

# 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

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## JUST BECAUSE IT'S BETTER THAN WORSE DOESN'T MEAN IT'S GOOD

by Lee Moses

The western world is certainly in a state of moral decline. The Bible and perceived references to Christianity are disappearing from public settings. Instead, levels of depravity unimaginable to most of the population a generation or two ago are now commonly set before the public eye. Single-parent households and “musical-chairs-father” households have replaced the two-parent model. Vulgarities and crime are influencing, and being perpetrated by, those of younger ages than previously was the case. It is much like the apostle Paul described, “*But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*” (2 Timothy 3:13).

Many survey the current moral landscape in the western world, and perhaps even in their own homes, and realize, “We can do better!” So indeed they determine to do better, and take steps to do better, than what they see around them. But what some fail to consider is this: Just because it's better than worse doesn't mean it's good.

To view the western world's depravity, one need not venture into the seedy parts of our major cities. One can find immoral living glamorized by our entertainment media—television, movies, and music. ABC's *Desperate Housewives* has featured graphic discussions of sexual perversion, while mocking the concept of marriage and mocking Christianity. While many people would have nothing to do with such obvious trash as this, they will still watch other shows that do the same thing to a slightly lesser degree. Most sitcoms feature dysfunctional families who have mouths “*full of cursing and bitterness*” (Romans 3:14). The number

of sexual scenes on television has doubled since 1998,<sup>1</sup> and television was not exactly chaste in 1998. Just because some television programs and movies are not quite as debased as *Desperate Housewives*, this does not mean that they are fit for Christian viewing. As the psalmist said, “*I will set no wicked thing before mine eye*” (Psalm 101:3, emphasis LM).

It is “*no new thing under the sun*” for popular music to glorify worldliness and sin. In recent years, rap has perhaps brought popular “music” to a new low. But other forms of popular music continue to ennoble that which is degrading. Country singer Gretchen Wilson sings such exemplary lyrics as,

Well, I'm an eight ball shooting  
double-fisted drinking son of  
a gun  
I wear my jeans a little tight just  
to watch the little boys come  
undone  
I'm here for the beer and the  
[expletive] band  
Gonna get a little crazy just  
because I can  
You know I'm here for the party  
And I ain't leavin' till they throw  
me out  
Gonna have a little fun gonna get  
me some  
You know I'm here, I'm here for  
the party

Contrast the hedonistic bent of Miss Wilson's lyrics with the pure words of the Holy Spirit:

*Therefore, since Christ  
suffered for us in the flesh,  
arm yourselves also with the  
same mind, for he who has  
suffered in the flesh has  
ceased from sin, that he no*

*longer should live the rest of  
his time in the flesh for the  
lusts of men, but for the will of  
God. For we have spent  
enough of our past lifetime in  
doing the will of the Gentiles  
— when we walked in lewd-  
ness, lusts, drunkenness,  
revelries, drinking parties,  
and abominable idolatries (1  
Peter 4:1-3, New King James  
Version).*

While country and other forms of popular music may not have degenerated to the point of commonly glorifying rape and murder, there is much to which one cannot listen and yet “think on those things” which are “*true . . . honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report,*” virtuous, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

With popular music's pervasive and obvious exaltation of sinfulness, some in the religious world urge a turn to “Christian rock” music and other genres of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM). While CCM may be lyrically superior to most of the popular music that is being released, it is wrong and sinful. CCM artists perform songs of worship with instrumental accompaniment, a clear departure from the New Testament pattern, the Gospel of Christ (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Any person who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ (such as any CCM artist) does not have God; and any person who implies endorsement or agreement with someone who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ (such as one who regularly purchases, or encourages others to listen to, CCM) “*is partaker of his evil deeds*” (2 John 9-11).

Many are the times people justify a certain action just because it's better than worse. Some try to expand the role of the Lord's church into providing gymnasium facilities for the community, while diminishing the church's

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## THE MANNA/QUAIL SYNDROME

by Chris Perry

Romans 15:4 lays the foundation for a Christian's study of the Old Testament: "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*" Therefore, although we cannot find salvation under the Law of Moses, we can turn to the pages of the Old Testament and learn from the lives of those who came before us. Such an instance presents itself when we study Numbers 11. The attitude of the Israelites in this passage provides a telling example for us today. Consider the lessons we can learn from this context, as well as the events that lead up to it.

