

# 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

Volume 33

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

July 1999

No. 7

## DOES GOD PUNISH?

by Marvin Rickett

Some folks believe that "a loving God would not send anyone to hell." They are appalled at a religious faith that believes He would, and declare that kind of God to be a "barbaric God." Some religious people think there is no such place as hell. Yet they believe in heaven. There are more people who believe in heaven than there are who believe in hell. This is strange indeed, since the same Bible passage which reveals one also reveals the other, Matthew 25:34-46. There are others who think hell is only temporary, that those sent there will be immediately annihilated.

All of these denials arise because people don't want to accept what the Scriptures say about God's punishment. There are some questions we need to address and let the Scriptures give the answers.

Does God punish? "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). The Scriptures teach that God does punish. He **must** punish. Divine justice demands it. God is Holy, and to let sin go unpunished would take away from His Holiness. He would be less than God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). The one who does the sinning is the one who deserves to do the dying. The only just punishment for sin is eternal death - by decree of God's justice (Romans 6:23). God could not remain God and **not** punish.

Does God take pleasure in punishing the unrighteous? Does the Lord delight in the eternal death of the wicked? No. He says, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves and live" (Ezekiel 18:32). It must be a great sorrow to the Lord for any one of His beloved creatures to be punished. It is not a lack of love on His part that sends anyone to hell. It is the

lack of holiness and righteousness on man's part - the guilt of his own sins (Isaiah 59:2). The Lord desires all to be saved: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2:4). Yet, not all will be saved, because they choose not to. God will not override their choice. Man must repent to escape God's punishment: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions" (Ezekiel 18:30). The many refuse to repent.

Does God punish eternally? Will the condemned person suffer punishment perpetually? Jesus himself said that it is so. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43,44). The fire is not quenched because it has continuous "fuel." It **never** shall be quenched because those being punished have continuous existence. The worm does not die because it has continuous "food." This language confirms that fact that punishment in hell is everlasting.

Is God unfair to punish? Is it inconsistent with His love and goodness? Paul asked, "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" His answer applies to all three of these questions: "God forbid!" (Romans 3:5,6). God has the right to punish.

Some say that the God of the New Testament, as revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ, is less severe than the God of the Old Testament. But He is the same God! Both Old and New Testaments reveal the goodness and severity of God. Jesus himself talked as much about punishment as any other New Testament character. He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Man could kill the bodies of the saints (physical death), but they could not kill the soul (spiritual death). Even the devil could cause the body to be

killed, but he lacked the power to kill the soul. (He might entice a person to forfeit this soul through temptation and sin, but he lacked the power to administer death to the soul.) Only God has the power to "destroy both body **and** soul in hell." He's the One we should fear.

The reason folks reject the idea of God punishing condemned persons eternally in hell is their failure to comprehend the enormity of sin. This is compounded by their failure to comprehend the Holiness of God. To many people, sin against God is no more serious than childish infraction against their parents' rules. It may deserve a spanking now and then, but surely doesn't deserve the horrors of hell. How utterly they fail to understand the severe consequences of sin! That's why we must let the Scriptures speak and not rely on our own fallible human reasonings. If the Scriptures show that eternal torment in the devil's Hell is the **only** just recompense for sin, then we must believe that sin is enormous and deadly. Believing this, we must make every effort to put away sin.

All the effort we could put forth to defeat sin is useless, though, if it were not for the grace and mercy of God. We all **deserved** to be punished for our sins. It is only by the grace of God that anyone shall escape. God Himself provided a way for us to take in order to avoid His Divine punishment. Through His son Jesus Christ, who took the punishment for us, we may escape everlasting punishment. We may reject this way of salvation and get what we deserve in the Day of Judgment. Or we may accept the way provided and escape God's punishment. But we must accept it on His terms. We may escape the punishment our sins deserve by accepting the Lord through faith and obedience (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:1-5).

P.O. Box 159  
Bay, AR 72411

*When we are wrong, make us willing to change; and when we are right, make us easy to live with.*

*Children need models more than critics.*

**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

Ted J. Clarke ..... EDITOR

Phone ..... (870) 625-3217

Fax ..... (870) 625-3137

E-Mail ..... tedjc@centuryinter.net

**WHY THE SILENCE?**

by M. Heath

**INTRODUCTION**

Sadly, in many congregations throughout the brotherhood it seems that sound preaching on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage has been practically nonexistent. Why hasn't there been more preaching on this subject? It certainly isn't because there hasn't been a problem with it. All one need do is to look around to see the magnitude of this problem.

