indicated in Acts 5:40-41 when the apostles, after being beaten for preaching the gospel, “departed from the presence of the council, they were rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

The reason Paul gives for why he and other believers continue to labor and endure suffering is “because we trust in the living God” who never forsakes us. Hebrews 11:5 affirms God’s promise that He will never leave nor forsake us. Moreover, in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 Paul presents how believers receive profit as peace of mind from “the mystery of godliness” in “the life that now is” by trusting in the living God for deliverance while enduring weariness from their labors in service to God and suffer all things that oppose Him. “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”

The living God fulfills His promise of profitable rest and blessings, which is rest that truly refreshes our souls and blessings that truly cause our souls to rejoice. Therefore we both labor and endure suffering while trusting God “who is the Saviour of all men.” He is the Savior even now, “in the life that now is,” as indicated by the verb “is” which is parsed as present tense, meaning (God) is at present the Savior of all men. Such wording might allow for “all men” to mean “God is saving all humans in a natural way through provisions of air, water, etc.” as some commentaries assert. However, neither context nor connotation support that application concerning this verse.

The immediate context indicates “specially of those that believe” is as subset (is included) with “all men” of whom God is Savior. This subset includes those who “both labour and suffer reproach” to preach the gospel and do so trusting in God, since they assuredly are among all who are saved, are believers and are most recently mentioned. Thus, “all men” are all whom God saves, which includes those who believe.

Nor does connotative consistency with previous mention in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 of “Savior” in connection to “all men to be saved” allow an interpretation that all humans are intended. Rather its previous use suggests Paul intends all manner of people who are eternally saved. The passage reads: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” The phrase, “who will have all men to be saved” indicates the pleasure of God’s will is to save from all manner of people without regard to station or ethnicity, which Paul identifies as kings and those in authority and who in Ephesus (where Timothy was serving and received this letter) were Gentiles.

God's pleasure to do so is indicated by the phrase "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God."

Moreover, use of the coordinating conjunction "and" in the phrase "and to come unto the knowledge of truth" indicates it is likewise God's pleasure that all whom he saves know the truth. This phrase implies knowledge by spiritual insight, since it applies to "all men" whom God saves spiritually by regeneration and eternally in the resurrection. According to Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 2:14 spiritual insight can only be experienced by those who are born again, for man in his fallen natural state cannot know "the things of the Spirit of God." Therefore, saved in the phrase "will have all men saved" must imply spiritual and eternal saving of those to whom God will also have come unto the knowledge of truth.

In addition, the preposition "unto" in the phrase "come unto the knowledge of truth" conveys a sense of spatial or relational movement toward a destination or goal. With this in mind this phrase indicates it is God's pleasure to have all who are saved complete the journey toward the destination (goal) of arriving at the knowledge of truth in all its aspects. The journey begins with new birth (See John 3:5-8, Romans 8:14-16), can include gospel conversion (See Acts 2:37-41, 8:26-38, 10:44-48) and is reached in the resurrection when we will know and experience the truth of God in the reality of perfect love and peace in His presence. Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 13:12 "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" and Psalms 17:15 "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" indicate the journey to perfect knowledge of the truth for all who are saved will be completed in the resurrection.

With this in mind it follows that by stating, "who is the Savior or all men, specially those that believe" Paul intends Jesus is the Savior of all manner of people who fit either of two categories. which are: 1. People who are born again and are not believers; and, 2. People who are born again, converted by the gospel, and are faithful believers. Scriptural support for the proposition stated in category 1, that there are saved unbelievers, is found in Romans 11:26-27. Here Paul implies the elect include some born again yet unbelieving Jews. "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (see also Mark 10:17-22). From this we understand God did not repent (change His mind) concerning having chosen by election nor from having called them from death to life by regeneration certain Jews, who despite God having saved them, did not believe Jesus is the Messiah.

All who believe are "specially" saved are a subset of "all men" of whom Jesus is the Savior. In this regard

the believers have a special experience of salvation in "the life that now is" (in the temporal, or in-time portion of their lives) that cannot be had by those who are saved and do not believe. This is so because believers receive profit from the promise of the "mystery of godliness" "in the life that now is." In this regard, the phrase "those that believe" applies to believers who vigorously engage in godliness in labor and suffering and "trust in the living God." By doing so they gain more fellowship with the Spirit of Christ and have better informed deliverance experiences in the "life that now is" while joyously anticipating fulfillment of the promise of eternal life "in that which is to come."

