

The Sabbath Sentinel

January–February 2014



The importance to teaching
our children to pray.

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath Sentinel

January–February 2014 Volume 65, No. 1 Issue 565

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The importance of teaching Children to pray.

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Keeping the Faith



Keeping the faith means that you have faith to start with. Many who profess their faith in Christ exhibit by their lives that they have no faith at all. What a paradox. There are a lot of Sabbath-keeping Christians who have substituted Sabbath keeping, the Law, and Scripture for faith in Christ. To many who have come out of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), keeping the Law and the Sabbath are the sum total of what is required of them. To many (not all) in the Messianic movement their insistence on maintaining standard Jewish rituals as part of their service separates them from other believers in Messiah Yeshua and cuts off their communication with other parts of the body of Christ. That's just plain wrong. I am reminded of the Scripture that says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God." My previous editorial, "One Man's Remedy for Boring Sermons," was about those who often substitute a litany of Scriptures in their sermons for challenging the congregation to greater faith in Christ and the Father.

As Genesis 15:6 says of Abraham: "And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." So faith is the starting point, not the end point, of our walk with God. God's goodness leads us to repentance, but the starting point is our faith to accept that goodness and realize that God gave His Son for every person who has lived or will live on this earth. There are no exceptions.

What does keeping the faith mean to you? I recently asked a pastor friend what he thought "keep the faith" meant. He said that to him it meant being faithful to the values and principles that one is taught as each person develops and grows through his personal experience. I kind of like that definition. It is concise and puts the emphasis on personal growth rather than on a list of dos and don'ts. How are you growing personally in your faith? That's a question that each of us needs to ask daily. Is God pleased with what you are doing at the time you are doing it? If you suspect that God is not pleased with your conduct, then you need to ask God for His direction to put you back on the right course. But, is there more to it than that?

I can't tell you that I have the answers to these questions. I am a work in progress like the rest of you. I do know, however, that I have grown in both grace and understanding over the years. If I did not, I would be a walking corpse — one of the "undead" as people like to say. (No, I'm not fond of vampire movies.)

What keeps you motivated in your walk with Christ? A friend where I used to work kept a list of prayers to God that were very specific. As each one was answered, he would mark it off his list. He kept the list in the back of his Bible. It was amazing to look at his list, particularly the answered prayers, and realize that God had been very faithful to him many times. I began to do this myself and was always likewise amazed when prayers were answered. Should I have been amazed? Yes, probably. That's a whole lot better than taking His answers to my prayers for granted. God is faithful and loves His children.

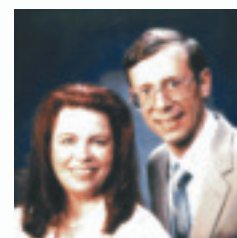
We have a generation now that listens with its eyes and thinks with its feelings. It's not like the generation in which most of us grew up. If we are to reach this generation with the gospel message, we must approach them very differently. When my wife and I were first married, she used to tell me that people from the old WCG were full of head knowledge about the Bible but had no heart. I think she was right. The head and heart must be involved together. Our convictions should generate feelings in those who receive our message of the Sabbath and the gospel of the kingdom of God. Emotions are very much a part of life. God made us so that we cannot live without emotions (I'm not talking about emotionalism here). If we are severing the head from the heart, that is the wrong approach. The Scripture often talks of the heart, which we know now is the seat of our emotions.

We need to reexamine the Scriptures in light of the head and the heart working together without losing the truth that there is right and wrong, sin and righteousness, evil and goodness. I think we can do that and not ignore our calling. I think it will enhance our witness before the watching world.

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Celtic Sabbath Keepers

Research by Richard Nickels



WE KNOW from several sources that Christianity entered the British Isles in apostolic times. (Colossians 1:23) Rev. Richard Hart, B. A., Vicar of Catton, says: "That the light of Christianity dawned upon these islands in the course of the first century, is a matter of historical certainty. "Ecclesiastical Records," p. vii. Cambridge: 1846. Tertullian, about 200 A. D., included the Britons among the many nations which believed in Christ, and he speaks of places among "the Britons inaccessible to the Romans, but subjugated to Christ." "Answer to the Jews," chap. vii. Dr. Ephraim Pagit, in his "Christianography," printed in London, 1640, gives an interesting account of the early Christians in these islands.

Before the church in the British Isles was forced under the papal yoke, it was noted for its institutions of learning. The Rev. Mr. Hart says:

"That learning and piety flourished in these islands during the period of their independence is capable of the most satisfactory proof, and Ireland in particular was so universally celebrated, that students flocked thither from all parts of the world." – "Ecclesiastical Records," p. viii.

He says, some came to "Ireland for the sake of studying the Scriptures." – *Id.*, p. xi.

The Coming of Patrick

Patrick, a son of a Christian family in southern Scotland, was carried off to Ireland by pirates about 376 A. D. Here, in slavery, he gave his heart to God and, after six years of servitude, escaped, returning to his home in Scotland. But he could not forget the spiritual need of these poor heathen, and after ten years he returned to Ireland as a missionary of the Celtic church. "He had now reached his thirtieth year [390 A. D]." – "The Ancient British and Irish Churches," William Cathcart, D. D., p. 70.

Dr. E. Pagit says that "Saint Patrick had in his day founded there 365 churches." – *Christianography*, Part 2, p.10.

Dr. August Neander says of Patrick:

"The place of his birth was Bonnaven, which lay between the Scottish towns Dumbarton and Glasgow, and was then reckoned to the province of Britain. This

village, in memory of Patricius, received the name of Kil-Patrick or Kirk-Patrick. His father, a deacon in the village church, gave him a careful education." – *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Vol. II, p. 122. Boston: 1855.

Patrick himself writes in his *Confession*: "I, Patrick, ... had Calpornius for my father, a deacon, a son of the late Potitus, the presbyter.... I was captured. I was almost sixteen years of age ... and taken to Ireland in captivity with many thousand men." – *The Ancient British and Irish Churches*, William Cathcart, D. D., p. 127.

Patrick Not a Catholic

To those who have heard of Patrick only as a Catholic saint, it may be a surprise to learn that he was not a Roman Catholic at all, but that he was a member of the original Celtic church. There is no more historic evidence for Patrick's being a Roman Catholic saint, than for Peter's being the first pope. Catholics claim that Pope Celestine commissioned Patrick as a Roman Catholic missionary to Ireland; but William Cathcart, D. D., says:

"There is strong evidence that Patrick had no Roman commission in Ireland. As Patrick's churches in Ireland, like their brethren in Britain, repudiated the supremacy of the popes, all knowledge of the conversion of Ireland through his ministry must be suppressed [by Rome, at all cost.]" – *Id.*, p. 85.

The popes who lived contemporary with Patrick never mentioned him. "There is not a written word from one of them rejoicing over Patrick's additions to their church, showing clearly that he was not a Roman missionary.... So completely buried was Patrick and his work by popes and other Roman Catholics, that in their epistles and larger publications, his name does not once occur in one of them until A. D. 634." – *Id.*, p. 83.

"Prosper does not notice Patrick... He says nothing of the greatest success ever given to a missionary of Christ, apparently because he was not a Romanist." – *Id.*, p. 84.

"Bede never speaks of St. Patrick in his celebrated 'Ecclesiastical History.'" – *Id.*, p. 85.

But, writing of the year 431, Bede says of a Catholic missionary: "Palladius was sent by Celestinus, the Roman pontiff, to the Scots [Irish] that believed in Christ." – "Ecclesiastical History," p. 22. London: 1894.

But this papal emissary was not received any more favourably by the church in Ireland, than was Augustine later received by the Celtic church of Scotland, for "he left because he did not receive respect in Ireland." – *The Ancient British and Irish Churches*, William Cathcart, D. D., p. 72.

No Roman Catholic church would have dared to ignore a bishop sent them by the pope. This proves that the churches in the British Isles did not recognize the pope.

Dr. Todd says:

"The 'Confession' of St. Patrick contains not a word of a mission from Pope Celestine. One object of the writer was to defend himself from the charge of presumption in having undertaken such a work as the conversion of the Irish, rude and unlearned as he was. Had he received a regular commission from the see of Rome, that fact alone would be an unanswerable reply. But he makes no mention of Pope Celestine, and rests his defense altogether on the divine call which he believed himself to have received for his work." – *Id.*, pp. 81, 82.

"Muirchu wrote more than two hundred years after Patrick's death. His declaration is positive that he did not go to Rome." – *Id.*, p. 88.