During the past few years, numerous homes of our brothers and sisters in Christ have been rent asunder by the ugly specter of divorce. All the while the pulpit has remained silent. Why? Many of those who have divorced have unscripturally remarried, and still there has been practically no preaching on this subject! There has been no shortage of preaching on the general themes of love, grace, positive thinking, and forgiveness. All of these are good subjects, but preaching that deals frankly and thoroughly with divorce and remarriage has been conspicuously absent from many of our pulpits. **Why?** I try to attend as many lectureships as I can, and many of them that I have attended in the past few years have had at least one excellent sermon on divorce and remarriage. But what is it about this subject that causes local

preachers to avoid it like the plague? I believe there are several reasons that we find it so difficult to preach on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in our home congregations.

**THE EMOTIONAL FACTOR**

This is one of the most emotionally charged issues that can be dealt with, especially where children are involved. When we teach on marriage, divorce, and remarriage we are affecting not only individuals but entire families. Greater sacrifices may have to be made in this area than in any other area of life. Children may have to suffer the loss of one of their parents. Wives may have to raise the children alone. Husbands may be resigned to live alone. Christians may be resigned to living a life of celibacy. Because of the emotional factor, a preacher who clearly and thoroughly proclaims the Lord's teaching concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, can very quickly become unpopular to a great many in the congregation. When a preacher declares the truth on this subject some may wrongly assume that he is threatening their family. However, it is not the preacher that is causing the problem, it is their sin and their refusal to accept the truths that are being preached.

**THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM**

There are so many in the church that are either unscripturally divorced or are in unscriptural marriages that it is becoming almost epidemic. There is probably not one person in the church that has not in some way been affected by the marriage, divorce, and remarriage problem. Either they themselves, a close relative, or a good friend, have been unscripturally divorced and/or remarried. And since the remedy for an unscriptural marriage requires such great sacrifices with life long consequences, it is simpler just to avoid the subject entirely. It's never easy to point out that one may be an adulterer. It is much easier (and safer) to speak of sin in general terms. It becomes much more difficult when specific sin is pointed out and people perceive it applies to them. Often, people don't want to hear the truth, and telling adulterers they must forsake adulterous unions is never pleasant, especially when children are involved, but **tell them we must lest we be guilty of their blood** (Acts 20:26-27; Ezek. 33:1-6).

**THE FEAR FACTOR**

Fear of losing a job. Fear of confrontation. Fear of breaking up families. Fear

of reduced attendance (and with it reduced contribution). Fear of being disliked or unpopular. Fear of being labeled as "negative," or as a "legalist," or worse. On and on we could go. So, what's the problem? Could it be that we are more concerned with the things of this life than the things of the next life? Are these fears justified? Some of them certainly may be. Anytime one proclaims the truth in a clear and uncompromising way, some of the above fears may indeed become a reality. Look at the fate of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), of the apostle Paul (2 Cor. 11:23-27), and the greatest example of them all, the Lord (Luke 23:33). But Jesus tells us, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

**DOCTRINAL CONFUSION**

Some preachers say they are confused and claim that the Master's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is just too difficult to understand, and therefore it somehow absolves them of the responsibility of preaching on it. Is the Lord's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage really confusing? Of course it isn't! God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). So where does this supposed confusion come from? Obviously, it comes from men. I could become very confused by reading the conflicting theories in books written by men. But I don't get confused when I read what the Lord has said. I believe that anyone who really wants to understand God's will concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage will have no trouble understanding it, if they will simply study what the Lord has said and forget what men have said. If people will stop appealing to what this man or that man says, and will concentrate on what God's word says, they can get a true picture of God's will. After all, we are going to be judged by what the Lord has said, not by what men may say (John 12:48). The Lord has said "...Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9). Brethren, is this too difficult to understand? I don't think so. But men have confused it in an effort to justify unscriptural relationships. They often appeal to strange or hypothetical situations in order to cloud the real situation. Instead, what they need to do is to compare their

**actual** situation with what the Lord taught. According to the Lord's teaching in Matthew 19:9, unless you divorced your spouse because of his/her fornication, you cannot scripturally remarry, **period!** And if you didn't divorce your spouse because of his/her fornication and are remarried, then you are committing adultery. (The same thing also applies to the one you are marrying.) Simple isn't it? What may be hard is accepting it (Matt. 19:11). We must love the Lord enough to do whatever he requires of us (Matt. 10:37; John 14:15). We read in Matthew 19:12 where some became celibate ("made themselves eunuchs") for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Likewise, some today will also have to become celibate for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

**CONCLUSION**

Brethren, let us resolve to lovingly declare the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), both publicly and privately, regardless of the consequences to ourselves. Let's show enough love for those who are already involved in a divorce or remarriage, and for our young people who will be marrying in the future, to boldly speak out, teaching and warning them, as often as necessary, before it becomes too late. Otherwise, the problem will only continue to get worse, and we will not be blameless.

