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THE LORD OPENED HER HEART!

By Boyd E. Morgan

The following article is a reprint of an article by the late Boyd E. Morgan, which he wrote in 1945 and is most worthy of our reading today. MP

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was want to be made; and we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which was spoken of Paul." Acts 16:13-14

After the great call "Come over into Macedonia" had been answered by the apostle Paul, his first opportunity to "help us" was presented by Lydia and the women which "resorted thither". Outside Phillipi, the apostle preached for his first time on European soil, and Lydia became the first European convert to the cause of the Lord. As far as Salvation is concerned this case is of no more importance than the conversion of Saul, of the Eunuch, of the household of Cornelius, or those on the day of Pentecost. The outstanding point of discussion is "whose heart the Lord opened". The fact that the Lord opened her heart is sufficient for some to launch out and preach salvation poured out upon the alien separate and apart from all God's commands and the sinners obedience.

The heart was important enough in the plan of salvation that the Lord opened it. The Church of Christ has no reason to deny this, it behooves us to teach and to show how the Lord operates upon the heart of man.

The human heart is likened unto the earth in Luke the eighth chapter. Jesus said, "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.

And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bore fruit an hundred fold." (Luke 8:5-8)

The good ground in this parable, Jesus said "are they, which in an honest and

good heart, having heard the word keep it and bring it forth fruit and patience." (Luke 8:15). We cannot doubt for a moment that Lydia's heart was any other ground than "honest and good". She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, thereby bringing forth fruit unto God of her own soul and the souls of her household. Also she became hostess to the temporal needs of the apostle and his company. The scripture reads, "She besought us, saying, if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." (Acts 16:15)

Noticable in the parable of the sower is the fact that while the devil followed the sower, overthrowing the ability to bring forth fruit in all but the honest and good soil, the devil exercised no power whatsoever upon the sower and hindered him in no way. Satan is unable to stop

the sowing of the Seed. Jesus said, "Now the parable is this 'the seed is the word of God.'" (Luke 8:11) The power of the seed is shown in, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) Lydia was redeemed. This is unquestioned. Lydia was born again. Peter declared the means of birth when he said, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptable, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Regardless of the condition of the heart; wayside; thorny; or rocky; God has the right of way to have the seed sown. Whether or not fruit is yielded depends upon the quality of the heart. Solomon

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Synthetic Fellowship

By Mike Pace

Synthetic religion will always create a synthetic fellowship. Our lives will not only be void of a personal relationship with God, but also with our brothers in Christ. True Biblical fellowship is more than surface association. It is more than just seeing one another from time to time. There are at least two implications in our daily lives that are seen in the New Testament concept of fellowship.

1. Fellowship Implies Identity. Paul asks, "What fellowship does light have with darkness." (I Cor. 6:14). What we have in common will determine if we have a genuine fellowship. We will always associate with those who are most like ourselves. True fellowship cannot be ordered as a dutiful task, but must be an automatic response which follows common goals, values, priorities and judgments. When Jesus is in our hearts we will desire the encouragement and desire to encourage other Christians by daily association. Suddenly the things of the world that swallow up our time and money will move out of the way.

2. Fellowship implies caring. Paul believed that the body should have equal care for one another. "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it, if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." Jesus designed the Church to be a people caring people. Fellowship that sees each other only on Sunday tends toward the synthetic. Fellowship that speaks only of weather and sports tends toward the synthetic. Synthetic fellowship knows nothing of each others struggles, suffering and spiritual problems. In true fellowship when one member suffers every other member suffers just as much. When one member is honored the whole body is honored.

Christianity that is genuine can attain a fellowship that surpasses earthly understanding. Remember, our fellowship together will bring us great happiness or greater sorrow. Synthetic religion has divided many churches, destroyed many relationships and caused many more souls to be lost.