There are three reasons why Patrick could not have been a Roman Catholic missionary: 1. Early Catholic historians and popes avoided mentioning Patrick or his work; until later legendary histories represented him as a Catholic Saint (These legendary histories of St. Patrick, written during the Dark Ages, are so full of childish superstition and fabricated miracles, that they have to be rejected as actual history). 2. When papal missionaries arrived in Britain, 596 A. D., the leaders of the original Celtic church refused to accept their doctrines, or to acknowledge the papal authority, and would not dine with them. (Compare 1 Corinthians 5: 11; 2 John 8-11) They "acted towards the Roman party exactly 'as if they had been pagans.'" – "Ecclesiastical Records," by Richard Hart, pp. viii, xiv. 3. The doctrines of the Celtic church of Patrick's day differed so widely from those of the Roman church, that the latter could not have accepted it as "Catholic." Patrick must have been a Sabbath-keeper, because the churches he established in Ireland, as well as the mother church in Scotland and England, followed the apostolic practice of keeping the seventh day Sabbath, and of working on Sunday, as we soon shall see. But this was considered deadly heresy by the Papacy.

Columba

Another leader in the Celtic church deserves to be mentioned: Columba, who was born in Ireland, A. D. 521. Animated by the zeal and missionary spirit he found in the schools established by Patrick, Columba continued the work of his predecessor, and selecting twelve fellow workers, he established a missionary center on the island of Iona. This early Celtic church sent its missionaries not only among the heathen Piets of their own country, but also into the Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Italy. This Sabbath-keeping church (as did their Waldensian brethren) kept the torch of truth burning during the long, dark night of papal supremacy, till finally they were conquered by Rome in the twelfth century. Professor Andrew Lang says of them:

"They worked on Sunday, but kept Saturday in a Sabbathical manner." – "A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation," Vol. I, p. 96. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1900.

Dr. A. Butler says of Columba:

"Having continued his labours in Scotland thirty-four years, he clearly and openly foretold his death, and on Saturday, the ninth of June, said to his disciple Diermit: 'This day is called the Sabbath, that is, the rest day, and such will it truly be to me; for it will put an end to my labors.'" – *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Vol. I, A. D. 597, art "St. Columba," p. 762. New York: P. F. Collier.

In a footnote to Blair's translation of the Catholic historian, Bellesheim, we read:

"We seem to see here an allusion to the custom, observed in the early monastic Church of Ireland, of keeping the day of rest on Saturday, or the Sabbath." – *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*, Vol. I, p. 86.

Professor James C. Moffatt, D. D., Professor of Church History at Princeton, says:

"It seems to have been customary in the Celtic churches of early times, in Ireland as well as Scotland, to keep Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, as a day of rest from labour. They obeyed the fourth commandment literally upon the seventh day of the week." – *The Church in Scotland*, p. 140. Philadelphia: 1882.

But the church of Rome could never allow the light of pure apostolic Christianity to shine anywhere, for that would reveal her own religion to be apostasy. Pope Gregory I, in 596, sent the imperious monk Augustine, with forty other monks, to Britain. Dr. A. Ebrard says of this "mission:"

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You, Me, and the Psalms

By *Brian Knowles*



When I read some of the Psalms I am frequently moved by how precisely some of them echo my own thoughts. Yes, they are part of the inspired canon of Scripture, but they also reveal the humanity of their authors. As the editor of the Soncino Commentary on Psalms writes, “The Psalms are more than beautiful literary compositions; they are essentially human documents. They reflect life in its varied aspects as it was experienced by the Israelite community.”

Cohen continues, “Such experiences are not limited to one people or one age; they are recurrent and worldwide...They echo the thought and feeling, the aspiration and yearning, of countless men and women in every era,” *The Psalms* by A. Cohen, Introduction, p. xi.

Seventy-three of the psalms are attributed to King David. Other writers are Moses (1); Solomon (2); Asaph (12); Heman (1) and Ethan (1). Four of them are anonymous.

The writers of the New Covenant writings thought the Psalms important since they cited them some 414 times in 23 of the 27 documents in that collection. In fact the most frequently quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament is Psalm 110:1. Jesus said that David wrote this verse under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36). It is referred to no less than 18 times! Check it out.

The three main themes of the Psalms are: 1) Praise 2) Lament & 3) Ethics. The Psalms were the song book of the Temple used by its choir of Levites. The Psalms introduce one of the three divisions of the Tanach (Old Testament), the Ketuvim (Writings) which constitute Wisdom literature.

Let’s look at some verses that may resonate with your humanity - they certainly do with mine. “How long, Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? Will your wrath burn forever? Remember how short my time is; for what futility have you created all the children of men? What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?” (Psalm 89:46-48).

The assumption here seems to be that God hides himself because he is wrathful. The English “how short my time is” reads in Hebrew “what a fleeting thing I am.” How often I have thought that thought! Life seems so frustratingly short. It’s just a transient puff of ephemeral smoke. I can’t begin to learn all that I want to learn, do all that I want to do, or become all that I want to become. Jesus commanded his followers: “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is per-

fect,” (Matthew 5:48). What chance have I of achieving such a lofty goal in this brief lifetime?

No matter what God has commanded us to do, or to become, death abruptly terminates the whole process of our spiritual development. Nothing we can do will prolong life. When it’s over, it’s over. That being the case, it sometimes seems that life is futile. (Read the Book of Ecclesiastes for a wonderful exposition of the “emptiness” of life on this planet.)

Heman, in his one psalm, has captured much of the human perception of God. He hides himself perhaps because he is angry with sinful mankind. There’s nothing any of us can do about that — we can’t make God appear and we can’t do anything about the shortness and apparent futility of our own lives. So we live out our days and hope there turns out to be some point to it all.

At this point, it might be appropriate to consider the words of Ecclesiastes: “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Centuries later, Paul wrote, “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil,” (Ephesians 5:15-16). There’s nothing worse than a squandered life. Human life, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), is too precious to waste.

If we can say to God with David, “My times are in your hands (Psalm 31:15),” then perhaps God will work his purposes through us. David certainly believed that God had given him the psalms he wrote, “He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God,” (Psalm 40:3). As we have already seen, Jesus also believed David was inspired (Mark 12:36).

An Imprecatory Psalm

David was a “man after God’s own heart” yet he wrote things like this: “If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them. I count them as my enemies,” (Psalm 139:19-22).

Are there not those today who hate the God of Israel and his people? Are they not bloodthirsty? Do they not

seek to drive God's chosen people into the sea? How should we view such hateful enemies?

Perhaps surprisingly, many of the Psalms, eleven to be exact, are "imprecatory" in nature. Of these, nine were written by David. An imprecation is a spoken curse or a malediction. In the Bible, such psalms have four purposes: 1) to demonstrate God's just judgment (Psalm 58:11); 2) To show God's authority over the wicked (Psalm 59:13); to lead the wicked to seek the Lord (Psalm 83:16); and to lead the righteous to praise God (Psalm 7:17).

When David and others, like Asaph, wrote these powerful and evocative Psalms, they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. They echoed the heart of the Lord.

God is God!

Surely one of the messages of the wisdom literature in the Bible is that God is God and that he is not to be trifled with. The other day, I was watching a Jewish-Christian show on TV. The principals were ministering to Ethiopian Jews who lived in dire and degraded circumstances. One beautiful young lady was horribly crippled in her legs. She used two wooden blocks in her hands to propel herself across the dirt. Her shattered legs dragged behind. Asked how she felt about her condition in relation to God, she replied simply, "He is God — he can do anything he wants!" She had accepted her condition, and God had given her the grace to bear it.

Did not God say, in effect, to Job, "I am God; I can do anything I want!" (Job 38-39). Did not God give Paul the grace to bear his sufferings in the name of the Lord? (2 Corinthians 11:22-33; 12:9).

Incidentally, I should mention that God did not heal the Ethiopian lady, but he did bless her with a shiny new wheelchair with which to get around. Her smile of thanksgiving lit up the whole village!

We don't always understand the why of things that God does or doesn't do. This is one of the abiding themes of the Psalms. But whatever he does, it's the right thing.

I encourage you to study the Psalms, don't just read them, think about them. Learn from them how to praise God and how to thank him. Learn to recognize the various forms of Hebrew poetry they contain (i.e. parallelism). Note the Psalms that are acrostic (following the Hebrew alphabet). Many Psalms were chanted as the worshipers ascended the steps of the Temple. Psalm 119 shows the whole Hebrew alphabet.

The Psalms are a rich gold mine of Hebrew wisdom. They are an important part of the Bible. Get to know them.

