

# Fulton County Gospel News

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## GOD vs. OUR SOCIETY

By J. Willard Fulton

Welcome Hill Church of Christ

Man is directly responsible for the society in which he lives. His moral values are based on those social standards, and those standards govern his actions. Those standards can either be strict or permissive, whichever he chooses. He makes laws that enforce or protect those standards, which forces every one to live by them.

The world we live in today is governed by the social standards that were set yesterday, and the world we leave to our children will be governed by the social standards we set today.

So we have to ask ourselves these questions. **Is God happy with our social standards? Does he approve of our moral values?** If the answer to those questions is NO. Then we as individuals had better find ways to improve them. For we as individuals are going to be held accountable for individual actions, and the lack of influence we have on others. But one may ask what can I do about the way the world is? The answer is this. By setting your own moral values above that of society, and influencing others to do the same through your actions and teachings, and if that person or persons do the same to others, then eventually the social and moral standard of our society would be raised.

In Genesis 18:20-33 and 19:1-25 the Bible tells us of a degenerated society and God's action against them. In both cases God completely destroyed both societies. There are many more such examples in the Bible in which God was displeased with a society and its moral values. And in all cases He severely punished them for their actions and He will us today, if we let our social standards degenerate to such a low state that He becomes displeased with us.

**How much farther can our moral values drop before He takes some drastic action against us?** Take a look at the society here in our own area. What is its moral values? See how many of the following sins are NOT being committed DAILY.

I Corinthians 6:9 and 10 says, "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revelers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.*"

Galatians 5:19 - 21 confirms, "*Now the works of the flesh are manifested, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies. Envy, murder, drunkenness, reveling and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*"

Ephesians 5:3 - 7 states, "*But fornicators, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints.*

*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.*

*For this ye know that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God.*

*Let no man deceive you with vain words: for with things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.*

*Be not ye therefore partakers with them.*

Also read Romans 3:10-19 and II Peter 2:10 - 22.

How does our social standards compare to the Word of God? Each one of us as Christians, and those that are outside of the Church, have a moral obligation to our children to leave them a society with higher moral values than we have now. And its up to us, not only as Christians, but as citizens of our community, and nation to live up to our responsibility.

**So let's give our children a better world to live and raise their children up in . . .**

## The Choice is Yours

By Mike Pace

We live in a nation where every man's religious belief is respected and protected. Aren't you glad? I am! Freedom of choice in fact, has its origin in God's own scheme of things. God created man a free moral agent, and has always allowed him the liberty of making his own choices. The words of Joshua to the Israelites of old (Joshua 24:15) reflect God's manner of dealing with all men of all ages: "*Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.*" What we tend to forget, is the fact that we are also held responsible for the choice we make. Joshua told Israel that God would turn against them if they chose to turn against him (Joshua 24:20). Just because God allows us to choose, does not mean God approves.

So it is with us today with regard to churches. There are hundreds of different churches, and we are free to choose any one of them. God allows it, and our nation defends our right to do so; but that does not mean GOD APPROVES of our choice. We may choose a church which wears and glorifies the name of a man, of a place, or of some peculiar doctrine, but God approves of the church for which his Son gave his life, his Son's bride (Eph. 5:

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**THE CHOICE IS YOURS**

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22-33), and which wears the only "name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We may choose a church which has its own set of rules, discipline or creed, but the Son of God says our worship is vain if we teach as doctrine what is nothing more than man's commandments (Matthew 15:9). The Holy Spirit also pronounces an eternal curse on any, including angels, who would dare teach anything other than what the prophets and apostles by inspiration proclaimed (Galatians 1:6-12).

When we talk about the church of OUR CHOICE, we should keep in mind that the very foundation of truth as revealed by God, and the only solid basis for Christian unity, is in reality the fact that there is ONLY ONE CHURCH (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:1-4). That one church is not my church, your church, or their church; it is HIS church. It is HIS because he purchased, built, founded it; HIS because it wears his name, teaches his doctrine, and defends his word.

