

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

December 2007

Vol. 41 / No. 12

TRUE BRANCHES OF CHRIST

by Marvin L. Weir

The fifteenth chapter of John portrays Christ as the true vine and individual Christians as the branches. One who obeys the gospel is a branch in Christ. Man-made denominations are **not** the branches spoken of by John as is made clear in verse five. The disciples who are followers of Christ are the branches under discussion. Each child of God has the responsibility to produce fruit as a branch in the kingdom.

Denominations teach that these “branches” are different “churches” in a futile attempt to justify denominationalism. The context, however, will not allow such an erroneous interpretation. It is individual people under consideration and not different religious groups. Man-made religious bodies are desperate to find New Testament Scripture to back up their existence but they will search in vain. There is only “one body” (Ephesians 4:4), and **one** does not mean **many!**

Only those who obey the gospel (Romans 1:16) are branches “in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17). One puts on Christ in the act of baptism (Galatians 3:27). A penitent believer who obeys the gospel plan of salvation is “baptized into Christ” (Romans 6:3) and “raised” to walk “in newness of life” (verse 4).

One who does **not** bear fruit is not maturing in Christ. The apostle Paul identifies the fruit that every child of God is to produce as being, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, [and] self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). The

Christian who is bearing fruit for the Master will continue to mature, as Peter demonstrates in saying, “*Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love*” (2 Peter 1:5-7). A Christian will also strive to teach others the gospel in planting and watering as the opportunity arises (1 Corinthians 3:6).

When the Word of God is proclaimed, the seed of the kingdom is sown (Luke 8:11). The gospel is still to this very day God’s power to save souls from sin (Romans 1:16). No one has ever been saved by the wisdom of man (compare with 1 Corinthians 1:20-25), and this truth strikes a death-blow to all the gimmicks that are employed today by religious shysters to draw a crowd. A true follower of Christ who is bearing fruit for the Lord will preach the Word and be content to let God give the increase.

The Word of God has the ability to clean and make pure. The apostle Peter says to brethren, “*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (1 Peter 1:22-23).

It has already been noted that a person puts on Christ at the point of

immersion into Christ (Galatians 3:27). One who is **in** Christ must choose to continue to **abide in** Christ (John 15:4). If one fails to “*walk in the light as he is in the light*” (1 John 1:7) or “*goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ*” (2 John 9), he does not “*abide in the vine*” (John 15:4) and **cannot** bear fruit.

Many today pretend to be “branches” while refusing to do the Lord’s will. Jesus notes this truth in saying, “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:21-23). May we submit to the Master’s commands so that we will not hear Him say at the judgment, “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46).

John 15:6 says, “*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*” This makes it clear that Jesus is speaking of individuals and not “churches.” One is obligated to remain in the vine. Whatever is required to do he must do or be purged from the vine. This shows that man can apostatize and lose his soul.

Different fruit does not come from the same vine. Religious division is contrary to Jesus’ prayer (John 17:20-21). All “branches” in Christ are to produce the same fruit. In other words, each Christian is to “*speak the same thing...that there be no divisions...be perfectly joined together in the same*

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

... is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

FCGN is mailed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name we must have a complete address, including number and street name, or R.R. or HCR number, plus box number, or a P.O. Box number and the **NINE DIGIT ZIP CODE**. This paper is supported by voluntary contributions for which we are grateful. Financial information will be furnished upon request. **Mail all address corrections or manuscripts to:**

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

P.O. Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Lee MosesEDITOR
Phone(870) 625-3217
E-Mailcocfcgn@centurytel.net
Website . . .www.fultoncountygospelnews.org
Brian DixonWebmaster
E-Mailhalopages@yahoo.com

continued from page 1

mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

One cannot claim to **follow** Christ while refusing to obey His commands. A true branch of Christ abides in His Word and enjoys fellowship with the Father and the Son and all others who are content to abide in the teaching of Christ. May we strive to be true branches of Christ!

1272 Bonham St.
Paris, TX 75460-4059

BEHOLD THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD

by Lee Moses

“I don’t believe that God would send me to hell because I didn’t do everything He said. God knows my heart, and He just wants me to be happy.” This statement sums up the prevailing American religion. People

generally believe in God, but only as long as God meets their definition of “good.” To them, “good” means unobtrusive, easygoing, flexible, non-judgmental, and infinitely forgiving. Yet God’s inspired word instructs, *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off”* (Romans 11:22). There are two sides to God, both of which we need to behold—that is, we must see and take special note of both of them¹—if we are to understand and appreciate either the goodness or severity of God.

