

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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NEVER TO KNOW GOD'S RULE

by Lee Moses

INTRODUCTION

Why is it that there are some people who are absolutely adamant about removing “under God” from the words of the Pledge of Allegiance? It is difficult to know their exact reasons. Certainly, it can be agreed that the United States as a nation has never submitted itself fully to God. However, in the main, those who are making this push are not desirous of honesty concerning the nation's relationship with God. Some people are terrified of the thought of a God in heaven. As Creator of the universe, God is entitled not only to rule over this nation, but over the universe. But many people wish never to know God's rule. So some wish away their own perception of the evidence for God, and are able to delude themselves into thinking that there is no Lord to Whom they must submit. Others reshape God into a less imposing God, one to whom they need not to worry about submitting themselves. Such people think it is a blessing not to be hindered in their lifestyle pursuits by an all-seeing and all-knowing God; for God knows all their deeds, thoughts, and motives, and does not forget (except figuratively and by His own choice). They think it is a blessing not to be hindered in their lifestyle pursuits by an all-just and all-powerful God; for God must hold them accountable for their actions, and has the power to administer the according punishment for the most serious offender. But is it truly a blessing never to know God's rule? The following lament of the people of Israel is preserved for our learning: *“We are become as they*

over whom thou never barest rule, as they that were not called by thy name” (Isaiah 63:19, American Standard Version).

Of course, the people of Israel **had** been called by the name of God (Deuteronomy 29:13). They **had** been ruled by God (Judges 8:10; I Samuel 12:12). And now, as affliction upon affliction was besetting them, they wished that it were still the case that they were still manifestly under the rule of God. Is it wise to wish never to know God's rule?

ONE WOULD NEVER KNOW THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOD

While there are many human institutions, there are only three Divine institutions on the earth: civil government, the family, and the church. While many people feel that government is too intrusive, can you imagine the world without any civil government at all? What would hinder murderers, rapists, and thieves from plying their craft? Without an enforceable common standard, crime could no longer be considered crime, and absolute anarchy would reign (cf. Judges 17:6; 21:25). God placed the institution of government upon the earth as *“a minister to thee for good...a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”* (Romans 13:4).

What if there were no families? God created the family for the protection of its members, for the perpetuity of the race, and for the ability of parents to instill values in children. While government provides justice, the family provides prevention as proper values are

instilled. Yet there are efforts being made as you read this to redefine what a family is. Would the world be better if children lived by “the law of the jungle” from their birth? Do we wish to deny the world the loving attachments of a family?

If the church did not exist, mankind's means of reconciliation to God would not exist (Ephesians 2:16; cf. 1:22-23). By means of the church, God is glorified (3:21). By means of the church, the angels are made to know the manifold wisdom of God (3:10) - and we can see the wisdom of God by means of the church as well.

ONE WOULD NEVER KNOW THE DIRECTION OF GOD

The course for each man and woman to pursue through life is uncertain without God. People search for direction in life, as seen by the myriad of different religions and cults professing to offer some sort of meaning or direction. However, man has an utter inability to direct his own steps (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Without God, there can be no direction in life. The furthest we can see with our own eyes is death, and none of us has any idea when that will be. God has the ability to see infinitely beyond our limited tunnel of awareness. If we do not know the direction of God, all we can do is stumble in the dark as we make our way toward death. When Moses reiterated the law for the Israelites, he ebulliently asked, *“For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?”* (Deuteronomy 4:7-8). God had blessed them with

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continued from page 1

direction. The very reason for the later plight of the people of Israel was that they had left the "ways" and "fear" of the Lord (Isaiah 63:17). However, when one knows the rule of the Lord he has both direction and meaning in life. As wise Solomon completed his search for the meaning of life, he realized, *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole (duty) of man"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

ONE WOULD NEVER KNOW THE HOPE OF GOD

Assume for a moment that the universe was created as the atheists hope it was. They hope that rocks and dirt collided in such a way as to create life (no one has exactly figured out yet from where the rocks and dirt came, and life has never come from non-life). They hope that we are the result of that creation of life that occurred. And they hope that when our earthly life is ended our eternal existence will be nothing more than that of rocks and dirt. Is

there really any hope at all in such a scenario?

Contrary to the above scenario, God is not a product of over-imaginative and under-realistic thinking. As hope is defined as desire plus **expectation**, where there is no reality there can be no hope. God is real, and God extends hope to all of mankind. God has promised eternal life to the faithful, a promise certain and unwavering (Titus 1:2; cf. Hebrews 6:18-19). This is true hope, which can carry us through the most trying times of this life and into the next life. Yet so many hope that there is no God at all.

CONCLUSION

If one never knows God's rule, he will never know His other blessings. And His rule itself is an incredible blessing. Israel was able to rejoice,

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12). Now it is spiritual Israel, the church, who is God's chosen nation (Galatians 3:26-29; 6:15-16; I Peter 2:9). But we can certainly appeal to the civil nation in which we live to govern itself by Biblical principles. These are the principles on which America was built and made great by the blessing of God. The people of Israel lamented that they had become as those who had never known God's rule. Contrariwise, it seems as though the number of people desiring to be completely rid of God's rule is growing greater each day in the United States. But remember the old saying: "Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it."