"But," someone might observe, "aren't all the churches HIS churches, and if not, how do I know which is which, and how can I possibly sift through the hundreds of churches until I find the one that is His?" The answer is so simple, and so easy, that most simply refuse to believe it. There is no need to sift through all the hundreds of creeds and doctrines of the numberless churches. Just read the Word of God, and obey "from the heart that form of doctrine" found in His Word. (Romans 6:17). God will, according to His promise, purify our souls because we have obeyed the truth (I Peter 1:22); and

in keeping with God's purpose and plan, He will ADD us to the church of HIS choice (Acts 2:47). That's all there is to it! We don't join any denomination, we are not obliged to defend any denomination's doctrine or creed, we are not subject to the decisions and deliberations of any ecclesiastical authority, and we need not wear any name other than Christ's name. We are Christians, and God has added us to the church of the Lord; what could be easier? "But," someone objects still "we can't just be nothing, we would not have any sanctuary to meet in, and what about a minister or priest, or someone to administer the sacraments?" I told you the solution was so simple people refuse to believe it. We object because we are steeped in human traditions, and unacquainted with the Scriptures. There is no special "holy" place where Christians have to meet (John 4:20-24). We can meet in our homes if we want to, or, several who have been added to the Lord's church can pool their resources and build a building if it is convenient and practical to do so; any building, any size, any place. The church of God is the people, not the building. And there is no special clergy in God's church; all are priests (Revelation 1:6), all are brethren (Matthew 23:8), and all are equal in God's sight (Galatians 3:26-29). As for sacraments, no such thing is ever mentioned in the Scriptures.

There are millions today around the world meeting in homes, in rented halls, in small buildings, in large buildings, people who exercised their free choice and said "we will serve God - we will not be a member of any church but God's church." You too, are free; the choice is yours.

## **Circles -**

### **JAMES 4:12-14**

By Ordell Heavin

Have you ever noticed that life never seems to run in a straight line? Don't you oft find yourself going around in circles? We all know the feeling and know it increases as time goes on. When one is lost, there is a well known tendency to walk in circles. You walk sometimes for hours and wind up in the same spot. There are in our lives vicious circles of enmity, vengeance and retaliation. Sometimes there are pleasant circles of love, appreciation and kindness. Here's a little poem written on this very thing.

*He drew a circle that shut me out,  
Heretic, rebel a thing to flout.  
But love, and I had the wit to win.  
We drew a circle and took him in.*

Life is very much as a spinning circle. As the wheel of life turns, the young are at the center, the wheel seems to turn slowly. But time does not stand still, we begin to grow and slip toward the outer edge. The older we get the closer to the edge we get. The days pass by and the wheel spins faster, after days and years go by we slip off the edge into eternity. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a wheel within a wheel. Ezekiel 1:15-16. A young man sees a drunkard lying in the gutter, and vows he will never take a drink. Later he takes his first social drink and tells himself it won't get the best of me. He forgets the fact that there are seven million problem drinkers today who once said the same thing. A young woman prepares for college. She is aware of the pitfalls for she has been warned. In a day of permissiveness she holds to the old standard of morality. But she is not prepared for the worldliness she finds in the classroom, an atheistic professor who in a very subtle way, denounces God and condones immorality in its rankest form. Nor is she prepared for the ungodly behavior of her classmates outside the classroom. Ridicule is a powerful weapon she is subjected to each day. One day she weakens and looses her place with the righteous.

It takes fortitude to stand under enemy fire. "Fear ye not and stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah which he will work for you today." There was a man named Demus, a co-worker of Paul, but he became so entangled with the things of this world, that he lost sight of his spiritual life. "Demus has forsook me having loved this present world." (II Tim. 4:10). We enter the world, we struggle, we hope, we die. Our children repeat the cycle and their children after them, but the cycle doesn't end at death, for death is the door that leads to either eternal rest or eternal damnation. "We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved we have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1). The Christian life moves forward toward its goal. The spending of eternity with God. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). To strengthen our faith we must pray, study and grow spiritually. When we were little children we were fond of saying:

*Jesus loves me this I know  
For the Bible tells me so,  
Little ones to Him belong,  
They are weak but He is strong.*

Keep in mind Jesus once said he loves both the old and young. "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3). Surely if a little child can say he knows Jesus loves him, because the Bible tells them so. What's the matter with mature people? Can't we have even greater hope. The dark days gives us opportunity to know that to trust Him and to know God stands within the shadows keeping watch over his own. One of the most beautiful meaning hymns in the English language is "Abide With Me." It seems like the writer had in mind the words of David. "If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me, yea the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and light are both alike to me." (Psalms 139:11-12). "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." (Heb. 13:5-6).

If you so choose you can live in a vicious painful circle of greed, hate, lust, envy, retaliation and all the rest. If you are spinning about upon that circle you must escape or perish. But if you live in the circle of God's love, pray that you will remain in the sacred nearness of the Father whose love transcends all evil, the circle of God's love never stops. If you have stepped outside the circle, won't you decide to do something about it today?