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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EDITOR Mike Pace

Publication No. 211780

"A Repentance Without Regret"

By Mike Pace

The background to these thoughts is I Corinthians the fifth chapter where Paul had written a strong letter to the church there about their arrogance in dealing with an immoral situation among them. He instructed them to turn the brother over to Satan so that in the end he might be brought to repentance and save his soul. He went into detail of how to do this by disfellowshipping him. This was a sharp rebuke; but it took such a rebuke to get this corrected. Sometimes the soft and private approach would be the most effective; but not this time. Only a public sharp rebuke would move these sinners.

Since he wrote the first letter, Paul had suffered many things. Opposition in all forms had risen against him. He was under a lot of pressure, and in need of encouragement and comfort. He was comforted. He said that God had comforted him in two ways: first, by sending Titus to him. Paul was like most of us, he liked to have true and understanding friends around him in such times. Titus was such a brother in Christ. Secondly, God comforted Paul with the news that Titus brought to him. That news was that the church in Corinth had disfellowshipped the sinful brother and it had caused him to repent and be restored to their fellowship. Paul was always uplifted by the news of souls being reconciled to God.

Now, we will look at II Cor. 7:8-11 where Paul makes distinction between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow, and give us some marks of true repentance so that it can be identified by others that observe their lives.

It was sin that caused the sorrow on

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

The most important question ever asked is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30.) Then, the HOW becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2.) This faith comes by the hearing of the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.) "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6.) With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts 17:30.) In repentance, we come out of our sinful condition, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord.

(Matt. 3:8; Luke 13:3.) With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10.) Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27.) Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26.)

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

the part of so many. It always does. The law of God had been broken, that law which is pure and perfect. They had disobeyed the gospel which is Divine in source and gracious toward sinful men. They had grieved God who is good and glorious. They had slighted Jesus, where love is tender and unending. They had been ungrateful though they had been loved, chosen, redeemed, forgiven, justified, sanctified, and soon to be glorified. They had crucified Christ afresh before their friends and neighbors in Corinth. You see, sin will send you to Hell. There is never anything but sorrow connected with sin in the end.

Paul made distinction between two kinds of sorrow which he identifies as worldly and godly. Paul said this sorrow has been of a godly kind and will give some identifying marks of it in a few verses later.

Worldly sorrow is confused with the godly kind so often. Worldly sorrow has its identifying mark, too. Many are sorry that they have broken the law because they got caught not because they did wrong. They cry hot tears but there is no sorrow that they have offended God! Many are sorry because they are finally identified for what they are! What others think of them is very important to them; their reputations are now ruined and the people they most want fellowship with now won't have anything to do with them. They don't enjoy the consequence of their wrongdoing! They grieve for the loss of their worldly loss and the freedom

that is taken away from them. Sometimes tears come from pride. King Saul confesses his sin to David and told him, "I have played the fool and have committed a serious error." (I Sam. 26:21). Saul made this statement from a weak standpoint, one that was to his advantage at that moment. But, was it sincere? Did he practice this sentiment afterwards? No! He was embarrassed because he was caught in such a defensive situation. Now turn to Luke 18:9-14 and see the tax-collector go up to the temple, and getting off from the crowd, he beat his chest and cried, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." From a broken heart went his petition to the Throne in Heaven and Jesus said this man went back to him home justified in the sight of God. Pride didn't stand in his way to God.

Paul said that "sorrow of the world produces death," and indeed it does. It literally causes premature deaths. Think of the thousands that die every year on our highways because someone was breaking the law or under the influence of strong drink. Think of the young lives that are ruined by "pot". Yes, we have to take this in the literal sense. It can be used in the spiritual sense, too. Think of the damage that is done to the conscience, the sense of right and wrong and the courage to do what we know is right when we do wrong and then won't repent of it right away. You can't abuse your conscience and not pay for it! Conscience can be hardened and deadened to the

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Have you counted the cost if your soul should be lost?