Some Farewell Lessons

by Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

In Acts 20:17-38 the apostle Paul had a farewell meeting with the elders of the Lord's church in Ephesus in a smaller Asian city called Troas. You will remember that Paul had labored in Ephesus for three years, longer than he remained anywhere else, as far as we have an account in Scripture (verse 31). Paul was very dear to the hearts of these shepherds, for they wept and embraced him emotionally when he told them that they would see his face no more in this life (verses 22-25, 36-38). These brethren were close to Paul's heart also, for although he was hurrying to Jerusalem (verse 16), he took the time to wait for the Ephesian elders to come to him so that he might impart to them one last verbal message of encouragement and admonition.

PAUL'S DEDICATION AS A PREACHER

The apostle's statement that he *"served the Lord with all humility of mind"* (verses 18-19), might sound like a bragging contradiction to the claim of humility, but that is not the case at all, for Paul did just that--he served the Lord in great humility. His work in Ephesus is merely one example of that. The apostle Paul supported himself while in Ephesus, likely by making tents (Acts 18:1-3; 20:34-35). Paul did not believe it was wrong to accept support from churches as a preacher, but in some places like Ephesus and Corinth he did not do so (cf. 1 Corinthians 9: 11, 14).

Paul was not a lazy preacher. He labored diligently in the Lord's work and supported himself in secular labor when necessary--often working

day and night (Acts 20:31, 34-35). May God help all gospel preachers to have a work ethic like Paul, showing an example to other Christians as to what it means to "labor for the Lord." Paul wore himself out for Christ, even to giving the ultimate sacrifice of his last breath (2 Timothy 4:6-8). Some of his last words to the evangelist Timothy were: "*But watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry*" (verse 5).

PAUL'S DEDICATION TO THE WHOLE TRUTH

While the Lord's church is plagued with some false teachers and preachers who pervert God's word and compromise the truth with error, **one of the greatest dangers in the church is men who will not preach the whole truth!** The apostle Paul was not one of those preachers! He reminded the Ephesian elders: "*And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house*" (Acts 20:20). A few verses later he proudly proclaimed, "*For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (verse 27). Preaching all of God's word was not an option with Paul, for he knew that it was **all profitable**. Notice these two great verses in addition to the above. "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Beware of the man who avoids preaching on certain Bible topics. Such a person is not following the teaching Paul gave in the above Scriptures nor is he following Paul's example. Some men avoid controversial or "hot" topics so that they do not offend or drive away those who would find such preaching unacceptable. Paul spoke the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but he spoke

the whole truth whether people liked it or not. He knew that some people find some Bible preaching objectionable, but he told Timothy to preach it anyway. "*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry*" (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

PAUL'S DEDICATION TO WARNING BRETHREN

The apostle Paul would not be welcome to preach in many churches today. They would reject him because he was too plain spoken, yes, but they would also likely reject him for being "too negative." Balanced preaching is necessary, but what many people mean when they say preachers are

"too negative" is that they do not want to hear anything negative. Paul not only warned the Ephesian elders about false teachers as a danger to the Ephesian church, he did it regularly (Acts 20:28-30). Verse 31 says: "*Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.*"

CONCLUSION

Paul's conclusion was: "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*" (Acts 2:32). God's Word--**all of God's Word**--when believed and practiced will cure every religious ill. No preacher today is an apostle Paul, but when a preacher works with the Lord's church he ought to key on these lessons (and others which space forbids us to cover in this lesson), so that when he leaves a congregation he can say: "*Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God*" (Acts 20:26-27).

New Editor To Assume Duties

We are happy to introduce to you brother Lee Moses as the new editor of **Fulton County Gospel News**. The elders at the Third & Bethel Church in Mammoth Spring, AR have hired Lee as the new evangelist to work with the congregation and edit **FCGN**. Lee and his wife, Kelley, have twin sons, Luke and Travis, who are 21 months old. Lee is a 2002 graduate of the **Memphis School of Preaching** and has been working with the church in Mt. Pleasant, Texas for the last two years. Lee grew up in Illinois while Kelley is a native Texan, so they bring a blend of cultures from the north and south. The

church in Mammoth Spring is excited to have this young couple coming to be with us at the end of August. Lee's duties as editor of **FCGN** will begin with the September 2004 issue. From what I know of brother Moses and the faith of the elders at Mammoth Spring, **FCGN** will continue to teach the whole counsel of God, without fear or favor. Please continue your faithful support of this good work.

Since this is my final issue as editor of **FCGN**, please allow me a parting comment. Working with **FCGN** has been one of the most rewarding efforts in my 35 years of preaching. Your

continued from page 3

kindness in commenting favorably regarding the paper and the increased support we have received, mostly from churches, is tremendously gratifying. I shall truly miss my association with you all, but will offer an occasional article for the new editor's consideration. I pray only the very best for the Mammoth Spring congregation, the sister churches and dedicated individuals who support this good work, and also for Lee Moses and his family as they begin this new phase in their work for the Lord. Pray for me in the new work of training preachers at the **Bible Institute of Missouri** and for brother Moses. Send him and his family a note of encouragement to the church address here. You may also contact me through: the **Bible Institute of Missouri**, 2540 North Kansas Expressway Springfield, MO 65803. Phone (417) 865-4543

[Ted J. Clarke]



PLEASE REMEMBER MY CHANGE OF ADDRESS

For any future communication you may have with me personally. Writing to me at the church or FCGN address will only delay the correspondence.

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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; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I 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; I Corinthians 12:13).

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