

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

Established 1953

April 2009

Vol. 43 / No. 4

JOSEPH TEACHES US TO TRUST IN GOD

by Marvin L. Weir

One cannot help but be reminded of the Christ when he thinks of Joseph. Joseph's brethren sought to do him harm, but God's divine providence overruled their envy. We see God's providence overruling the evil intentions of the unbelieving Jews who sought to undermine the Master's plan. Joseph was hated because of his dreams, and the Lord was hated because he claimed to be God's Son and King. Joseph was tempted and remained pure, and Jesus was tempted and did not sin. Joseph was willing to forgive his brethren, and Jesus is willing to forgive those who sin against Him.

Both Joseph and Christ found the way of escape when faced with temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). Every trial endured for the cause of Christ will increase one's faith and make him stronger. Let us learn some things from Joseph about trusting in God.

Joseph was despised by his brethren but loved by his father. Upon sensing the partiality of Jacob to Joseph, the brothers hated Joseph and *“could not speak peaceably unto him”* (Genesis 37:4). Jacob, however, *“loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors”* (verse 3).

Christ *“came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not”* (John 1:11). Even those of his hometown of Nazareth would not accept Him, causing Christ to say, *“No prophet is acceptable in his own country”* (Luke 4:24).

Those both within and without the Lord's church may persecute children of God today who stand firm for the truth. It may be that even their own physical

family turns against them. But what a consolation to know that we are loved by the Heavenly Father for doing His will (Matthew 5:10)!

Joseph was sold as a slave, but in reality he was a prosperous man. *“And there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt”* (Gen. 37:28). The brothers of Joseph did not care what happened to him, but the Heavenly Father did. They must have thought that Joseph would be forced to serve the remainder of his life as a humble and poor slave of men.

The Heavenly Father proves to all once again that the man who does His will always prospers. *“And Jehovah was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian”* (Gen. 39:2). One lesson that all must learn is that it does not matter the value that the world places upon us. It does indeed matter, however, the value that Christ places upon us. One will be a prosperous man in the sight of God if he does His will (Matt. 7:21).

Joseph was falsely accused, but God did not forsake him. Many today believe that when things go wrong in their lives it means that God is no longer with them. But to the faithful God has promised that He *“will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5). When things go wrong in this world it may very well be because one has chosen to do the honorable and right thing (2 Timothy 3:12; John 3:19-20). The pure in heart will not only see God (Matt. 5:8), but

they will **suffer** for His sake.

If one's heart is hot with a zeal for God and His truths, men (and women) will falsely charge you. Joseph had found favor in Potiphar's eyes, but the devil was determined to bring ruin to Joseph. Mrs. Potiphar makes her move and says to Joseph, *“Lie with me. But he refused, and said . . . how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that he went into the house to do his work; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and fled, and got him out”* (Gen. 39:7-15).

Joseph, even though he was cast unjustly into prison (Gen. 39:20), was rewarded for his faithful convictions as *“Jehovah was with Joseph, and showed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison”* (Gen. 39:21). As Christians, let us remember, *“Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you”* (Matt. 5:11-12).

May we never fail to **trust** in our Lord and our God!

1272 Bonham St.
Paris, TX

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

USPS Publication #211780

... is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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STUCK IN SEARCH OF GREENER PASTURES

by Lee Moses

“The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.” The reader has likely seen this to be true with livestock, as goats and other animals push their heads through fences to get at the grass on the other side, regardless of how green and lush their own pastures might be. The reader has likely seen this proverb to be true with human beings as well, as so many people are never satisfied with what they have. Their eyes look with envy upon what other people have and upon what they do. Their hearts wonder and wander after things of the world. And, as with animals, such a person will often “get his head stuck in the fence” while trying to get at that illusorily greener grass.

A few years ago, news sources reported of a fourteen-year-old boy who ran away from his father’s home in the United States to fly back to their native Cuba. The boy’s apparent motive for

running away was that his father took away his computer and iPod privileges. As one news magazine commented, “The boy, who must not have read much about communism, apparently thinks life will be better in Castro’s Cuba.” This magazine’s article was aptly entitled “Breaking into Prison.”¹ By feeding his desire for greener pastures, he likely cut off all real opportunity ever to return.

How especially sad it is when those who are in the **Lord’s** pasture choose to wander in search of greener pastures! They honestly believe they can find something better, but they only find their heads stuck in the fence; they find they have “broken into prison.” Jesus’ Parable of the Lost/Prodigal Son paints a grim picture of this:

And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (Luke 15:11-16).

The younger son thought he saw greener pastures in the “far country,” far from the rules—and riches—of his father’s house. Many young people find such pastures particularly enticing. They have lived under their fathers’ roofs and rules their entire lives, and they seek opportunities to graze elsewhere. Many eagerly anticipate going away to college not to grow in knowledge or to expand their opportunities, but to go to the “far

country”—both physically and spiritually. They do not intend it to be a permanent trip; they fully intend to come back to a life of faithful service, worship, and devotion to the Lord. But when one deliberately turns away his ear from hearing the word of the Lord, one can potentially do irreparable damage to his mind and conscience (Romans 1:21-22; Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 Timothy 4:2)—not to mention his soul (Proverbs 28:9). One who continually allows himself to do wrong comes to a point where he has difficulty discerning correctly between right and wrong. He may, like the prodigal son, have yet to “come to himself.” He may think he is enjoying the greener pastures of that country far from God, but he is in the pigpen:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Sometimes one intends his foray into green pastures to be nothing more than a quick taste. A young person tries “just one sip of beer.” He or she goes too far with a member of the opposite sex “just this one time.” However, such one-time trials lead to lifelong habits—no one ever developed a habitual practice he never tried. Did the prodigal son think that he would stay in the far country as long as he did, and spend everything of his father’s he had? Probably not. Did he think he would sink as low in the wretchedness of the far country as he did? Certainly not.