First, groundwork must be laid from Israel's history. At the time depicted in Exodus 16, Israel was separated from their last day in Egyptian bondage by a mere 30 days (verse 1 compared to 12:18). However, they had already challenged God's judgment and care once (14:10-12), and would do so for the second time here. Moses records, "*And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron [and by extension, God—CP] in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full...*" (Exodus 16:2-3). Israel obviously had a selective memory. They had wiped from their mind the torturous way they had been treated (1:9-14; 5:6-14) and the order to kill all male children (1:15-16); however, they remembered the "flesh pots" and "eating bread to the full." But God, in His infinite mercy, agreed to "*rain bread from heaven for you*" (verse 4). This bread from heaven would be called "manna," literally, "what is it," and "*it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like*

*wafers made with honey*" (verse 31). He placed regulations, howbeit few, upon the Israelites "*that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*" Their physical nourishment was to be completely furnished for them by God—all they had to do was gather it according to His instructions. They were to gather it every morning but the seventh; enough would be provided on the sixth day to last through the seventh. As well, they were to consume it all before the next morning. In both of these regulations, however, Israel failed. Despite Moses' warnings, "*...some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank...*" (verse 20). And despite Moses' warnings, "*there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and found none*" (verse 27).

In spite of God's graciousness in providing manna from heaven, and in spite of His patience in overlooking their errors concerning its use, Israel was not satisfied. Numbers 11 describes yet another calloused and thankless complaint leveled at God by His children. Verse 4 records this despicable description: "*And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?*" It had been just a little over a year since their deliverance from horrible bondage, and again all they can remember is "*the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely* [ironic, isn't it, considering they were in bondage—CP]; *the cucumbers, and the melons, the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick*" (verse 5). And, above that, they had the audacity to say before God that "*our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes*" (verse 6). Dare they whine and weep at God's gracious provisions? Dare they question and complain because they did not have *variety*? Yet that is exactly what they did.

But God would teach them a lesson. He commanded Moses to tell the people, "*...for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord...therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days,*

*continued from page 1*

evangelistic abilities, claiming, "At least we are working; at least we are doing some good" (compare with Matthew 7:22; 25:14-30). Some worship with a manmade denomination knowing that they should be worshipping "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24), all the while claiming, "At least I'm going to **some** church." Yet the Scriptures say, "*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination*" (Proverbs 28:9).

Certainly, the desire to alter society's downward course is commendable. And there are some courses of action one could choose that, while not ideal, are better than others (compare with 1 Kings 16:30-33; Jeremiah 16:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:13). But just because a course of action is better than another does not make it right. **If it's wrong, it's wrong!** "*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isaiah 5:20).

<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Kerr, "More sexed-up shows on television, report finds." Associated Press, November 9, 2005.

*neither ten days, nor twenty days; But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you...*" (verses 18-20). And indeed He fed them. The quail stretched "a day's journey" on all sides of the camp and stood "two cubits," or three feet high. The people gathered "all that day, and all that night, and all the next day." However, when they went to eat it, "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague" (verse 33). The passage ends with this ominous statement: ". . . there they buried the people that lusted."

The lessons that loom large before us from this passage ought to be obvious. God has provided all of mankind with innumerable blessings. James writes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). "Every good gift and every perfect gift" includes everything, from earth and air, to money, to the relationships we enjoy. To all the world He has provided the promise that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), and has given His Son as the means to that end. To those who "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" God has promised that "all these things [food, clothing, and shelter] shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). But for many of us, all that God has provided is not enough. We don't just want salvation; we want it on our terms, not His. We don't just want the necessities of life; we want to have everything we could ever desire and then some. Like the Israelites, we "fall a lusting," and survey all of our rich blessings and moan, "There is nothing at all." The American dream has become for many the greed condemned in I Timothy 6:5: "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." This nation is one of the wealthiest on earth per capita, and yet many of us are in debt—to have bigger

and better—to the point we cannot meet our monthly obligations. Indeed, we have proven true the wisdom of Solomon that says, "*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity*" (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

So what will it take for us to learn what Paul had to learn, namely, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"? (Philippians 4:11). Will it take us suffering for our abundance, as the Israelites? Will we cry as all that we have amassed "comes out our nostrils?" Will we have to bury those that went a lusting? Will we have to mourn the broken homes, the corrupt lives, and the mournful souls that lie in the wake of our lusts? Will we keep "pulling down our barns, and building greater," only to have God say, "*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*" (Luke 12:18, 20)? Or can we learn the simple lesson of faith from the Hebrews writer before it is too late—"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5)?