The immediate context of this temporal saving (time salvation) of believers "in the life that now is" applies to preachers who "both labour and suffer reproach." From which we can infer Paul intends those who vigorously employ godliness. This is confirmed in verse 16, where Paul instructs Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

In broader terms the promise of saving in the "life that now is" by more and better fellowship with Christ and informed experiences of deliverance applies to all believers who vigorously pursue godliness in their labors and sufferings while trusting in God. In Luke 7:7-8 Jesus explains how informed experiences of fellowship and deliverance work: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

And finally, in Titus 1:1-3 Paul affirms the saving impact of the gospel "in the life that now is" in relation to godliness by acknowledging the truth according to the preached word: "Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour..."

What Does John 3:16 Teach?

By Elder Marty Smith
Woodstock, Georgia

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." -John 3:16

John 3:16 may be one of the most often cited, and most often misunderstood, verses in the Bible. Four of the main sources of misunderstanding are:

1. Interpreting the phrase “whosoever believeth” to mean “whosoever will choose to believe” instead of its grammatical meaning, which is “whosoever does believe”.

2. Interpreting the word “gave” to mean “offered” instead of its plain meaning, which is “bestowed”.

3. Interpreting the word “world” to mean “the entire human race”, instead of its contextual meaning, which is “the collection of people chosen of God.”

4. Interpreting the word “loved” to mean “an emotional attraction” instead of its scriptural meaning, which is “an everlasting connection.”

Let’s consider these sources of misunderstanding one at a time:

1. Interpreting “Believeth”: One has to change both the tense, and the intent, of John 3:16 to make “whosoever believeth” mean “whosoever will choose to believe”! The phrase “whosoever believeth” means “those who are currently believing”. This verse is not a warning, or a proposal, to induce unbelievers to manufacture belief within their skeptical souls. It is, rather, strong evidence given to those who do believe - evidence that God loves them greatly. It is evidence to believers that God has given them the greatest gift in the universe: His only begotten Son, to die for their sins, to lay in the grave, to rise again, to return for them.

2. Interpreting “Gave”: There is an important difference between “offered” and “gave”. When something is offered, the offeror expects an acceptance or a refusal. When someone gave a gift, the possibility of refusal may or may not exist. For example, “And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” (Genesis 2:20)

If one person gives another a shirt or sweater, the intended recipient often has the option to refuse. If God gives life, that option does not exist. No one had the right to refuse their parents’ role in giving them physical life. Similarly, someone who is dead in trespasses and in sins (Ephesians 2:1) cannot accept, and cannot refuse, everlasting life in Jesus Christ. God has not offered them Jesus Christ to accept or reject, but God has given them Jesus Christ and he indwells them by his own sovereign purpose. Nowhere does the Bible describe Christ being offered to man; Christ was offered once to God, on the cross – and God accepted that offering.

3. Interpreting “World”: The Greek word for “world” in John 3:16 is “kosmos,” which means “arrangement” or “collection” or “system”. It is used in many places in the New Testament, and must be interpreted in context. For example, it is used here: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the

Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17)

If “world” here is “the entire human race,” then the scriptures above teach, “If any man love the entire human race, the love of the Father is not in him.” Of course, that is not a valid Bible teaching, because “kosmos” does not mean “the entire human race” here, it means “the system of selfishness and cruelty which permeates fallen human culture.” Also consider this verse: “Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” (2 Peter 3:6)

The entire human race did not perish in the flood; Noah’s family (8 people) survived on the ark. So, what does “world” mean in John 3:16? It is the collection of people whom God the Father gave to God the Son before creation (Ephesians 1:3-4), and for whom Jesus Christ died, and of whom Jesus Christ said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” [John 6:37]. It is the world God saves, without a single loss.

