

## So Much Bad News...

Cary Gillis - Bridge Ave church of Christ - Weslaco, TX

When the twentieth anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks arrived, I reminisced about an unexpected lesson I learned as that infamous day unfolded in my little corner of the world. I was in my first year of graduate school at Freed-Hardeman University. As was the Tuesday routine, I was about to go pick up my good buddy, Nathan Kedarisetti, for Greek 1. I got an unexpected call from him, telling me to turn on the news. I distinctly remember him saying, "The World Trade Center is crumbling! The Pentagon is crumbling!" Since he was from India, and English wasn't his first language, I thought maybe he was misspeaking in some way. As I began to process what I heard, I remember thinking that the Pentagon was a fairly old building... but crumbling? But the World Trade Center? His words made no sense. Then I turned on the TV. His words were exactly what I was seeing. By the time I had "gotten in the loop," the attacks were already over. If you lived that day, you remember feeling the need just to sit and watch. We didn't know what happened. It didn't make sense. We needed answers! While there were many things we did not know, one thing we absolutely knew was that our lives would never be the same.

Reluctantly, I picked up Nathan and went to Greek class. When we walked into the room, many of our classmates were glued to the news. This was back when TVs were large and required carts to be wheeled around. Someone found this TV in the building somewhere and decided to bring it to our room, because, as we all felt, they wanted to see how things were unfolding. I'll never forget our teacher, Clyde Woods, walking into the room and seeing the shock on our faces. Without much of a pause, he walked over, turned the TV off, and said, "There's nothing we can do about this right now. Let's do some Greek." Even back in 2001, Clyde Woods was one of the pillars of the Bible department, with a long-held reputation of being direct with people. Personally, I appreciated his ability to confidently call things as he saw them. But, at that moment, it seemed a bit cold. We didn't know if there would be more attacks. 50,000 people worked in the twin towers - how many were dead? Minute by minute, the news unfolded with clues and information. Many people would stay paralyzed in front of their TVs for months to come. So, didn't Dr. Woods want to know what had

happened? Didn't he want to see things unfold? Didn't he care? Certainly, he did. Knowing that he was a seasoned and wise Christian, his counterintuitive reaction in that moment was something that I have never forgotten. In fact, I have come to realize that there was a lot of wisdom in that moment - a moment that has helped frame the way I process tragedy. When I get hit with bad news, I filter it through the question, "Is there anything I can do about it right now?" Most of the time, there isn't anything we can directly or immediately do, because we constantly hear bad news that is totally detached from the sphere of our influence. Often, prayer is all we can offer - and we must never underestimate its power (Jas. 5:16). Realizing how little we can directly do has a way of unparalyzing us from the shock and freeing us to live life and do the things we need to do - the duties of life within our control. It seems like we hear of a new tragedy every day - hurricanes, tornados, terrorist attacks, social unrest, etc. The amount of bad news we hear is directly related to the number of media outlets we're plugged into. It can paralyze us from living life, if we let it. If there is something we can do at the moment of a tragedy, we should seize that opportunity to be a blessing to someone (Gal. 6:10). That may be a call or visit of encouragement (2 Cor. 1:3-5), sending money and relief packages (Rom. 15:25-27), using your personal talents where they are needed, planning to take a group of volunteers in the coming days, etc. I stood in line for hours to give blood on September 11<sup>th</sup>, just to learn later that there were few survivors and little need for blood. If there is virtually nothing you can do, live your life, trust God's promises, and entrust to Him the things that are out of your control.

Over the past year, we've gone through prolonged phases of global, national, societal, and cultural turmoil. How have we reacted to it, spiritually? Some Christians scaled back their involvement in the church, and have normalized inactivity. Others are not letting Satan use this time to get the upper hand on their spiritual priorities. What warnings and reassurances does Scripture offer?

In 2 Timothy, Paul tells Timothy to "be watchful in all things ("be sober-minded" in the ESV), endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (4:5). In the context, Paul is warning Timothy about false teachers and those who will

...continued at top of page 2...

follow after their words. A false teacher is anyone who affects your mind in a way that keeps you from doing God's will. In a world of ungodly "gospels" and narratives, the solution for not being deceived is staying resilient and clear-minded, while keeping focused on your duty to God. In the same way that a prosperity gospel preacher will say everything a fleshly-minded person wants to hear about a Christianity that guarantees a life of no suffering, tragedy-peddlers will say whatever keeps your fear fresh. Those who propagate fear are just another kind of false teacher, seeking to make and keep you a slave to your fear. In our culture today, the media traffics in what some have dubbed "tragedy porn" or "disaster porn." Headlines are crafted to invoke dread and fear, while robbing us of optimism and hope. Fear sells. Fear keeps people coming back. You would think that they are coming back to find out when they can let go of their fear; but they're really coming back to see what new thing there is to fear. Tragedy can be intoxicating. A sober mind processes tragedy in a controlled way.