Is God really severe?

Many of us have grown up singing the precious words “Jesus loves me! this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” And indeed the Bible does say just that; repeatedly affirming the love of God to the entire world (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:16; et al.). God is loving, gracious, and good. But not His love, grace, nor goodness precludes His severity.

When the world had fallen completely into sin, the Lord said, *“I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them”* (Genesis 6:5-7). And He did what He said He would; destroying the world, the animals, and all mankind save one family, *“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished”* (2 Peter 3:6).

Shortly following their Divinely-approved ordination as priests, *“Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them”* (Leviticus 10:1, New King James Version). As they offered their worship, Nadab and Abihu may have thought to themselves, “This is a truly great way to

worship. No, God did not say to do it **exactly** this way. But He knows our hearts, and we just want to find exciting new ways to worship Him.” Regardless of their thoughts, God responded with swift severity: *“And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD”* (Leviticus 10:2).

God has always judged with severity. He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their selfish and lustful sins; and they *“are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”* (Jude 7). When Korah and his compadres thought to take to themselves the authority that only God can give,

The ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation (Numbers 16:31-33).

God does not change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17); and anyone who persists in rebellion will face the severity of His judgment. As God had prepared water to destroy the world by the Flood, *“the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:7).

How can such a severe God be good?

To use “severe” as a one word description of God does not paint a complete picture of the perfect character of God. While we are to behold God’s severity, we are also to behold His beneficence, His kindness, His generosity—all part of His unmatched **goodness**.²

Jesus noted that people are generally good toward their friends and

family—but much less so toward strangers, and not at all toward their enemies (Matthew 5:43, 46-47). But God is good toward all: *“He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”* (verse 45). Mankind’s unworthiness and unappreciation does not diminish God’s desire to be good to all mankind. Contrariwise, God makes **every effort** to be good to every man and woman, regardless of cost to Himself: *“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:7-8).

God’s severity does not demean His goodness. God is absolutely **just**; that is, He is upright and fair (Psalm 145:17; Romans 9:14).³ He *“will render to every man according to his deeds”* (Romans 2:6). If we better understood the severity of sin, we could grasp why sin demands severe punishment (compare with Psalm 5:4-5). In a sense, it could be said that God’s goodness **demand**s His severity.

That God is severe does not mean that He is **excessive**. While God does execute judgment strictly and punish intensely, He does not relish doing so (Ezekiel 33:11). God is not infinitely forgiving in the sense that He can forgive those who refuse to repent, but His forgiveness is limitless to those who **do** repent (Isaiah 55:7).

What should be my response to the goodness and severity of God?

One should not huffily reject God and His word because they do not conform to one’s own preconceived notions. *“Be not highminded, but fear . . . take heed lest he also spare not thee”* (Romans 11:20-21). Neither should one’s response be to attack the Christian who faithfully proclaims God’s word (compare with Galatians 4:16). One’s response should be to love the truth, and to love the God

who gave it (2 Thessalonians 2:10; John 17:17).

One’s response should be to change his practices as one who appreciates the goodness and severity of God. *“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”* (2 Peter 3:11-12). If we know that the judgment is coming, and that it may come at any moment, why would we live as though we are unconcerned about it? *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”* (Romans 2:4). If we appreciate God’s goodness, why would we spurn His word? We cannot use His goodness as a crutch to allow ourselves to live wickedly. God indeed knows our hearts; and the truth is, one who does not obey God **does not love him!** (1 John 5:3).

Conclusion

America, and the world, has formed God into the image it desires (compare with Romans 1:22-23). In the minds of many, God is not much different from Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny: soft and cuddly, and according to one’s own imagination. However, there are two sides of God to behold. God is severe—He will judge the world through His Son, and will punish appropriately. And God is good—He has provided for all the means of pardon for the Judgment, at priceless sacrifice to Himself. How are you going to respond to the goodness and severity of God?

¹ “*eidon*,” in Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Univ. Of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 279.

² “*chreestotees*,” BDAG, p. 1090.

³ “*dikaios*,” BDAG, p. 246.