4. Interpreting “Loved”: “God so loved” does not mean that God felt so strongly about human beings that He would offer them a chance at heaven. “God so loved” means that God bound Himself so strongly to the people He chose in Christ that the bond could never be broken. In the New Testament, the Greek word “agape” is translated as both “love” and “charity.” Consider these scriptures about agape:

“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Colossians 3:14)

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:10)

God’s love for His people binds Him to them, and His love fulfills His own holy law for them. Therefore, if God ever loves a person, that person will always be bound to God, and cannot be cast away into “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” as written in II Thessalonians 1:9. If God loves the entire human race, then the entire human race is going to heaven. Since II Thessalonians 1:9 and Revelation 20:15 indicates that some will be cast away, we must conclude that God does not love every human being. We also find in scripture that God loves His people with a love that is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3), unending (I Corinthians 13:8), and inseparable (Romans 8:38-39) - and so God’s people from every nation are kept forever in Christ Jesus the Lord.

So, many people mistakenly understand John 3:16 to mean: “For God was so emotionally attracted to the entire human race, that he offered his only begotten Son to them, that whosoever will choose to believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” A better understanding of John 3:16 is: “For God so permanently connected himself to the people he chose, that he bestowed his only begotten Son, that whosoever is believing in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Ultimately, the wording in the

KJV bible is just right, if we will only understand it in total scriptural context. John 3:16 is a wonderful verse of scriptural truth, but the verse does not describe an offer, or a proposal; it proclaims a clear declaration of the mighty and extravagant love of God in giving every one of His elect children the gift that cannot be refused: the everlasting life of the Lord Jesus.

Give And Do Without Expecting To Receive

Elder Clayton Nowell
Headland, Alabama

As we look ahead to our activities for this week, wouldn't it be a blessing if they could somehow make a positive impact on someone's life? In Caesar's kingdom, the typical thought process around us is, "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." Or more often, the more ambitious will say, "I'll scratch your back IF you'll scratch mine." But either way, if effort is expended, then something in return is usually expected.

Now, while that works well in many applications, what about the kingdom of God? Granted, a spirit of cooperation is great and returning common courtesies, indeed, makes for a more pleasant environment. But, if we are to make a positive impact in the Kingdom of God, then we must go beyond what is so often practiced, and remember how the Lord teaches us that we are to give, not expecting anything in return.

For instance, Paul said in Acts 20:35, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Notice, the Lord said it is more blessed "to give than to receive" and not "to give expecting to receive." Also, Proverbs 19:17 helps us to understand more of how the Lord "makes" this principle work. It says, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he (i.e., the Lord) pay him again." Now, since the Lord is altogether faithful, since nothing escapes His watchful eye, and since He is able in every respect to fulfill His promises, then we can freely do those acts of kindness and compassion, resting confidently in the fact that the Lord will do what is right toward us. After all, He has already given to us far more than we could ever deserve; and so, we need to remember that God doesn't owe us anything! If we never received another blessing from Him, we still have enough to praise Him in all eternity for the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Savior! And that's even without considering all we receive daily of His mercy and grace.

Another passage that teaches this principle is found in Luke 14. Verses 12-14 say, "Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a

supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." In other words, the gift of eternal life that Jesus has already given to us is worth far more than ANYTHING that we will ever do for others in this life. So, it really doesn't "cost" us to do for others.

Friends, God is loving and gracious. So this week, go ahead and do those alms in secret and do those acts of kindness, not expecting anything in return. If our motives are pure, and if we have done those things in love and compassion, then the Lord will bless it.

BIBLE CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS

(Puzzle on Page 8 – Answers are Backwards)

Across

- 5. eelilag
- 6. snoitan
- 10. nadroj
- 14. tpyge
- 16. sudoxe
- 18. leumas
- 19. eerht
- 20. rohtnuom
- 22. rettop
- 23. owt
- 24. ytrof

Down

- 1. learsi
- 2. ohcirej
- 3. evif
- 4. ytrihtderdnuhuoof
- 7. nhoj
- 8. nolybab
- 9. ekuldnakram
- 11. divad
- 12. leikeze
- 13. noitavlas
- 15. rehtse
- 17. doolb
- 21. ytriht

HOW DIFFERENT IS OUR LOT

By Elder Ralph Harris (Deceased)

Christ said to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep." Strong words were those, but very true, and for this the Jews were prepared, again to stone Him (See John 10:26-31). How despicable was their religion—a religion that did not restrain them from seeking to murder the very ones who told the truth—a religion that professed great honor to Moses, and yet left its advocates free to attempt, and if possible, to carry out the destruction of the very One that Moses foreshadowed. How sad when men's religion has no better influence upon them than to leave them among the very worst of men! Such an evil creed can only be an abomination in the sight of a pure and holy God.