P.O. Box 496  
Princeton, KY 42445

**GOD'S SIMPLE PLAN OF SALVATION**

by Thomas F. Eaves, Sr.

Recently my wife and I went into a sandwich shop to each lunch. On the counter was a stack of booklets titled, "God's Simple Plan of Salvation." Later as I read the material I came across two statements which caught my attention.

On salvation the booklet had,

"Just pray: Oh God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus was my substitute when he died on the cross. I believe His shed blood, death, burial and resurrection were for me. I now receive Him as my Savior. I thank You for the forgiveness of my sins, and the gift of salvation and everlasting life, because of your merciful grace. Amen."

It is interesting to note that in the Bible conversions, not one single person was commanded to pray "the sinner's prayer." Simon the sorcerer was commanded to

repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22), but he had already believed and had been baptized (Acts 8:13). Simon was a believer (Christian) who had sinned and was instructed on how he could obtain forgiveness.

The answer to the question of the alien sinner, "What must I do to be saved?" is clearly set forth in Acts chapter two.

1. Peter preached Jesus Christ - Acts 2:22-36
2. The people were convicted - Acts 2:37.
3. Convinced of their sin, they asked for instructions - Acts 2:37.
4. Peter answered their question - Acts 2:38.
5. They obey Peter's instructions - Acts 2:41.
6. God added them to the church - Acts 2:47.

On baptism the booklet mentioned above had,

"You should be baptized in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as a public testimony of your salvation, and then unite with a Bible believing church without delay."

Nowhere in the Bible do you read that people were baptized or told to be baptized "as a public testimony of one's salvation." You do read in the Bible that baptism was,

1. For remission of sins - Acts 2:38.
2. To wash away sins - Acts 22:16.
3. To put one into Christ - Galatians 3:27.
4. To unite the sinner with the death of Jesus Christ - Romans 6:3-4.
5. For salvation - I Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16.

When you read man's comments on the scripture (even this article) be sure to compare it with the Word of God.

1350 Carmel Dr.  
Cookeville, TN 38506

**The "P's" Of Personal Evangelism**

by James R. Dunigan

In the Book of John, chapter 1, verses 40-42, we can read the story of Andrew learning the truth, going out and finding his brother and bringing him to Christ. Now there's personal evangelism; hear the truth, believe, obey, and then spread the good news! But for us, I would like to take a few moments and remind all of

us there are some "P's" of personal evangelism that will be of value to us in bringing the lost to Christ.

The first "p" is PRAYER. Don't begin to do the Lord's work without the Lord's help! We should be praying for ourselves, for wisdom, for courage, for doors of opportunity, but maybe most importantly we should be praying that the lost might be saved. Paul's prayer in Romans 10:1 says, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Do not underestimate prayer and its power, it is a valuable tool in personal evangelism.

The second "p" is PERSISTENCE. A good salesman is persistent, a good teacher is persistent, they keep on keeping on, until the sale is made or the lesson is learned. We should be that way with the truth, the greatest lesson ever taught. Persistency will pay off.

The third "p" is much like the second - PERSEVERANCE. The ability to keep going when the going gets tough. The ability to keep on working through slammed doors, unkind words, ridicule, even having small annoying dogs set on us (a story for another time). Paul was stoned and got up from that stoning and taught the gospel again and again (Acts 14:19-21).