Brian Knowles is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website (www.godward.org).

The Question of Evil

by Lenny Cacchio

Recently I had a startling conversation with a young man who lamented that all but four of his friends are atheists. "Why are they atheists?" I asked. His answer was along these lines: they aren't really atheists so much as searching for God without realizing it. They look at the world and all its evil, and they question how any God, if there is such a being, can let such things happen. Isn't God supposed to be both good and all-powerful?

Those are serious questions, and they deserve an answer.

Most of us, I think, would struggle with this complex question. But I do like what C. S. Lewis wrote in his short book *The Case for Christianity*:

"God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong, but I can't. If a thing is free to be good it's also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata, of creatures that worked like machines, would hardly be worth creating. The happiness which God designs for His higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to Him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they've got to be free.

"Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently, He thought it worth the risk. (...) If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will, that is, for making a real world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings- then we may take it it is worth paying."

We as a rational creatures have a duty to ask the tough questions, but one thing we can't do is to say that there can't be a God because people are so bad. People make choices, and those choices can lead to either good things or bad things. We shouldn't want it any other way, for otherwise we would be machines in a dystopian world of Stepford Wives who are unable to choose to love. Love freely chosen is the only love that matters.

You can catch all of Lenny's latest commentaries on <http://morningcompanion.blogspot.com> and on the BSA Web site at <http://www.biblesabbath.org/>. Lenny is a member of the BSA board of directors.

MALACHI: A STORY OF LOVE AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

By R. Herbert

“So I will come to put you on trial ... says the LORD Almighty.” Malachi 3:5

Malachi is a fascinating book. It is unclear exactly when it was written, and even whether Malachi is the name of the author or simply a title (*malachi* means “my messenger” in Hebrew, and the word is not found as a name anywhere else in the Bible), but the “message” of Malachi is clear.

The last book in both the Hebrew *Tanak* and the Christian Old Testament, Malachi deals with the theme of God’s judgment on the unfaithful and backsliding post-exilic Jewish community, and His eventual judgment of all peoples. But there is an underlying aspect to this theme which is seldom mentioned in commentaries on this book. Malachi presents his message by way of legal complaints produced in trial. In this “trial” God Himself brings a number of charges against Israel, all of which Israel denies. God then provides evidence of Israel’s guilt in each case.

Guilty as charged

Malachi begins immediately with the first charge: “‘I have loved you,’” says the LORD” (1:2) and the charge is implied in this simple statement. God had loved Israel over a great length of time, yet His people had refused to return His love and had been constantly unfaithful to the covenant which He had made with them. Israel’s ungrateful response to the charge: “How have you loved us?” is all the more reprehensible considering God had only recently created the circumstances which allowed the Jews to return from captivity.

Malachi then lists a number of ways in which Israel persisted in breaking its covenant with God and rejecting the love He gave them. First, he charges that Israel had greatly disrespected God (1:6). Once again Israel denies the charge: “How have we shown contempt for your name?”, but the evidence is clear: by offering blemished and inferior offerings (1:7-8). Malachi particularly faults the priests for accepting and offering such sacrifices: “For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger [*malach*] of the LORD Almighty” (2:7).

The same legal pattern of charge, denial, and then presentation of evidence of guilt is repeated throughout the greater part of the book of Malachi:

Charge: The Israelites were breaking their covenant with God by marrying women who worshiped foreign

gods, by being unfaithful to their own wives, and by divorcing them (2:12-16).

Charge: Israel was breaking its covenant with God through the injustice which permeated the land (2:17–3:5).

At this key point the legal nature of this book is made especially clear. God says to Israel: “I will send my messenger (*malachi*), who will prepare the way before me ... the messenger (*malach*) of the covenant ...” (3:1) and “... I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me,” says the LORD Almighty.” (3:5; see also Isaiah 3:13-15 where God also appears as prosecuting attorney and judge).

Two final charges follow this legal broadside:

Charge: Israel was being unfaithful in its tithes — by not paying a full tithe. (3:8-10).

Charge: “‘You have spoken arrogantly against me,’ says the LORD. You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements ...’” (3:13-15).

Applying the charges to ourselves

Throughout these legal proceedings, Malachi shows the Israelites repeatedly denied the charges brought against them, asking “how have we done this?” or “how have we done that?” They are portrayed as full of sin, yet clean in their own eyes. But before we judge them for this, could any of these charges apply to spiritual Israel? Can we ask ourselves the same questions that God asked them?

Have we failed in our covenant relationship with God in any of the ways spelled out in the charges leveled in the book of Malachi? Let’s take a single example and look at the charge of giving inferior offerings. Malachi shows the Israelites were giving blemished and substandard offerings to God that they would probably be embarrassed to give as gifts to one another. It’s easy to read over this and not see how it might apply in our lives, but does it? Malachi offers an instructive example from everyday life in any age: “Try offering [the inferior

offerings] to your governor [read “boss”]! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?’ says the LORD Almighty” (1:8).

We may faithfully give to our church in terms of monetary offerings, but what about the other things we offer God? Are our prayers too often short, “sleepytime” offerings which skimp on our covenant relationship? We talk about spending “quality time” with our mates, but what about the quality of the time we give to God each day and week — is it hastily crammed in around the edges, or is it something better? How about the Sabbath? Do we keep it in the letter of the law, or do we see it as an opportunity to offer some undivided attention to God within the parameters of the day? These things are just as much our offerings to God as our monetary support of the Gospel.

All of Israel’s failings in their covenant relationship with God have obvious and sometimes not so obvious parallels in our lives (Romans 15:4), and some of the charges against physical Israel may apply to us today. They are worth thinking about.

Suspended penalties and the law of love

Before he moves to the penalty phase of trial, Malachi shows that some few do accept the charges by admitting guilt and penitently turning to God. “Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. “‘On the day when I act,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him.’” (3:16-18).

The final section of Malachi then jumps to a future time when most humans finally will understand, appreciate and respond to the covenant that God has offered them and will no longer deceive themselves: “Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not” (3:18), For those who do not, the penalty will be inescapable and final (4:1).

“But for you who revere my name” God says, “the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays ...” (4:2). What does this mention of the sun in Malachi have to do with a legal trial? It is interesting that for many of the nations which were ancient Israel’s neighbors, the sun god was also the god of justice and the sun was thus a symbol of justice and law in the Near East, just as the scales of justice are a symbol of law to us. But Malachi stresses that rather than some pagan sun god, the “sun of righteousness”—the embodiment of perfect righteous law—would rise on God’s repentant people.

Then Malachi ends on words that focus on both the law of God: “Remember the law...” (4:4) and the love of God which began this book: “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents...” (4:5-6).

This turning of the hearts as a result of the work of an Elijah-like figure doubtless applies equally to our relationship with our spiritual parent as much as it does to physical parent-child relationships. It also has two possible applications in terms of the person of the latter day Elijah. In the first and clearest application, the prophet “Elijah” indicates John the Baptist who prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus and the institution of the new covenant. “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). Notice also the words of Zechariah, John the Baptist’s father, “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord ... by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven” (Luke 1:76-78 which uses the same imagery of the rising sun as Malachi 4:3-4). Jesus himself confirms this identity of Malachi’s Elijah figure in Matthew 11:14 by saying of John the Baptist, “And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come” (see also Matt. 17:10-12).

In the second understanding, this prophecy also applies to some yet future individual or individuals, but in either case, the closing section of Malachi clearly stresses the parent-child relationship as a metaphor of the love that God has offered throughout the human story.

When God says “I have loved you” at the opening of Malachi it is in the legal context of Israelite and human failure to respond to his love. But the closing verses of this book show that due to the love of God these legal proceedings will eventually have a good outcome for those who accept God’s law. The book of Malachi plainly shows that law has a place in love, and that love has a vital place in law.

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Let's look at a few Scriptures and keep in mind the lessons that they are trying to teach us.

"If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land'" (Deuteronomy 15:7-11).

Notice that the emphasis is on taking care of the needs of the poor and that "you shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy" and that the "the poor will never cease from the land."

These are very valuable lessons for all of us. The poor will never cease from the land for any number of reasons, and it may not be any fault of their own. We are not to decide which of the poor are worthy or unworthy of help. None of us knows the intimate circumstances of others to make that judgment. I think there is one caveat in all this, and that is "if a man will not work, he should not eat." I am not talking about sloth.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"
(Luke 4:18-19).

We see the same theme in these verses. Jesus talks of how the gospel went to the poor, the brokenhearted, and the captives. Jesus here is in a magnificent way telling us the things that should occupy our hearts and minds as we take the gospel to others.