Jesus warned His disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem that "you will hear of wars and rumors of wars," but followed that by saying not to be troubled (Matt. 24:6). Not only is bad news in high supply, it is in high demand. What we would all benefit from is turning off the news, scaling back our media input, and detoxify from the bondage of dread. I encourage you to read Psalm 46. Then read it again. And again. Let the truth of God's promises soak into your heart and melt away your anxiety and fear. The psalmist assures us: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge... Be still, and know that I am God" (vs. 1-2a, 7, 10a). When the bad news arrives, ask yourself if there's anything you can actually do at that moment. If not, entrust it to God and take refuge in Him.

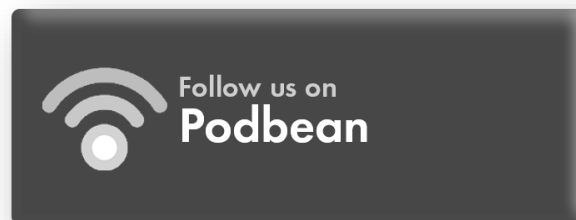
### *Thanks to our Supporters and Some New Works*

As the preacher for the church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, AR and the Editor of FCGN, I want to personally thank each of our supporters - both that do so congregationally or individually. The elders of the church - Kevin Hedden, Derek Hufstedler, Steve Simers, and Randy Ward - also express their gratitude for your faithful support in this work! Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "*I have planted, Apollos has watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God...*" (1 Cor. 3:6-9). FCGN reaches over 6,300 people in the US on a bimonthly basis and this could not be done without your financial support. So, **Thank You!** We plant and water together. May God give the increase!

Beginning in February of this year I started a podcast for the paper on Podbean (*visit [podbean.com](http://podbean.com) and subscribe!*). Sometimes an episode will be an article reading from an older edition of the paper. Sometimes it will be a discussion based on a Bible question that I have received. If you subscribe to the Podbean channel you can interact with each episode by asking questions or making a comment. If you like audio books, podcasts are kind of a form of that.

In January we also began a "Local FCGN" that reaches every box in our Zip code area. We send out approximately 1,600 editions of that paper as well. If you'd like to see that, visit our congregation's website, [mammothspringchurchofchrist.com](http://mammothspringchurchofchrist.com). All editions are in PDF and are printable and downloadable.

*Subscribe to the  
Fulton County Gospel News Podcast...*



Fulton County Gospel News podcast is also available on Spotify and Google Podcasts!

If you are looking for the most dramatic and unexpected adventure, you will find it in Leviticus chapters 8-10. This describes how Moses obeyed God's instructions to consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests before the congregation of Israel. Moses began by washing Aaron and his sons and dressing them in the clothing that God had commanded (Lev. 8:1-9). With the preparations made, Moses proceeded to anoint the tabernacle and its altar and utensils before pouring oil upon Aaron's head and sanctifying him to be the high priest. Then Moses followed a similar procedure to consecrate Aaron's sons as priests of Israel (Lev. 8:10-13). The following verses provide a detailed account of the offering of a bull as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering (Lev. 8:14-29). Note that Moses followed very carefully the commands the Lord had given him. God's instructions had to be followed quite explicitly. Failing to do so would result in death. *"Therefore shall ye abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation day and night seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, that ye die not: for so I am commanded. So Aaron and his sons did all things which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses"* (Lev. 8:35-36).

After a week, Aaron and his sons began performing their priestly tasks. Once again, there is a strong emphasis on doing things exactly as God had commanded. *"And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the LORD shall appear unto you. And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and for the people: and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; as the LORD commanded"* (Lev. 9:6-7). As the priests carried out their work, God manifested his approval by causing the glory of the Lord to appear before the people (Lev. 9:23-24).