By Ordell Heavin

We live in a materialistic age. Great emphasis is placed on the tangible, visible, and sensual. Only the things we can experience by means of the five senses are accepted as reality. Anything else is scoffed at, or simply ignored. But is only that which we can see, hear, touch, taste or smell real? Is man only a being of flesh made up of a few dollars worth of chemicals; an accident of evolution who spends a few fleeting years on this planet and then perishes forever? Or, is there more to reality than this?

Man has a soul. The inspired book of God, the Holy Scriptures tells us man is a trinity, a being not only of flesh, but also of soul and spirit. Paul the apostle, pointed this out when he prayed for the Christians in Thessalonica saying, "And the very God of peace sanctify you holy: and I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". (I Thess. 5:23). Only the body dies, decays and returns to dust (Gen. 3:19; James 2:26). The spiritual nature of man continues to live somewhere in eternity. "The body returneth to dust of the earth as it was: and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Eccl. 12:7). "For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (II Cor. 4:16). Since man has a spiritual nature, a soul that never dies. Someone has well said, "A wise man is he who gives up that which he cannot keep, in order to gain that which he cannot afford to lose." (Matt. 16:25-26). Life on earth will pass quickly, "Man borne of woman is but few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1). "Ye know not what shall be on the tomorrow. For what is your life? It is as a vapor that appeareth for a little while and vanishes away." (James 4:14). Nothing is so valuable that it can be exchanged for the soul.

The scriptures tell us there are only two destinies for the soul when life ends on earth. One is pain, misery, torment, and punishment. It was prepared for the devil and his angels and is known in the scriptures as "Hell's eternal fire." (Matt. 10:28; Matt. 25:41, 46). All the wicked will be there forever and ever as a punishment for sin. The other destiny is Heaven, a place of peace, happiness, fulfillment and joy. The Lord prepared heaven for those who love and obey His will. (II Cor. 5:1-6; John 14:1-3). No fear, sorrow,

sickness, pain or death, that mar this life will be there. (Rev. 21:3-5). Have you counted the cost if your soul should be lost eternally in hell? Millions don't want to even be reminded of it, but simply refusing to face up to it doesn't change the fact that your soul can't go there.

Christ died on Calvary for our sins. The final verdict is ours. The Lord says, "Come"; the devil says, "No". So it's your final decision that makes the difference. If you fail to obey the scriptures, you are sure to hear these words at the judgement "Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41). What if I should lose my soul? Then Christ the sinless Son of God died in vain as far as I am personally concerned. (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7) If I should lose my soul I have lost everything forever, I can't take earthly things with me. "For we brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out." (I Tim. 6:7). If I lose my soul I will be eternally in hell, as we have noted. Anyone who has read and understood what a place it will be should shudder at the mere thought of one minute there. If my soul should be lost I will miss the blessings of Heaven. Listen how Paul describes Heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things God has prepared for those that love Him." (I Cor. 2:9). If I lose my soul, I will cause others to lose their souls too. It has been said no one goes to hell alone. The influence of parents on children largely determines the kind of persons the children grow up to be. Parents bring up your children in the nature and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4.) "Be not deceived: evil companionship corrupt good morals." (I Cor. 15:33).

What about you? Have you considered the eternal life to come? Have you counted the cost if your soul should be lost? Nothing in the world, whether it be money (Luke 12:16-21); family and friends (Matt. 10:27); fame or worldly pleasures (John 2:15-17); is worth the cost of losing your soul in hell.

Will you not purify your soul in obeying the truth? (I Peter 1:22-23). By believing in Christ, God's Son and man's Savior (John 8:24); Repenting of your sins (Luke 13:3); Confessing your faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10); Being buried in

baptism to have past sins forgiven (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38); and then serving Him faithfully for the rest of your lives (Rev. 2:10), will you not count the cost so your soul won't be lost?