Let's look at a couple of other Scriptures.

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He

will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me'" (Matthew 25:31-40).

If our gospel does not contain this kind of compassion, then according to our Lord and Savior, it is worthless. We must decide whether we want to be sheep or goats. That is our choice.

I want to look at one more Scripture before I bring this to a conclusion. Look at 1 John 4:8.

"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

That last Scripture sums up everything that I have been trying to say in this editorial. Let's not forget one of the most important Scriptures in the Bible: John 3:16-17. We should have this one memorized. Anyone who attended Sunday school or Sabbath school class as a youngster undoubtedly had to memorize this passage: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Please note a couple of things that the Bible is saying here, 1) that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, 2) that God's intention was to save the entire world — every person who has ever lived or will live on this earth. Sometimes we like to stick to our little cliques and pretend that we are on the inside with God, and everyone who does not belong to our group is an outsider who is not due any consideration from us. That, unfortunately is a mentality that is all too present among Christian groups. Remember that Jesus said: "And other sheep I have which are **not of this fold**; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

One thing I learned when I left the WCG was that they were not unique at all. Whether one is Sabbatarian, Protestant, or Catholic, each has its own way of dividing the “sheep” from the “goats.” Each group likes to label those who are either “in” or “out.” There is a set of rules that every group has that defines them and excludes others. It’s not good enough just to say you are a “Christian.” The rules of each group defines you. That’s not to say that rules of behavior should not be followed, but not regarding skirt length or a man’s appearance when you come into a church meeting. Moderation is good, but even in that context, at times there have to be exceptions involved.

What is the overarching message that Christ was trying to get across? Just look at what James 2:1-9 says:

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

As Christians we should remember that the head without the heart is sterile making our worship sterile. The heart without the head will only cut us adrift to wander from doctrine to doctrine without any mooring. We need both, and we must express both head and heart to express Christ’s love to a fallen world. We can’t allow ourselves to be defined by our rituals or our dress. We have to be defined by our faithfulness to the Word of God and our willingness to reach out to those less fortunate than we are, and, by our conduct, draw others to follow Christ. That’s Christ’s message. We just need to live it.

—Kenneth Ryland

MYSTERIES

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible presents two great mysteries: the mystery of the Incarnation-how God could condescend to become like one of His creatures in order to save humanity-and the “mystery of iniquity” how a created being could ever presume to exalt himself to the level of his Creator or even above Him. These two opposing mysteries are exemplified in the lives of Christ, the Prince of Life, and Satan, the prince of darkness.

Though Christ was “in very nature God, [He] did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8, N.I.V.). He did this voluntarily, out of a heart of love for His creatures.

In contrast with Christ's self-abnegation, Satan boasted, “I will scale the heavens; I will elevate my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of assembly, far away in the north. I will rise above the heights of the clouds; I will rival the Most High!” (Isaiah 14:13, 14, New Berkeley). Had he possessed the power, Lucifer would have torn God from His throne and occupied it himself. His ambition was to have God's power, not His character. Can you imagine what the universe would be like if it were governed by such a being?

But there is another mystery, one that interacts with the two great mysteries we have been discussing and rivals them in importance-the mystery of the freedom of the human will. Why do some people, in the face of all the light God has permitted to shine on their path, choose Satan's side? By the same token, why do others, on whose path very little light has shone, cherish the little light that they have, and choose God's side? Not until after the millennium, when God brings “every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14), will we learn the complete answers to these questions. But of one thing we may be certain: No one who is lost will be able to plead that he did not have an opportunity to make the right choice, for “every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess” (Rom. 14:11) the justice of God's judgments.

If we would remain on the Lord's side we must from time to time reaffirm our choice to be there.

Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 353. Review & Herald Publishing Ass'n. 1981.

The Collapse of America (Ignoring the Ten Commandments)

by Lori Godfrey



Looking back to the time of the patriarchs, I can see a glimpse of their unwavering commitment to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A far cry from America today. The ones who listened and obeyed were those who truly sought the holiness of God. They knew the law was handed down by Moses, from God, and was to be revered.

Unfortunately though, the collapse of America is a result from ignoring the Ten Commandments. The world as we see it will continue on a spiral downfall if we repeatedly turn away from a loving God, to serve the god of this world.

When Jesus taught the people he told them he had not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. He also summed up all the commandments, by these two: "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment and the second is like unto it. Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37-40).

We as a nation know the Constitution was birthed from the Ten Commandments and once revered and now only to be rejected. If our founding fathers knew how important they were, should we not, as well? The Jewish nation not only kept the law, but the Gentiles also acknowledged them. Why the drastic change? Because in the day of the apostles, righteousness was the norm and not the minority. God has always intended for the law to be kept but even in the church today there are those who lie, secretly covet their neighbor's possessions and so on.

Therefore, as the day draws closer to His return, man becomes less tuned in to his conscience, more in tuned in to sin. One day America will be called to answer for her backsliding and betrayal of the God who "shed his grace on thee." Time will then usher in the appearance of the Lamb of God who so freely gave himself for the remission of our sins.

If America lived according to the commandments, she would not be in the shape she's in. Hence, we would be a godly nation. If we believe Proverbs 14:

"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people," then we have to ask ourselves this question. Can we who are a free nation, having shared in the many blessings that America has, ignore the Ten Commandments and then by doing so, contribute to the collapse of America?

Lori Godfrey is a Christian freelance author, reaching out to those who are searching for godly answers to life's problems. Lori lives with her two sons in the southern U.S. You can email Lori at writermom777@yahoo.com.

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Nickels: "Celtic Sabbath Keepers" cont. from page 5.

"Gregory well knew that there existed in the British Isles, yea, in a part of the Roman dominion, a Christian church, and that his Roman messengers would come in contact with them. By sending these messengers, he was not only intent upon the conversion of the heathen, but from the very beginning he was also bent upon bringing this Irish-Scotch church, which had hitherto been free from Rome, in subjection to the papal chair." Bonifacius," p. 16. Guetersloh, 1882. (Quoted in Andrews' *History of the Sabbath*, fourth edition, revised and enlarged, p. 582).

Through political influence, and with magnificent display, the Saxon king, Ethelbert. of Kent, consented to receive the pope's missionaries, and "Augustine baptized ten thousand pagans in one day" by driving them in mass into the water. Then, relying on the support of the pope and the sword of the Saxons, Augustine summoned the leaders of the ancient Celtic church, and demanded of them: "'Acknowledge the authority of the Bishop of Rome.' These are the first words of the Papacy to the ancient Christians of Britain." They meekly replied: 'The only submission we can render him is that which we owe to every Christian.' - "History of the Reformation," D'Aubigne, Book XVII, chap. 2. "'But as for further obedience, we know of none that he, whom you term the Pope, or Bishop of Bishops, can claim or demand.'" - *Early British History*, G. H. Whalley, Esq., M. P., p. 17 (London: 1860): and "Variation of Popery," Rev. Samuel Edger, D. D., pp. 180-183. New York: 1849. Then in 601, when the British bishops finally refused to have any more to do with the haughty messenger of the pope, Augustine proudly threatened them with secular punishment. He said:

"If you will not have peace from your brethren, you shall have war from your enemies; if you will not preach life to the Saxons, you shall receive death at their hands.' Edelfred, King of Northumbria, at the instigation of Augustine, forthwith poured 50,000 men into the Vale Royal of Chester, the territory of Prince of Powys, under whose auspices the conference had been held. Twelve hundred British priests of the University of Bangor having come out to view the battle, Edelfred directed his forces against them as they stood clothed in their white vestments and totally unarmed, watching the progress of the battle - they were massacred to a man. Advancing to the university itself, he put to death every priest and student therein, and destroyed by fire the halls, colleges, and churches of the university itself; thereby fulfilling, according to the words of the great Saxon authority called the Pious Bede, the prediction, as he terms it, of the blessed Augustine. The ashes of this noble monastery were smoking; its libraries, the collection of ages, having been wholly consumed." - *Early British History*, G. H. Whalley, Esq., M. P., p. 18. London: 1860. See

also *Six Old English Chronicles*, pp. 275, 276; edited by J. A. Giles, D. C. L. London: 1906.

D'Aubigne says of Augustine: "A national tradition among the Welsh for many ages pointed to him as the instigator of this cowardly butchery. Thus did Rome loose the savage Pagan against the primitive church of Britain." - *History of the Reformation*, D'Aubigne, book 17, chap. 2.