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## ONE PATH ISN'T ENOUGH

by Marvin L. Wair

Perhaps you have been hiking in mountainous area or in a thick forest and strayed farther than you realized from your base camp. The time arrives when every rock and tree begins to look like every other rock and tree. You have changed direction several times because of choosing in between numerous **paths**, but you are not concerned because you **feel** that any direction you travel will carry you safely to your camp. You have chosen **not** to consult the compass in your possession because it always points to the same direction. The last thing you want to be accused of is being "narrow-minded" in finding your way back to camp.

Isn't it amazing that what would be labeled as foolishness at best or

stupidity at worst in the world is considered normal in the religious realm? The "pick and choose" whatever appeals to one at a given time "religion" simply demonstrates that one has absolutely no faith whatsoever in God or His Word.

When one spurns the divine pattern and swings open the door to apostasy, there is no end to the depth to which he will plunge. The Saturday, March 13, 2004 Dallas Morning News carried an article by Susan Hogan/Albach titled "Pick and Choose" that well demonstrates where apostasy leads. The article says that:

[A] woman by the name of Reneè Shepley-Ragan gave up on following a single religion and now embraces "Christian, Hindu, Unitarian, and more... She calls her **path** 'interfaith spirituality,' an identification she shares with a small but emerging group of Americans. They customize their spirituality by picking and choosing practices from the world's religions – often without any particular attachment to **doctrine** (emphasis MLW).

A lot of people are finding that one religion doesn't have all the answers for them. Shepley-Ragan said, "We help people discover their spirituality but we don't tell them what it should look like."

They downplay the differences among religions to focus on common threads such as love and mercy. It's inconsequential to them, for example, that Christians teach that Jesus was the Messiah, Muslims say he was a prophet and Jews says he was neither.

"People accuse us of practicing smorgasbord spirituality," said the Rev. Susanna Stefanachi Macomb,

an interfaith minister in New York, who has embraced the contemplative, mystical practices of Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sufism at different points. “They mean it to be derogatory, but there is truth to that. We’re seeking the essence of religion, which is spirituality – **not dogmas**. That is where you **feel** God” (emph MLW).

Many practitioners say they became disillusioned with their childhood faith and spent years bouncing from religion to religion searching for a **better fit**. “Then it’s like a light bulb goes on and you realize you don’t need to choose,” Ms. Shepley-Ragan said. “There’s no contradiction because the goal of all religions is basically the same” – only the **paths** are different (emph MLW).

People need to “wake up” before it is too late! **First**, isn’t it incredible how wise people will act in regards to their physical safety while acting so very foolish in regards to their spiritual safety? Folks understand the danger of being physical lost in the mountains or forest, but never comprehend the danger of being lost spiritually.

**Second**, one cannot “pick and choose” from the “**world religions**” and please God. Moses reminded the children of Israel, “*Ye shall observe to do therefore as Jehovah your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which Jehovah your God has commanded you, that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye possess*” (Deuteronomy 5:32-33). In the New Testament Jesus says, “*I am the way, the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). John records that one must not add to nor take away from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18-19).

**Third**, how can one discover his spirituality if he doesn’t know what it

looks like? The Bible describes in detail how one can live a righteous life.

**Fourth**, The Bible doesn’t tell one to “feel God,” but it does demand that we “obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). Jesus says, “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). Again the Lord says, “*Not everyone 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*” (Matthew 7:21).

**Fifth**, there is a tremendous contradiction in one claiming to follow God while practicing the religion that he feels most comfortable with. There are no “paths” to Heaven – only **the** strait and narrow way (Matthew 7:13-14).

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### 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).

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