The unbelieving Jews, who so proudly proclaimed their own superiority and holiness, could not bear to be told that they were not the children of God. If they had actually believed that Christ was the imposter that they accused Him of being they would have simply ignored His charges against them as the mere ravings of a crazed wretch, but He had shown too many undeniable evidences of His divinity for them to simply dismiss Him. They could not deny that He was more than a mere man, but this had no good effect upon their hard and stony hearts. It did not cause them to fall before Him as in holy awe beseeching His mercies and His forgiveness, but rather, their evil hearts were enflamed and enraged against Him. And again, if He had not removed Himself out of their midst, as He had already done on more than one occasion, they would indeed have stoned Him.

On this occasion Christ spoke some of the sweetest words believers will ever hear. He said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-30). O, how blessed are we who have a sweet hope that we are among the sheep of His pasture! How precious it is to have the assurances that this text affords, and, how different is our lot from those who hate God and only "have their portion in this life" (Psa. 17:14).

(From "Advocate and Messenger", Dec. 2006)

THE COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST

By Elder Rickey Taylor
Booneville, Mississippi

Hebrews 5:1-2: *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.*

In Numbers 3:10, God instructs Moses that Aaron and his seed would serve in the line of the priesthood. This was not an honor that Aaron took upon himself, but one that God called him and his sons to do. The priesthood was to serve the twelve tribes to represent them to God and be a spokesman for them. The lineage of Levi - who Aaron and his descendants were members of - would serve Israel for around 1,500 years in that capacity. So indeed, this was a great honor for them to be chosen of God for such an important work. Yet they were also just men just like everyone else; men who had infirmities just like the people they represented. Because of that they could relate to them in a compassionate way, as we see in

Heb 5:2. It's hard to have a stiff neck when you are asking forgiveness for your shortcomings as well as for others. So all that the high priest could offer for himself and the people was the blood of bulls and goats, which could never take away sins (Heb 10:4). He would have to leave the temple with his head down still feeling that though he gave an offering, yet he and the people he represented could not feel complete forgiveness. Because the offering was only a shadow of better things to come in the future (Heb 10:1). That better thing is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Who did come and offered up a perfect life and washed our sins away. The old high priest and the people he served didn't live to see who would complete the work of redemption for them. The coming of Jesus Christ and the New Testament church had that good news, for it was a much better testament that what they had.

Christ is now our great High Priest, he did not come after the order of Aaron, but the order of Melchisedec. It is an unchangeable priesthood. He is the only priest that we will ever have or need. When we come to his throne of grace to find help in time of need, we will see that he is a compassionate high priest, that is both man and God and understands our pain and short comings. He is ever at the right hand of God to make intercessions for us.

There is one more God-called servant that relates to our story - the gospel minister that we have today. A true God-called minister, like Aaron and his sons, does not take this honor upon himself, but rather he is called out from among men by God. He is like unto the priests in the Old Testament, for he has his shortcomings, he has to wrestle with sin and the devil just like everyone else; going himself through battles of sin and Satan, he can advise his congregation to keep heart, and fight the good fight of faith. He can pray for them as well as himself, knowing that Satan is like a roaring lion seeking to rob them of the joy of their salvation. We ministers should consider John 10 where it teaches about the great Shephard, Jesus Christ, and his loving and compassionate way that the good Shepard is always seeking the welfare of his sheep. The sheep know the compassionate voice of our Lord. Ministers are to use these examples of our Savior and seek the well-being of the people that they preach to on Sundays from the pulpit. A minister should have a report of how things are going for them, and help them in any way that he can, but especially pray for them regularly (1 Tim 3:7). Lord, give us the strength to serve you and glorify your name here in the gospel kingdom.

God be with you until, by God's grace, we meet again in the next Glad Tidings or in heaven.