This was a master stroke of Rome, and a great blow to the native Christians. With their university, their colleges, their teaching priests, and their ancient manuscripts gone, the Britons were greatly handicapped in their struggle against the ceaseless aggression of Rome. Still they continued the struggle for more than five hundred years longer, till finally, in the year 1069, Malcolm, the King of Scotland, married the Saxon princess, Margaret, who, being an ardent Catholic, began at once to Romanize the primitive church, holding long conferences with its leaders. She was assisted by her husband, and by prominent Catholic officials. Prof. Andrew Lang says:

"The Scottish Church, then, when Malcolm wedded the sainted English Margaret, was Celtic, and presented peculiarities odious to the English lady, strongly attached to the establishment as she knew it at home.... The Celtic priests must have disliked the interference of an English woman.

"First there was a difference in keeping Lent. The Kelts did not begin it on Ash Wednesday.... They worked on Sunday, but kept Saturday in a sabbatical manner." - *History of Scotland*, Vol. I, p. 96.

William F. Skene says:

"Her next point was that they did not duly reverence the Lord's day, but in this latter instance they seem to have followed a custom of which we find traces in the early Monastic Church of Ireland, by which they held Saturday to be the Sabbath on which they rested from all their labours." - *Celtic Scotland*, Vol. II, p. 849. Edinburgh: David Douglas, printer, 1877.

"They held that Saturday was properly the Sabbath on which they abstained from work." - *Id.*, p. 350.

"They were wont also to neglect the due observance of the Lord's day, prosecuting their worldly labours on that as on other days, which she likewise showed, by both argument and authority, was unlawful." - *Id.*, p. 348.

Scotland Under Queen Margaret

Professor Andrew Lang relates the same fact thus:

"The Scottish Church, then, when Malcolm wedded the saintly English Margaret, was Celtic, and presented peculiarities odious to an English lady, strongly attached to the Establishment as she knew it at home....

"They worked on Sunday, but kept Saturday in a sabbatical manner.... These things Margaret abolished." – *A History of Scotland from the Roman Occupation*, Vol. I, p. 96. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1900.

The Catholic historian, Bellesheim, says of Margaret...

"The queen further protested against the prevailing abuse of Sunday desecration. 'Let us,' she said, 'venerate the Lord's day, inasmuch as upon it our Saviour rose from the dead: let us do no servile work on that day.' The Scots in this matter had no doubt kept up the traditional practice of the ancient monastic Church of Ireland which observed Saturday, rather than Sunday, as a day of rest." – *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*, Vol. I, pp. 249, 250.

Finally the queen, the king, and three Roman Catholic dignitaries held a three-day council with the leaders of the Celtic church. Turgot, the queen's confessor, says:

It was another custom of theirs to neglect the reverence due to the Lord's day, by devoting themselves to every kind of worldly business upon it, just as they did upon other days. That this was contrary to the law, she proved to them as well by reason as by authority. 'Let us venerate the Lord's day,' said she, 'because of the resurrection of our Lord, which happened upon that day, and let us no longer do servile works upon it; bearing in mind that upon this day we were redeemed from the slavery of the devil. The blessed Pope Gregory affirms the same, saying: "We must cease from earthly labour upon the Lord's day.'" ... From that time forward ... no one dared on these days either to carry any burdens himself or to compel another to do so. *Life of Queen Margaret*, Turgot, Section 20; cited in *Source Book*, p. 506, ed. 1922.

Thus Rome triumphed at last in Scotland. In Ireland also the Sabbath-keeping church established by Patrick was not long left in peace:

"Giraldus Cambrensis informs us that in the year 1155 [Henry II, King of England, was entrusted by Pope Adrian IV with the mission of] invading Ireland [with devastating war] to extend the boundaries of the church, [so that even the Irish would become] faithful to the Church of Rome." The pope wrote Henry:

"You, our beloved son in Christ, have signified to us your desire of invading Ireland.... and that you are also willing to pay to St. Peter the annual sum of one penny for every house. We therefore grant a willing assent to your petition, and that the boundaries of the Church may be extended,... permit you to enter the island." – *Ecclesiastical Records of England, Ireland, and Scotland*, Rev. Richard Hart, B. A., pp. xv, xvi.

Thus we see, that in Scotland an English queen "introduced changes which, in Ireland, came in the wake of conquest and the sword. For example, the ecclesi-

astical novelties which St. Margaret's influence gently thrust upon Scotland, were accepted in Ireland by the Synod of Cashel (1172) under Henry II. Yet there remained, in the Irish Church, a Celtic and an Anglo-Norman party, 'which hated one another with a perfect hatred as if they rejoiced in the designation of Protestant and Papist.' – *History of Scotland*, Andrew Lang, Vol. I, p. 97.

But whether this triumph of Catholicism over the native Celtic faith was accomplished by the devastating wars of Henry II, or by Queen Margaret's appeal to Pope Gregory, and her threat of the civil law, in either case it lacked an appeal to plain Bible facts, accompanied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. And, while the leaders of the Celtic church might reluctantly yield to the civil authorities, the people, who had kept the Bible Sabbath for centuries, requested divine authority for Sunday-keeping. For some time the papal missionaries, who preached this strange gospel to the Britons, fabricated all kinds of stories about miraculous punishments that had befallen those who worked on Sunday: Bread baked on Sunday, when it was cut, sent forth a flow of blood; a man plowing on Sunday, when cleaning his plow with an iron, had it grow fast to his hand, so that he had to carry it around to his shame for two years.

Forged Letters from Christ

When the Abbot Eustace, 1200 A. D., was continually confronted with requests for a divine command for Sunday-keeping, he finally retired to Europe, and returned the next year with a spurious letter from Jesus Christ, claimed to have fallen down from heaven upon St. Simeon's altar at Golgotha. This letter declared:

"I am the Lord.... It is my will, that no one, from the ninth hour on Saturday [3 p. m.] until sunrise on Monday, shall do any work.... And if you do not pay obedience to this command.... I swear to you ... I will rain upon you stones, and wood, and hot water, in the night.... Now, know ye, that you are saved by the prayers of my most holy Mother, Mary!" – *Roger de Hoveden's Annals*, Vol. II, pp. 526, W, Bohn's edition. London: 1853.

In that superstitious age such childish fabrications might, to some extent, satisfy some people, but four hundred years later the trouble flared up again.

"Upon the publication of the 'Book of Sports' in 1618, a violent controversy arose among English divines on two points: first, whether the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was in force among Christians; and, secondly, whether, and on what ground, the first day of the week was entitled to be distinguished and ob-

served as 'the Sabbath.' In 1628 Theophilus Brabourne, a clergyman, published the first work in favor of the seventh day, or Saturday, as the true Christian Sabbath. He and several others suffered great persecution." – Haydn's Dictionary of Dates., art. "Sabbatarians," p. 602. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883.

Several ministers arose in England about this time who defended the Bible Sabbath, and who were bitterly persecuted by the state church. John Trask was put in prison; his wife, a schoolteacher of a devout Christian character, remained in prison for fifteen years. On November 26, 1661, John James, a godly Sabbath-keeping preacher, was hanged for advocating the Sabbath truth, "and his head was set upon a pole opposite the meeting house in which he had preached the gospel." – "History of the Baptists," Dr. J. M. Cramp, p. 351. London: Elliot Stock, 1868. Dr. Thomas Bampfield, (See Robert Cox's *Literature of the Sabbath Question*. Vol. II, pp. 86-91 Page 87), who had been speaker in one of Cromwell's parliaments, wrote two books defending the seventh-day Sabbath (1692, 1693), but he also was imprisoned. In 1664, Edward Stennet, an English minister, wrote a book entitled: "The Seventh Day Is the Sabbath of the Lord." But like the rest, he had to spend a long time in prison. In 1668 he wrote the following letter to his Sabbath-keeping brethren in America:

"Abington, Berkshire, England,
"February 2nd, 1668.

"Edward Stennet, a poor unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, to the remnant in Rhode Island, who keep the commandments of God, and the testimonies of Jesus, sendeth greeting:

"Dearly Beloved:

"I rejoice in the Lord, on your behalfs that He hath been graciously pleased to make known to you His holy Sabbath in such a day as this, when truth falleth in the streets, and equity cannot enter. And with us we can scarcely find a man that is really willing to know whether the Sabbath be a truth or not, and those who have the greatest parts, have the least anxiety to meddle with it.