The fourth "p" is PATIENCE. Lots of patience. We are going to be dealing with hardened hearts, skepticism and outright disbelief. People very seldom change instantly or even overnight. We will have to teach the same thing over and over again. Some grasp the lessons swiftly, others not so swiftly. We will have to overcome, in some cases, years of false doctrine. It will take time, we often become discouraged when someone doesn't instantly change, but be patient and expect, slow going. Statistics say that only one in a hundred will accept an invitation to study or visit services and only about 10 percent of those will convert! So be ready! James wrote in James 5:7-8, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

104 E. Cleveland Street  
Bald Knob, AR 72010

*A lost temper needs no advertising*

**The OLDEST Church In The World!**

- *The New Testament Church*
- *Established by Christ*
- *Controlled by His Will*

"Upon this rock I will build my church," Matthew 16:18. Jesus promised to build a church – it was to be His church. In Mark 9:1, Christ said this kingdom (church) would come with power. After His resurrection Jesus told His apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the power, Acts 1:4-8. The power came on the first Pentecost day following the resurrection of Christ and the church was established on that day, according to the second chapter of Acts. Jesus is both the founder and the foundation of the church one reads about in the New Testament. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," I Corinthians 3:11. Any church established by any person other than Christ, in any place other than Jerusalem, at any time other than the first Pentecost after the Lord's resurrection, is not the New Testament church. The church of Christ is over 1900 years old!

The church Jesus built exists in the world today. It exists anywhere people abandon human opinions about religion and submit entirely and completely to the teaching of the New Testament. You can identify Christ's church in the world today. Read what the Bible says on the name we are to wear, the worship we are to offer God, the work of Christians, the organization and government of the church, and compare scriptural teaching to what men are doing in the religious world. Where you find people who are just Christians, worshipping and working in exact conformity to the Word of God, without human creeds or catechisms, without additions, subtractions or substitutions to the things taught in the Scripture, you will have found the Lord's church. It is in the world today!

*– from the Tiptonville Bible Truth*

**SO IT SEEMS**

Norma McCorvey is the "Jane Roe" of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion. Mrs. McCorvey uses the name of a husband she left. She is 46 and has had three pregnancies, the second and third out of wedlock. The third, though born before the Supreme Court decided *Roe*, was the baby of that decision.

Mrs. McCorvey announced herself a les-

bian after the birth of her first daughter, Melissa, now 29, but she nevertheless conceived two more times. She has been living with a "pro-choice" Catholic woman, Connie Gonzalez, for 21 years. Gonzalez met McCorvey when she caught her shoplifting at a store where she worked.

Mrs. McCorvey reports that, when she first met her attorney, Sarah Weddington, whom the case made famous, she did not know the attorney had herself had an abortion. "When I told her then how desperately I needed one, she could have told me where to go for it. But she wouldn't because she needed me pregnant for her case."

As Raffaello Balestrini remarked in his 19th century book on abortion in antiquity, abortion is a symptom of a widespread social degeneracy.

Reported by Harold O. J. Brown,  
*The Religion & Society Report*, 10/94, p. 8

*Real wisdom is looking at the world from God's point of view.*

*Some people have missed the most important thing in life – they don't know God.*

**CONTRIBUTIONS  
CHURCHES**

Lowell Church of Christ, Springdale, Ar.	\$ 50.00
Viola Church of Christ, Viola, Ar.	25.00
Church of Christ, Bakersfield, Mo.	25.00
Church of Christ, Gamaliel, Ar.	30.00
Dellhalf Church of Christ, Myrtle, Mo.	25.00
Church of Christ, Elizabeth, Ar.	25.00
Pilot Church of Christ	40.00
Mammoth Spring, Ar.	
Church of Christ, Moody, Mo.	25.00
Church of Christ, Souder, Mo.	25.00
Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo.	200.00
Church of Christ, Clarkridge, Ar.	75.00
Land Between the Lakes Church of Christ	
Dover, Tn.	120.00
Church of Christ, Garfield, Ar.	35.00
Jeff Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo.	25.00

**INDIVIDUALS**

Nellie Crews, Mobile, Al.	\$100.00
Hazel Stokes, West Plains, Mo.	10.00
Alice Vandergriff, West Plains, Mo.	10.00
M/M Gary Wilson	25.00
Don Ross, Clinton, Mo.	20.00
Opal Henard, Camden, Ar.	20.00
James Hendrix Jr., Alburn, Al.	10.00

"YOU CAN HELP WITH POSTAGE"

**MOVING? CHANGING TO 911?**

*Be sure to send us your change of address.*



**GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION**

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

**THE CHURCH OF CHRIST**

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

ADDRESS  
CORRECTION  
REQUESTED

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

#BXNGHZD \*\*\*\*\*3-DIGIT 325  
MICHAEL HATCHER  
4852 SAUFLEY FIELD RD  
PENSACOLA FL 32526-1724  
PRG 2  
SACK 112

Periodical Postage  
Paid At  
Mammoth Spring, AR  
72554-9998  
Publication #211780