After such an auspicious beginning, the outlook for Israel's new priesthood looked very good indeed. However, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu soon made such a serious mistake that it cost them their lives. Leviticus 10:1-2 says, *"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."*

What was this **strange fire** and why did it provoke the Lord to respond in such a drastic way? Some other translations use the phrase "unauthorized fire" and that aptly describes the nature of these priestly brothers' transgression. After being trained to

follow every detail of the Lord's instructions precisely, they offered "*unauthorized fire*" when they attempted to burn incense. The Law specified where the coals to burn incense were to be found. *"And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and he shall bring it inside the veil"* (Lev. 16:1-2). Perhaps Nadab and Abihu used coals from another source. That might not seem like a major problem in our estimation, but anytime we disobey God's precise instructions, we may face serious consequences. Nadab and Abihu took it upon themselves to do something that the Lord had not commanded them to do. While we might think that the source of the fire would be irrelevant, that was not the case. It was enough to cause the Lord to send out a fire to devour them.

The lesson for us to take from the sad story of Nadab and Abihu is that it is very important that we get the details right. If God says to do it a certain way, we had better be sure that we do precisely what he says! There is **no room for error** when we are serving the Lord. Whether these priests were careless or rebellious is not the issue. They did something that God had not commanded and they paid for it with their lives.

We live in a time when many people, including some of our brothers and sisters in the church, do not take the matter of authority seriously. When we ask them about authority for some change they want to make in the church's worship or organization, they readily reply, "The Bible doesn't say that we can't do it that way." They have rejected the idea that we need Christ's permission for everything we do. Silence (i.e., the lack of a "thou shalt not" statement) does not equal the granting of permission. In his 1976 debate with Dwaine Dunning, Rubel Shelly made the point that everyday life doesn't work that way. A doctor's prescription instructs a pharmacist what medicine to give to a sick customer. It does not list all the medicines not intended for that patient. Employees who fill an online shopping order send the items the customer bought; they do not send all the items the customer failed to say that he did not want sent to him. It's all quite simple. Do what it says, not what it doesn't say. Obey what the Bible says. Do not assume that anything you want to do is permissible since it is not expressly forbidden. Shelly emphasized "**the authority principle**" -- found in Colossians 3:17, *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."* Everything we do must be done in the name of [or by the authority of] the Lord Jesus. Don't be guilty of making the same kind of mistake that Aaron's sons did.

---

**November/December 2021 Contributors**

**Churches of Christ**

Pilot (Mammoth Spring, AR)	\$700.00
Mammoth Spring	\$600.00
West Road (Mountain Home, AR)	\$300.00
Bellefonte (Harrison, AR)	\$200.00
Moody (Moody, MO)	\$200.00
Poughkeepsie (Poughkeepsie, AR)	\$200.00
Clarkridge (Clarkridge, AR)	\$150.00
Crossroads (Gepp, AR)	\$150.00
Lowell (Springdale, AR)	\$150.00
Agnos (Agnos, AR)	\$100.00
Bakersfield (Bakersfield, MO)	\$100.00
Camp (Camp, AR)	\$100.00
Elizabeth (Elizabeth, AR)	\$100.00

**Individuals**

Linda Stoker (Dresden, TN)	\$100.00
R.B. Watts (Gilmer, TX)	\$100.00
Gordon Barnett (Salem, AR)	\$90.00

<b>Contribution Total</b>	<b>\$3,340.00</b>
Potage Cost	\$1,573.80
Print Cost	\$1,135.00
Total	\$2,708.80
<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$631.20</b>

**The Churches of Christ**

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

**Salvation**

- Saved by grace, though faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

***Find us on the internet...***

[www.mammothspringchurchofchrist.com](http://www.mammothspringchurchofchrist.com)  
Facebook - Church of Christ at Mammoth Spring  
YouTube - Mammoth Spring church of Christ  
Instagram - mammothspringchurchofchrist

Send us an email with your Bible questions:  
[mscoc251@gmail.com](mailto:mscoc251@gmail.com)

***Fulton County Gospel News Podcast is on  
Podbean, Spotify, and Google Podcasts!***

---

**Fulton County Gospel News** (USPS Publication #211780) is a periodical publication issued bimonthly by the church of Christ at Third & Bethel (PO Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.** FCCGN is mailed free of charge to any who care to receive it. If you send in a name we must have a complete address, including number and street name, or RR, or HCR number, plus box number, or a PO 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 address corrections to: Fulton County Gospel News, PO Box 251, Mammoth Spring, AR 72554**

Editor - Barry O'Dell - Office Phone - (870) 625-3217