"We have passed through great opposition for the truth's sake, repeatedly from our brethren, which makes the affliction heavier; I dare not say how heavy, lest it should seem incredible; but the Lord has been with us, affording us strength according to our day. And when lovers and friends seem to be moved far from us, the Lord was near us, comforting our souls,

and quickening us, with such quick and eminent answers to our prayers, has encouraged and established us in the truth for which we suffer. But the opposers of truth seem much withered, and at present the opposition seems declining away; the truth is strong, and this spiritual fiery law will burn all those thorns which men set up before it. For was there ever any ceremonial law given us? But this law was given from the mouth of God, in the ears of so many thousands – written on tables of stone with His own finger - promised to be written on the tables of their hearts and confirmed by a miracle for the space of forty years in the wilderness, the manna not keeping good any other day but the Sabbath....

"It is our duty as Christians, to carry it with all meekness and tenderness to our brethren, who, through the darkness of their understanding in this point, differ from us. We have abundant reason to bless our dear Father, who hath opened our eyes to behold the wonders in His law, while many of His dear servants are in the dark; but the Lord has in this truth as in others, first revealed it unto babes, that no flesh shall glory in His presence. Our work is to be at the feet of the Lord in all humility, crying unto Him, that we may be furnished with all grace to fit us for His work; that we may be instruments in His hands, to convince our brethren (if the Lord will) who at present differ from us....

"Truly, dear brethren, it is a time of slumbering and sleeping with us, though God's rod is upon our backs. Oh! pray for us to the Lord, to quicken us, and set us upon watch-towers. Here are, in England, about nine or ten churches that keep the Sabbath, besides many scattered disciples, who have been eminently preserved in this tottering day, when many once eminent churches have been shattered in pieces. The Lord alone be exalted, for the Lord has done this, not for our sakes, but for His own name's sake. My dear brethren, I write these lines at a venture, not knowing how they will come to your hand. I shall commit them and you to the blessing of our dear Lord, who hath loved us, and washed away our sins in His own blood. If these lines come to you safely, and I shall hear from you, hereafter I will write to you more largely. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

"Edward Stennet."

— *An Original History of the Religious Denominations*, I. Daniel Rupp, p. 71. Philadelphia: 1844.

Richard Nickels, now deceased, was president of the BSA and an avid researcher into all issues Sabbatarian. Richard's wife Shirley currently manages our Battle Ground, Washington, office.

Spiritual Momentum

by Kelly McDonald



The Bible records that there are fixed laws in heaven and on earth (Jeremiah 33:25). This means that there are fixed laws that God has set up that apply to us all. One such law is the law of gravity. None of us challenge the law of gravity. It is a fixed law. Other laws include the laws of motion. One conclusion drawn from the laws of motion is that an object at rest tends to stay at rest, and an object in motion tends to stay in motion. Also, it takes less force to keep a moving object in a state of motion than the force required to move an object at rest. That is to say, an object will continue doing what it is doing unless an outside force causes that change. From Romans 1:20, we learn that the creation and natural order God has established teach us about His divine qualities. In other words, there is a spiritual application to these natural concepts. Take into account the law of momentum described above. In our walks with God, it is easier for us to keep our spiritual walk with God going when we are steadily reading our Bibles, praying, fasting, and keeping the commandments than when we are not. When we are not consistently seeking God, then we have inconsistent results. We need spiritual momentum.

Jesus is the perfect example of spiritual momentum. Luke 13:31-33, records, "At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, 'Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.' He replied, 'Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" Jesus is praying for people to be free from demonic influence and healed from illness. The Pharisees tried to get him to stop. Jesus reacted by telling them that he had a goal to keep. He had to press in and continue until the objective had been accomplished. Jesus knew He had spiritual momentum. Had He stopped, people would not have received their touch from God and experienced the power of the gospel. Another great example is the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14:13-21. In this passage, Jesus was ministering to a group of people. As evening approached, the disciples encouraged Him to send the people home. He did not accept their suggestion. Remember, it is easier to keep an object moving that is already in motion than move an object at rest. Jesus knew that He might not have the opportunity to minister to these people again. He looked for an opportunity to maintain spiritual momentum. Instead of sending the people home, He multiplied five loaves and

two fish to feed the entire crowd. What a miracle of God! He kept the momentum going! A final example from Christ's life is His sacrifice. Christ took the worst beating that any human will ever endure. He was betrayed, lashed, spit upon, slapped, punched, and crucified. He went all the way for us. At any point along the way, He could have stopped. He kept the momentum going because He saw the end result and knew the spiritual harvest that would come.

There are some examples in the Bible where spiritual momentum was stifled. In 2 Samuel 5-10, a series of amazing events happens in the life of David. David becomes King over all of Israel, he defeats enemy nations, and the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem with a great celebration. However, 1 Samuel 11 records an unfortunate event where David sinned. How did it start? 2 Samuel 11:1-3a, "In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king's men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her." David broke his spiritual momentum. Instead of going to fight another battle and gaining another victory, he stayed behind. He resorted to flight instead of fight. **He decided to take a break and in came the snake!** His decision to stop the spiritual momentum from going forward allowed the temptation to influence him. Many people suffered because of it. David and the entire nation went through a series of rebellions and other hardships.

Elijah was used by God to do many great things. Some of them occurred in a very short time span. In 1 Kings 18, Elijah prayed and fire fell from heaven. He then prayed and rain fell for the first time in 3½ years. Immediately following these two events, he outran the chariots of Ahab on foot! These three amazing events occurred consecutively. However, in 1 Kings 19 Jezebel told Elijah that she was going to kill him! He then ran to Mount Horeb in Arabia. The spiritual momentum was flowing and going, but he stopped. He got tired and worn down and turned to flight instead of fight. Elijah even asked God to take his life. We will never know the amazing miracle that was not performed because he ran.

From these examples, we can see that we must never give up as believers. We get tired from the per-

secution of those who have different beliefs than that of our own. At times, we become worn down from work and the constant bombardment of filth from this world. We undergo trials. Occasionally, we just get content with our spiritual lives. We are tempted to stop giving up and stop going on. We are tempted to stop reading our Bibles, praying, serving, or believing in God altogether. When you feel this way, then that is the precise time to press in. This will be hard to believe with your natural mind, but it is the truth! Look at the examples above. Once we stop, it is hard to get going again. David never really recovered from all the events that followed His sin. Elijah took a 40-day detour and precious time was lost.

Jesus said something very important in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden, He was praying and asking the Father for strength while He bore the sin of humanity. In Matthew 26:41, Jesus said, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Jesus was weakened in His natural body. At the same time, He knew that there was a force within Him which could keep Him going. The Spirit of God gave Him energy when He was weak. He relied on God to give Him strength. The strength He received in the Garden gave Him the spiritual momentum He needed to carry the cross!

Paul is a great example of spiritual momentum. During His ministry, He did not fall into a serious moral failure as did David or some of the other kings of Israel and Judah. He said to Titus, "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you." Paul started the work of God in Crete, and he sent Titus to finish up what was left undone. He realized that he needed to keep the spiritual momentum going! He was always involved in the work of God. In Colossians 1:29, he wrote, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." This verse teaches us a further lesson about spiritual momentum.

God the Father created all things through Christ (John 1:1-3). Christ is even identified as the Word or the spokesman. When He spoke, everything came into existence through the power of God, which is the Holy Spirit. Scientific evidence has shown that the universe is constantly expanding. The creative word Christ spoke in the beginning has momentum that is still going to this day! When we accepted Christ, we received the Holy Spirit. This means that the same creative power and energy with which Christ spoke is inside of us now! It is a driving force to create and carry the momentum forward in our lives.

How do we keep the energy and momentum going in our lives? The first key is by keeping the commandments. The commandments are fixed laws that never change. You can always count on them to produce positive results in our lives. For instance, Christ's pres-

ence will always be present on the Sabbath (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset). Keeping the Sabbath allows us to get into God's sacred rhythm and keep momentum going. For instance, Christ did most of His healing work on the Sabbath. The healing power available on the Sabbath gave Him momentum for the rest of the week. The Sabbath is the last day of the week, but it serves as a foundation for the upcoming week! We have promises from God in the Bible that we will receive blessing and increase in our lives by obeying the commandments. We have a promise that there will be momentum in our lives if we obey Him!