“A VERY LOVELY SONG”

by Lee Moses

The preaching of the Gospel should be attractive to God’s people. Although there are certainly those who will plug their ears and run the other way, there are yet many people who appreciate good, sound Gospel preaching. Unfortunately, even among those who appreciate the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, there are many who do not heed the things that are said. “I sure enjoyed that sermon on seeking first the kingdom of God,” one will say, and then miss evening worship because the late football game went into overtime. “Boy, it sure it shameful the way some Christians act,” another will say following a sermon on the Christian’s example; and the following day he will regale his fellow employees with dirty jokes and foul-mouthed tirades against the boss and customers. “That was a great sermon on prayer,” another will exclaim, and fail to utter one private prayer the following week.

Such was the problem in Ezekiel’s day. Ezekiel did not have to face the same persecution other prophets did. He prophesied to Israelites who were in captivity, who could readily observe that God’s warnings were being fulfilled against them. The people, including the elders of the people, would often come to Ezekiel to receive counsel. And they often enjoyed hearing him, even though he offered stern rebuke against their practices.

Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee (“of thee,” American Standard Version) by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy

words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not (Ezekiel 33:30-32).

To the people, Ezekiel was a good entertainer. He was probably a very eloquent speaker with a lustrous voice, able to hold the people in rapt attention as he prophesied to them the word of God. Nevertheless, as they heard his words, they had no intent of **doing** them.

It is a sad thing that many today hear the preaching of the Gospel and hear it as nothing more than “*a very lovely song.*” Indeed, the preaching of the Gospel is a very lovely song—even to God it is “*a sweet savour of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 2:15). However, as we are “*called by the Gospel,*” we are urged and commanded to **act** upon its teachings: “*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle*” (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15). It is only when we heed and obey the proclamation of the Gospel that we can truly appreciate it for the very lovely song it is.

COME AND SEE THE FCGN WEBSITE

Many more visitors have been coming to the *FCGN* website lately at www.fultoncountygospelnews.org. Since our recent move to a new server, our traffic has increased 445 percent.

As for our part, we try to keep the website regularly updated. Our webmaster, brother **Brian Dixon**, does an excellent job of keeping things up and running. We hope to expand greatly the available archives soon, thanks to the work of brother **James Kinsey** of Sherwood, AR. Along with archiving

past issues, the new issue can always be found at our home page. We also feature past articles, and articles not included in the print edition of *FCGN*. In the coming weeks, we will be featuring the six-part series “The Role of Women in the Lord’s Church” by Ted J. Clarke. This series originally ran from October 1996-November 1997.

We hope that those of you who have Internet access will see what is available at www.fultoncountygospelnews.org!

[Lee Moses]

NOVEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

CHURCHES

Church of Christ (Agnos, AR)	50.00
Pilot Church of Christ (Mammoth Spring, AR)	100.00
Church of Christ (Viola, AR)	25.00
Crossroads Church of Christ (Gepp, AR)	100.00
Gospel Hill Church of Christ (Pottersville, MO)	100.00
Church of Christ (Elizabeth, AR)	25.00
Church of Christ (Bakersfield, MO)	50.00
Oak Grove Church of Christ (Walnut Ridge, AR)	25.00
Church of Christ (Camp, AR)	30.00
Church of Christ (Sturkie, AR)	25.00
Church of Christ (Moko, AR)	50.00
Moody Church of Christ (West Plains, MO)	50.00
Clarkridge Church of Christ (Gainesville, MO)	75.00
Jeff Church of Christ (Thayer, MO)	25.00
Church of Christ (Poughkeepsie, AR)	50.00
Church of Christ (Marion, IL)	25.00
Lowell Church of Christ (Springdale, AR)	75.00

INDIVIDUALS

Gary & Ann Wilson (Hot Springs, AR)	35.00
Hazel Stokes (West Plains, MO)	10.00
Wilene & Luceile (Franklin, AR)	20.00
Levern Trussell (Clyde, TX)	60.00
Hurley Crews (Grand Bay, AL)	25.00
Anonymous	15.00
M/M Charles Tostige (Falmouth, MI)	50.00
Anonymous In memory of Marcillia Porter	75.00
Glenn McCoy (Yorba Linda, CA)	100.00
Glen Walker (Burton, MI)	100.00

GOD’S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

1. **LORD’S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16: 1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God’s word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men’s doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P.O. BOX 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554
 ADDRESS
 SERVICE
 REQUESTED

Periodical Postage
 Paid At
 Mammoth Spring, AR
 72554-0998
 Publication #211780