It has been said, “Forbidden fruit is sweet” (compare with Genesis 3:6; Joshua 7:21). But God only forbids that which is self-destructive and deadly

(Genesis 2:17; Joshua 7:1-5, 25). As green as pastures outside the Lord's may look, they have nothing positive to offer.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:20-23).

The apostle Paul knew better than to desire pastures away from the Lord: *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Philippians 4:11). Paul knew that he had access to the lushest and greenest pasture anywhere. As the psalmist penned, *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters"* (Psalm 23:1-2). When the Lord is one's Shepherd, one cannot lack spiritually. One who is found grazing in the Lord's pasture—who has been Scripturally baptized (John 3:5), who labors faithfully in His kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:58), who does good as the opportunity arises (Galatians 6:10), who grows in faith and godly living (2 Peter 1:5-7)—will enter into truly green pastures following his time here (Revelation 7:16-17). Contrariwise, regarding those in other pastures: *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"* (20:15). Now, where do you think the grass is greener?

Dear reader, do not be enticed by greener pastures outside of the Lord. You risk getting your head stuck there, and its pleasures are fleeting (compare with Hebrews 11:25). *". . . The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you"* (1 Peter 1:24-25).

MEN'S CHOICES

by Jerry C. Brewer

Many people have heard the statement, "Attend the church of your choice," so often they may believe it is actually in the Bible. "Attend the church of your choice" implies that Christianity is like a cafeteria where one can choose to accept any part of God's Truth which he likes and reject any which does not suit his taste, regardless of what God has said. This approach to religion makes man—not God—the final authority.

The Bible does *not* teach that Christianity offers multiple choices which God will accept. While it's true that there are many different denominations from which to choose, it is also true that Christ built *only one* church (Matthew 16:18) purchased *only one* with his blood (Acts 20:28) and will save *only that one church* (Ephesians 5:23). We have the freedom of choice because God made man a creature of free will. But that does not mean God accepts every choice man makes. God expects all men to choose what *He* has commanded. He won't prevent us from making wrong choices, but He will not accept religion that is not prescribed in His Word.

The Bible is full of examples of men who made choices. Some of those pleased God and some did not. For instance, Noah did not have the "wood of his choice" when he built the ark. God told him to, *"Make thee an ark of gopher wood"* (Genesis 6:14). If Noah had reasoned that pine was a light wood and easy to work with and would do just as well as gopher wood, pine would have been the wood of *Noah's choice*. But God gave him no choice in the kind of wood he was to use, and Genesis 6:22 says Noah "did according to all that God commanded him." In order to save himself and his family from the flood's destruction, Noah had no other choice.

Cain had no "sacrifice of his choice" in Genesis 4. The Bible says, "And in the process of time it came to

pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Genesis 4:3-4). Hebrews 11:4 says Abel offered his sacrifice, "by faith." Cain did not. Since *"faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17), Abel heard and obeyed God. Cain did not.

Man has only two choices in religion. He can do what God specifies in His word, or do what man chooses and ignore what God has said. Jesus said the overwhelming majority of the human race will be lost because they travel the way of man's choice instead of God's (Matthew 7:13-14). God's choice is that we believe (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24) repent of our sins (Acts 17:30) confess our faith in Christ (Acts 8:37) and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). These are the things of *God's* choice, and when men obey Him, he adds them to the church of *His* choice, not of men's choice (Acts 2:47).

WHERE IS THE SCRIPTURE?

by Danny Douglas

The trend with many today is to concentrate less on the Holy Scriptures, and more on other things in the pulpit and in Bible classes. Listeners are made to wonder: "Where is the Scripture?" In visits to congregations in recent years, I have left saddened because preachers or teachers used very little Scripture in the pulpit or Bible classes. In one instance, the preacher did not read or quote even one Scripture in his Bible class. How could this be called a "Bible class" at all? We also see this problem when preachers do not give the plan of salvation from the Scriptures when they extend the invitation. Do we assume that everyone knows what to do to be

saved? Or, do we think that members no longer need to be put in remembrance of these important truths? This cannot be the case, according to Paul (1 Timothy 4:6) and Peter (2 Peter 1:13-15; 3:1-2). Do children and youth not need to be grounded in the first principles, and adults as well, in this matter? Have some lost confidence in the Gospel to convert and to convict? Paul certainly did not. He said: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:16). Does not God command us to: *“Preach the word”* (2 Timothy 4:2a)? Sadly, book, chapter, and verse preaching is rapidly vanishing from many pulpits today! Could it be that some actually think that their words are greater than God’s Word? This sad situation can only be remedied by returning to a “thus saith the Lord.” Precious souls need to frequently hear the plan of salvation from the Scriptures preached, because the Word of God is *“able to save your souls”* (James 1:21b). *“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple”* (Psalms 19:7).

One who thinks so little of the Bible, and so much of himself, that he will fill his lessons with human sentiments, while leaving his audience starving for the truth, ought to humble himself and repent! When men who have a genuine reverence for God and His Word fill our pulpits and teach our Bible classes, then church members will be encouraged to: *“Fear God, and keep His commandments”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13), but not otherwise. Church leaders ought to demand this kind of preaching/teaching!

In the long ago, God commanded Jonah: *“Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee”* (Jonah 3:2). The preaching that God has always demanded is the preaching of His word, and not man’s! *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”* (1 Peter 4:11).

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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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 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554
 ADDRESS
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Periodical Postage
 Paid At
 Mammoth Spring, AR
 72554-9998
 Publication #211780