The second key to keep the spiritual momentum going is to have a daily discipline of seeking God. The root word for disciple is discipline. When most people think of the word discipline, punishment usually comes to mind. However, it can mean a narrow focus of study. We must consistently seek God through prayer and reading our Bibles. Thirty minutes a day in our Bible and prayer will go a long ways in your walk with God. I pattern my life after a concept called "immersion." I immerse my life so that when I wake up, I read my Bible first. When I get into the car to go somewhere, I play a sermon on CD or I listen to Christian music. When I get a break at work, I pray or read more of my Bible. When I get home, I take care of every day natural tasks. Immediately afterwards, I focus on Kingdom work, which may include writing this article, prayer, a sermon or some other task. I am trying to immerse my life in Him. This keeps my mind focused on Him. With family activities, you can get others involved in this process! Try to apply this concept to your life.

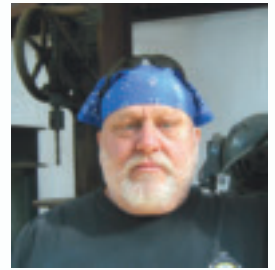
The third key to maintaining spiritual momentum is to keep going. As aforementioned, we all feel like giving up at times. Paul said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9a). When we feel weak, Christ's strength to carry the cross becomes activated in us. If we give up, then we may fall into sin as did David or lose time.

Do you have a Kingdom-focused goal you have given up on? Do you feel unqualified or discouraged? Is there some service in God's Kingdom you have let fall by the way side? The creative power of Christ is in you to keep the goal alive! The energy of the Holy Spirit within you will push you to keep going. Just make the decision to go forward and act. As believers, we are running a race for the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). I encourage you to run with all your might! Christ commanded us to pick up our cross and follow Him daily (Luke 9:23). He commanded us to keep His spiritual momentum going.

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Impulse Control

by Terrell Perkins



Did you ever consider exactly what constitutes personal growth and maturity? It strikes me that a big part of maturity is learning impulse control. We are all born with the “desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life,” but the mature person knows that controlling those desires is necessary for the “long game.” That is to say that giving in to our desires for our immediate gratification as a way of life never allows us to fully mature.

I've been pondering boundaries the last couple of days and realize there are two sides to the coin. Society must set boundaries/rules of behavior for its members so as to provide stability. These are the boundaries imposed on us from the outside. On the other side of the coin are the boundaries that we set for ourselves. These are the boundaries that come from within. These boundaries help us to control our impulses. They are the lines we draw for other people in dealing with us too. These boundaries are closely related to integrity.

Our impulses can be almost anything. Spending money, losing ones temper, being violent, controlling one's tongue and controlling ones desires...all of these can be impulse control issues. The most obvious weaknesses in impulse control are seen in addictions.

It has been my observation that people with addictions, those that give in to their impulses, in one area of life often lack control in other areas of life. That is to say that alcoholics, for example, are often drug and sex addicts as well. Other addictions, like gambling, are less desires of the flesh than they are psychological addictions that, no doubt, influence endorphins and other brain chemicals that are related to those “high” feelings.

Some addicts will tell you they were “born that way” and their addiction is not a matter of character weakness as was once commonly believed. If that were true, pharmaceutical treatments would effectively treat addictions, but they are not. Programs like Alcoholics Anonymous are more effective exactly

because they address the character issues in a way not unlike religion.

I do not believe that anyone is a born addict. We can be born with predilections or weaknesses but too many people born with the same predilections make different choices. That is the key to addiction as far as I'm concerned...choices. The alcoholic chooses to put a bottle to their lips. The drug addict chooses to take their drug of choice. Regardless of how good an addiction feels, it can still be controlled by choice. To exercise our choice is to exercise our will power. The more often we do it, the stronger it becomes.

No therapy helps an addict until they decide that they want out. Again, they make the choice. When an addict does make the choice to end his or her addiction, almost any therapy will work to help the person. Alcoholics Anonymous is effective precisely because it addresses character.

What some folks don't realize is that when an alcoholics or drug addicts begins the addiction, they stop growing and maturing at that age. They don't resume again until they stop using their drug. A thirteen year old who uses alcohol every time something upsets him and does so for twenty years is still thirteen emotionally when he stops using. The rest of us have to deal with life's upsets and pains every day without a drug to anesthetize us. The only way to grow and mature in life is without chemicals to alter our perceptions.

Controlling our impulses, those that can be destructive to us, is an essential part of the maturation process. As children we are restricted from the outside from giving in to our impulses. A child, for example, might only eat candy and other sugary treats to the exclusion of more nutritious choices if left on his own. A wise parent sees to it that their children don't give into such impulses. They make sure that their children eat their vegetables! This is why it's critical that parents make the decisions, draw the behavioral boundaries, for their

children until their children demonstrate the maturity to make wise choices for themselves.

We create boundaries for our own behaviors and impulses and boundaries we expect others to respect in interacting with us. For the sake of our psychological health we need to make these boundaries clear. The more clear these boundaries are the more fluid our interactions are. When we have strong personal boundaries that guide our own behavior, we are more stable as individuals. When society has clear boundaries that dictate the behavior of its members it becomes more stable.

A big part of the Social Contract is having clear boundaries we can expect others to respect. We have the right to expect that they control their own impulses, at least in as far as we are concerned. For example: it is inappropriate to touch people we don't know in some ways. This assumes one can control one's impulses to do so, and it assumes that other people accept this as a clear societal boundary.

One issue that must come up in any discussion about boundaries is, what I have come to refer to as, the mathematics of relationships. It is a very simple principle that simply says: X causes Y. When I treat someone X and they react Y, I've learned where their "button" is. Every time I want to elicit a Y response, I know what to do...just treat them X since the formula is a relationship either side can change. That is to say that when someone doesn't want to be treated X anymore, the person will need to stop reacting Y. That will take away the incentive of someone treating them X. Because all interactions between people are relationships are fluid, either party can change.

We set our own boundaries. We need to make those clear. When we allow someone to cross those boundaries...we are, at least, partially at fault. The need for clarity in society and in our own lives is vitally important. You see that there is a very simple psychological truth here. We teach people how to treat us. For our own sakes, and for the sake of society, we must draw clear boundaries of behavior. We must learn to control our own impulses within those boundaries. Until we learn to do those things we will not mature as individuals or as a society. Unfortunately, this is something that can't be passed down like some other forms of knowledge. Every generation has to learn the importance of this principle. If ours does not, we are headed for a great fall.

Terrell Perkins graduated from Ambassador College in 1981, and has been a Sabbath keeper for about 40 years. Terrell lives in Capitan, New Mexico, and works as an artist-blacksmith hand forging metal sculptures and architectural hardware and furniture. Terrell has been a freelance writer for about 25 years.

The Endurance of Houses and Nations

By Bill Ellis

SCOTT DEPOT, WEST VIRGINIA (ANS) — On Wednesday of this week, the house built by my parents was torn down, crushed and crunched. Nothing left as it was; hardly any part of it was recognizable. A two story, eight-room house, piled in one big heap of debris no taller than the ceiling in any of the first floor rooms. That house in its prime was a pleasure, in later years it was in a pained existence. It endured for 66 years.

Everything was destroyed and mangled except the memories of living in that house. It was the dream house of my parents. They worked hard and sacrificed much to make it possible. When we moved into it on June 2, 1947, life took a turn in a decidedly different direction for each of the five members of our family. We often looked back, but never wanted to go back.

When we moved, Harry S. Truman was President of the United States. He followed Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our longest serving president, who brought us through The Great Depression and most of World War II. President Truman led us to the conclusion of those terrible war years.

He was an honest and trustworthy president. He was the president of the common people. He had the kind of sense that so often is lacking among leaders. It is called "common sense" seasoned with integrity, honesty and truthfulness.

Our nation was born in 1776, though its beginning days were 156 years before that. Distinguished historian, William J. Federer, records these words about the nation's beginning, "Charter of the Plymouth Council," November 3, 1620, granted by King James, declared the purpose of the colony was, 'In the hope thereby to advance the enlargement of the Christian religion, to the glory of God Almighty.'" One hundred fifty six years later, we date our "Declaration of Independence" as a free nation to be July 4, 1776, when the formal Declaration was adopted.

Many times in the last few weeks, and especially today, I have thought of Stuart Hamblen's popular song about "This Ole House." Our nation has existed longer than many. Some think she may be about ready to crumble.

After each of the delegates had signed the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams declared, "We have this day restored the Sovereign to Whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come." To the extent that we acknowledge and obey God, we will remain free and strong.

On November 7, 2013, America's most respected preacher, Billy Graham, delivered a very special message to our nation on his 95th birthday. It was titled, "My Hope America," a nation he loves and like millions, prays for each day. Pastors and churches all across the country joined in asking others to view this unusual presentation that will offer hope for our nation.