I urge you to get off the devil's merry-go-round you've been on and answer the call of our Lord. He is saying today is the day of salvation in obedient faith. (John 3:16). Make that once and for all decision to rid yourself of sin that has been holding you a prisoner. This is repentance. (Luke 13:3). Publicly pledge your allegiance to Jesus as your new Lord and Savior and experience your "death to sin" by being baptized into Christ's death. (Romans 6:7). Out of baptism, arise as Christ rose from the death; all your past sins washed away by His blood to live a new life. (Col. 3:1-11). Live faithful to his will, then the circles of frustration can become the circle of eternity for you. Eternity with the one who gave his life that we may be free from sin and to be His child.

## STEWARDSHIP

By Orville Buchanan

**BASED ON DIVINE OWNERSHIP OF A MAN'S SOUL:** "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee?" Deuteronomy 32:6

**OF MAN'S LIFE:** "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord: And whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" Romans 14:8

**OF THE EARTH:** "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: The world and they that dwell therein: for He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Psalms 24:1-2 "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Psalms 50:10

**RE-ENFORCED BY REDEMPTION DIVINELY PURCHASED:** "For ye are bought with a price: Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit." I Cor. 6:20

Which are God's Divinely endowed: "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds and said unto them. 'Occupy till I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent a messenger after him saying 'We will not have this man reign over us.' And it came to pass than when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him. To whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pound.' And he said unto him, 'Well thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in very little have thou authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord thy pound hath gained five pounds.' And said likewise to him, 'Be thou also over five cities.' And another came, saying 'Lord behold here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin. For I feared thee, because thou are an austere man. Thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.' And he saith unto him, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knowest that I was an austere man, taken up that I laid not down, and I reapest that I did not sow. Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming, I might have required mine own with usury.' And he said unto them that stood by, 'Take from him the pound, and

give it to him that hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, that unto everyone which hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." Luke 19:13-26

**CONCERNING DIVERSE GIFTS:** "For the Kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. One he gave five, talents, another two and to another one; to every man according to his ability, and straightway took his journey. The man that received five talents gained five more talents. He that had two talents gained two more. The Lord said unto both, 'I will make thee ruler over many things.' The one talent man brought back the one talent and said, 'I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou has not sown, and gathering where thou has not strawed. I was afraid and went and hid thy talent in the earth.' His Lord said unto him: 'Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou should have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I would receive my own with usury.'" Matt. 25:14-27

**FAITHFULNESS REQUIRED - A BASIS OF HONESTY:** "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." I Corinthians 4:2

**GRATEFUL DEVOTIONS:** "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." I Peter 4:10

**AS A PRIMARY DUTY:** "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND REWARD REPORT TO BE MADE:** "Therefore the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servant. One man owed the King ten thousand talents and when he reckoned with him he had nothing to pay with and the king commanded him and his wife and children be sold to pay the debt. The servant fell down on his face and worshipped him saying, 'Have patience with me and I will pay thee all.' The Lord had patience with him and forgave him the debt. Then this servant went out and found a fellow servant who owed him an hundred pence and took him by the throat saying, 'Pay me what thou owest me,' and this servant fell down saying, 'I will pay thee all.' And he would not have patience with him but went and had him cast in prison until he pay the debt." Matthew 18:23-30

**STEWARDSHIP**

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**ACCOUNTABILITY AND REWARD - FRUIT TO BE EXPECTED:**

“Hear another parable: There was another householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about and digged a wine press in it and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen and went into a far country. And when the time of harvest drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruit of it and the husbandmen took his servants and beat one, and killed another and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first and they did unto these likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son saying, ‘They will reverence my son.’ But when the husbandmen saw the son they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir: come let us kill him and let us receive the inheritance.’ So he called everyone of his Lord’s debtors and said unto the first, ‘How much owest thou unto my Lord?’ And he said, ‘An hundred measures of oil’, and said unto him, ‘Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ Then said he to another, ‘And how much owest thou?’ And he said ‘An hundred measures of wheat.’ And he said unto him ‘Take thy bill and write four score.’ And the Lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely. And I say unto yourselves, friend of unrighteous that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitation. If you have not been faithful in that which is another mans, who shall give you that which is your own.” Matt. 21:33-40.

Perhaps the one best example of a good steward is that of Joseph as recorded in Genesis, chapter 39. May we each be inspired to be the kind of faithful stewards which God expects us to be.

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**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 everywhere to repent.*” (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **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**

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