Thank You

Your response to our plea for financial help has been most gratifying. Our contributions this month, as you can see by the list, have increased considerably. As a result of this, and should these contributions continue on a regular basis, we should be able to continue printing the paper monthly. May the Lord richly bless you for your generosity. Mike Pace, Editor

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THE LORD OPENED HER HEART

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said, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." (Prov. 16:1) Now the question arises. "How does God prepare the heart?" God prepares the heart by revealing unto man the way, and preparing the means unto the end proposed in the outset. "Go through, go through thy gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people." (Isa. 2:10)

In Lydia's case, salvation was proposed. "Come over into Macedonia and help us" was the cry. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa. 40:3) "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God: As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee, The voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Mark 1:1-3) When John the Baptist appeared in Judea preaching, he was preparing the hearts of the people for the reception of Jesus Christ. The highway and the way of the Lord were not temporal or earthly roads. They were spiritual ways for Jesus to gain a hearing, he preaching the fulfillment of the law to the Jews and peace between God and man through his blood: the Son of God's.

John prepared the hearts of the people by preaching, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." (Matt. 3:5-6) "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preached

the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan confessing their sins." (Mark 1:4-5)

But Lydia is the subject. Paul had gone into foreign soil to plant the seed of the kingdom. The Lord prepared Lydia's heart as he prepared the hearts of others. We are misguided to believe that the Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she heard the things Paul preached. Also that the opening rendered her saved and she heard as a Christian. Such is not so. Positively not. The scripture says no such thing. Let us read it again. "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake UNTO the women which resorted thither.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." (Acts 16:13-14)

Notice now "and spake unto the women which resorted thither. Lydia heard us: whose heart the Lord opened." The Lord opened Lydia's heart by the preaching. "Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17)

Her heart was not opened and salvation poured immediately in, for notice: "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she ATTENDED unto the things which were spoken of Paul. Not just that she heard, she ATTENDED. This means she did the things Paul told her to do. She and all her household. How noticable is the 15th verse which says, "And when she was baptized, and her household".

Who can deny that this is what Paul told her to do?

A REPENTANCE WITHOUT REGRET

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point that it will not provoke us when we do wrong (1 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 3:8-11, 15). Then, there is the spiritual death that results from unrepented sins (Jas. 1:14-15). Isaiah describes this kind of death (Isa. 59:1-2) as being separated from God, from his grace and forgiveness; from the blood of Christ.

This is seeing sin through the eyes of God! God "abhors sin." You need to see his Son hanging on the cruel cross to see sin as God does. Godly sorrow is not repentance, but it works repentance in us. Repentance changes our life, alters our bad habits and renews our hearts. Repentance is a change of purpose in regard to the sin for which a man mourns. It is a breaking off from sin. We are reconciled to three enemies when godly sorrow brings us to repent. They are (1) justice of God, (2) our own conscience and (3) to death. There are at least two things that move men to repent of their sins: (1) the goodness of God and (2) the word of God.

In verse eleven in our text Paul mentions six things that identify godly sorrow in our lives. They are: (1) earnestness, (2) vindication of ourselves, (3) indignation, (4) fear, (5) zeal and (6) avenging of wrong. These are the results of godly sorrow working repentance in our hearts.

When one is moved by godly sorrow to truly repent, then he will never regret things given up or pleasures sacrificed for God's sake or a brother's sake. There is only one way to do anything and that is, do it right the first time.

Many of God's children need to repent of sin in their lives — sin that will send them to Hell unless they repent before they die. Why not make right those wrongs right now! Don't put it off! Make sure that it is godly sorrow and not worldly sorrow that motivates you.

"Homecoming Service"

The Pilot Church of Christ announces Memorial service and Homecoming Day activities. For more than one hundred years, the congregation has reserved the third Sunday in May as their Memorial Day. This year that day falls on May 16.

A native of Mammoth Spring, Robert Ball, will be the featured speaker. Arlis Powell will give a historical sketch of the congregation. Dinner on the ground is being planned for lunch.

The congregation is asking everyone who ever had any association with the Pilot Church or Cemetery to help them break all attendance records in modern history.