I cannot imagine any pastor or Christian believer not being an active participant in this tremendous effort to call our nation back to God. We have no greater work to do. Millions of Christians will be inviting their friends to view and listen carefully to the saving message this program will present.

We need to heed the solemn warning from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 55. "Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). This is our hope.

See all ASSIST News articles at www.assistnews.net. Bill Ellis is a syndicated columnist, and convention and conference speaker on every continent. He is the writer of more than 2,000 newspaper and magazine columns, articles, and contributions to books.

Christ Left Us a Church, Not a Denomination

By Terril D. Littrell, Ph.D.



This writer has regularly contributed articles about Scripture, theology, Church history, apologetics, and morality. The Church is part of God's eternal plan whereby Jew and Gentile alike may be brought into fellowship with God and with each other (Ephesians 2 & 3). "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25), and He continues to nourish and cherish it (Ephesians 5:29), for it is His body (Ephesians 5:30). The church is not man's plan. Jesus said, "I will build My church."

The word most frequently translated "church" is "ekklesia," and is used some one-hundred and ten times in the New Testament. The word denotes a company or assembly of persons called out, selected, chosen, and separated from a larger company. The word in its classical usage also conveys the idea of an orderly and organized assembly. In the Christian sense, the word *ekklesia* is used in two ways:

1) It is most frequently used to designate a visible, local congregation of Christian disciples meeting for worship, instruction, fellowship, and service.

2) It is also used to designate the invisible, universal company of all of God's true people on earth.

The Visible Church

Because of the double meaning of the word church, there has been much confusion in the minds of many. The Roman Catholic Church has historically equated the true church with the visible organization.

This has produced the dogma that there is no salvation outside the church, *i.e.* hierarchical organization. In accordance with this view, anyone not a member of the Roman Catholic Church is outside the kingdom of God and without salvation. The Scriptures and most Protestants teach that the true church, that is, the invisible church, is made up of all true believers without regard to denominational affiliation. The Bible also teaches that in the visible Church the wheat, that is, the true believers, and the tares, that is, those that are false believers, may grow together. In other words, in the visible or organized church there may be those who have become members without being true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Invisible Church

Of the invisible church, the following statements are made in scripture concerning it:

1) Christ is the chief cornerstone and upon Him and His atoning work the church is built.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19, 20).

2) Christ is the Head of the Church.

"And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22).

3) As Christ is the Head of the church so the church is His body.

"And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:22).

4) Christ has purchased the church with His own blood.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

5) Every believer is made a member of the body of Christ, the invisible church, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

"For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

6) Since we are all members of the same body with Christ as the Head, we are then members of one another. This speaks of the spiritual unity and harmony in the body.

"So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

7) The church, tarnished and imperfect now, will be sinless and perfectly holy in love.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it: that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

The Church has been likened to Noah’s ark: sometimes a little unpleasant within but a great alternative to the flood without. Like the ark, it is a divine institution for the saving of souls. However, made up of human beings, it is tarnished and imperfect through sin. Unfortunately, it seems much easier to see its blemishes than its blessings, and its failures more than its accomplishments. In our consideration of the church, it is of primary importance to see it from God’s point of view.

The Purpose of the Church

The church is an extension of the mission of Christ for the purpose of the redemption of man from sin and sin’s consequences. Jesus said that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. That is the purpose of the church. He also said that He came to reveal the Father. That, too, is the purpose of the church. God is love, and God is holy.

In His life and in His death Jesus revealed the love and holiness of God. The church is to do the same.

As part of His ministry Jesus called twelve disciples that they might be with Him and that He might be with them and that He might send them forth to preach and to minister. This was the germ of the organized visible church which had its real beginning on the day of Pentecost. Without the visible, organized church we would not have the invisible body of believers. For God works through the visible church for worship and fellowship, for the preaching and teaching of His Word, for the observing of the sacraments and for the sending forth of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The church is the presence of Christ in the world through the believer, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Paul said,

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

As Jesus is the Light of the Word, so He has said that the church is the light of the world. Each believer is to be a light in the world. Peter speaks of this in his first epistle, chapter two, verses nine and ten:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people of His own, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: who in time passed were

not a people but are not the people of God; who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”

As Christ’s body, and as a special people of God, we are to show forth the praises of God through love and holiness.

Membership in the Church

When Christ established His church, He gave few commands concerning the outward organization. There was definite leadership, definite entrance requirements, a definite fellowship in Bible study, prayer, communion, and of giving support to reaching out with the Gospel. In Ephesians 4, we read that Christ, as the Head of the church, gave specific gifts in leadership for the building up of the church. Included among those were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Christ also gave to the church the Word of God for instruction, reproof and correction, that God’s people might grow into spiritual maturity; and He gave the ordinances for remembering the Lord and for publicly identifying oneself with the Lord and His people the church.

The second chapter of Acts gives to us the account of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the Apostolic Church. In this account several requirements for church membership are recorded which are supported by other New Testament passages. First, there was repentance and faith. They turned from their sin unto God through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). Secondly, they were baptized in water.

“Then they that gladly received His word were baptized; and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41; See also Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 8:35-38).

Third, there was participation: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

God’s intention is that His people not only join the church but become active participants in the church, the Sacraments, fellowship, worship, prayer, Bible study, and outreach.

The church is both an inclusive and an exclusive fellowship. It is inclusive in that the invitation is open to all. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:26-28:

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

The church is not an exclusive club, but an open fellowship to all who have put their trust in Jesus

Christ as Savior and Lord. The church is also an exclusive fellowship, in that it excludes those who do not repent, nor trust Christ as their Savior, for there is no other way to enter the church except by faith in Jesus Christ.

How important is church membership in a local organized fellowship of believers? If Jesus Christ is our Lord, and if He is the Head of the church, and if we, as members of His body, are members one of another, then there is the need for participation and mutual support and strengthening of each other in the body. Furthermore, we have the specific command that we are “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together” in that fellowship. We are also commanded to participate in the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. Furthermore, church membership is important for exercising of discipline within the church.

Tarnished Beauty

As children need the discipline of their parents, so all who are spiritually immature need the discipline of the fellowship of the church. In fact, we never get beyond the need for the discipline of the church, if in this life, we ever reach perfection in love and in holiness.

Discipline in the church is a very important ministry of the church to the body of believers, though sadly, it is greatly lacking in the church today. Of course, discipline ought first to be imposed by ourselves through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word as it is taught and preached. In 1 Corinthians 11, we are told that we are to judge ourselves, that we be not judged. Paul wrote to Timothy,

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries [in athletics], yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully” (2 Timothy 2:4-5).

Where a Christian fails to discipline himself, there is often the discipline imposed by the Lord, as we read in Hebrews 12, “Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth” (See also 1 Corinthians 11:28-32.)

Furthermore, when a person fails in his spiritual life, it is the loving duty of a member of the church to seek the restoration of that person, as we read in Galatians 6:1,

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

Also, we have the example of the apostle Paul given in 1 Corinthians 5:4,5 where we read.

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

This was where a member, guilty of gross immorality, was to be put out of the church until he repented. When he had repented, he was to be brought back in and restored into fellowship.

God’s Church

The Church is of God. Jesus loves the Church and gave Himself for it. He has committed Himself to the Church forever with all of its imperfections and failings. He does not give up on the church, nor should we. There are times when the church is hardly recognizable as that which was ordained by God, and there may be many members of a local organization who are not members of the true church. Like the ark in Noah’s day, there may be many unpleasanties, but the alternative was to be drowned in the flood in the destructive judgment of God. If we are truly members of Christ’s body, let us be light and salt in this world, manifesting the love and holiness of God by our love for one another, by our zeal for the work of God, and by our faithfulness in the worship of God.

The Church of God is a fellowship of people, all different, yet with a common bond to know more about God and how to relate to Him and to find meaning and purpose in life through Christian discipleship. To be “Christian” is to be identified with Christ in a personal relationship through the new birth. To be “Church” is to be called out as God’s people to share His life, His love and His labor. “We are laborers together with Him” (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Dr Terril D. Littrell became a member of the Bible Sabbath Association in 1961. He served as assistant editor of the Sabbath Sentinel in 1967, and served on the Board of Directors from 1967-1969. He was elected president of the B.S.A. from 1970-1978.

He graduated with honors from Evangel college, Springfield, Mo., with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1970. He graduated from Missouri State University, Springfield, Mo., with the Master of Science degree in 1975.

He graduated from Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, Ga., with the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1979. Dr. Littrell is a retired pastor with over fifty years of experience in teaching and ministry. He and his wife Chloe of 50 years live in Cleveland, Tennessee.

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