



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

Vol. 33 No. 2

February 2022

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GENESIS FLOOD #1

Jon Gary Williams

When one has a proper understanding of the facts surrounding the flood, questions asked about this great event are easily answered.

The Genesis flood was one of the world's most dramatic and awesome events, yet few have taken time to give it the serious attention it deserves. Many professed Bible believers have found it difficult to respond to questions asked about the flood, and in some instances this obstacle has led to a weakened faith in the Bible itself. These occurrences are unfortunate. Christians are to be ready to respond to those who ask about their “hope” (2 Peter 3:15). The hope by which Christians live is measured by their confidence in God's word; the greater the confidence in the word of God, the greater the hope.

When one has a proper understanding of the facts surrounding the flood, questions asked about this great event are easily answered. Following are some common questions.

WAS THE FLOOD WORLDWIDE?

Those who have done little study on this subject may lean toward the theory of a “local” flood — one which covered only a small portion of the globe. However, this solves nothing at all, for it is impossible to harmonize the “local” theory with the Genesis record. The flood is shown to be worldwide in scope for a number of reasons:

1) Since the Bible is the only historical source containing a detailed narrative of the flood event, it is only reasonable to listen to its testimony. *“And the waters prevailed exceedingly*

upon the earth, and all the high mountains that were under the whole heaven were covered” (Gen. 7:19). This passage is obviously describing a universal, worldwide deluge.

2) Testimony of the apostle Peter shows a world wide flood (2 Peter 3:3-7). Here Peter speaks of a forthcoming day when men would no longer think seriously of Christ's second coming and the final destruction of God's creation. Anticipating this skeptical reasoning, Peter appeals to the fact of the historical destruction of the world by water, showing that since a worldwide catastrophe had happened once, that it was absurd to think that another such destruction would never take place. Peter stated, *“...the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished....”* That he was speaking of a universal flood is obvious.

3) The record clearly states, “all flesh” that had the “breath of life” was to be destroyed *“from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die”* (Gen. 6:17). Since this death was worldwide in scope, it only follows that the flood was also worldwide.

4) If the flood was only local, there would have been no need for the animals to be saved within the ark. The flooded area would have been easily repopulated from surrounding regions. And likewise, if the flood was only local there would have been no need for the building of an ark! God could have directed Noah and his family to

relocate to a location outside the flood area.

5) Geology itself testifies that the world experienced a universal flooded condition. Throughout the globe, skeletal and fossil remains of animals are found in mass quantities deep within fissures (huge slits in the earth) on high mountain sides and in other elevated areas. These remains are of a wide variety, representing some animals which did not share the same habitat, showing that they were brought together by some powerful force. Also, within these fissures are found animals, such as elephants and horses, that could not possibly have scaled to such heights. How could such diverse animal remains have been collected in these remotely elevated locations?

There is only one reasonable explanation — water, and lots of it! At some point in time water levels would have risen above the elevation of these fissures. As the water drained back into the earth, multiplied millions of animals were forced into these openings with devastating force. Since this geologic phenomenon exists the world over, it must be concluded that a flood of enormous magnitude extended worldwide.

Additionally, in many places throughout the world are found giant

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Questions About The Flood...



Editorial...

THE GRACE OF GOD

Garland M. Robinson

***It is because of God's grace
(his bountiful favor) toward us that He makes a
way of escape from the penalty of our sins and
transgressions against Him.***

The grace of God is His *good will, loving kindness, favor, benefit, bounty, gift, reward*, that is extended toward man. It is unearned, unmerited, undeserved by man. It is by God's grace that salvation is extended. In Ephesians 2:8-9 we read, "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.**"

God freely and generously extends the offer of his grace, mercy, forgiveness, redemption, salvation, to all, even the vilest of sinners. None are unconditionally singled out to receive His grace; nor are others refused His grace as the devilish doctrine of Calvinism teaches. Titus 2:11 makes this clear, "**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.**" Notice, ALL MEN, not just some men.

It is because of God's grace (his bountiful favor) toward us that He makes a way of escape from the penalty of our sins and transgressions against Him. However, simply because God makes His grace available to all, does not mean that all will enjoy its benefits. He does not force it upon anyone.

A TRAGIC SITUATION

Some who claim membership in the church of Christ are teaching we are saved by "grace alone." They are falling "in line" with Calvinistic doctrine. Some are saying that it is an extreme position and false to teach that God has a part in salvation and that man has a part in salvation. Brethren, this is not a false statement. This is not an extreme position. It is correct to say that God has a part to play in salvation and man has a part

to play in salvation. Without both parts, no man can be saved.

God has done, completed, finished His part. He offers salvation by making it available to all mankind. He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, to die for the sins of the whole world (Heb. 2:9). He makes salvation available to everyone. However, he does not and will not force it upon anyone. He promised He will not save those who do not obey His Will (Matt. 7:21). To suggest He will save or that he may save those who do not obey, makes God a liar! But, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). There's nothing more God can do in respect to one's salvation than he has already done. It is now left up to each individual to accept God's offer of salvation by obeying the conditions God has given.

God is powerless to save those who do not obey Him. Therefore, man has a part in his own salvation. It is the part God has commanded man to do: *faith* (John 8:24) and *obedience* (Heb. 5:9). Faith without obedience is a dead faith (James 2:26). It is certain man cannot save himself and certainly does not supply what is lacking on God's part, for God lacks nothing. Without God, man will not and can not be saved. On the other hand, however, God cannot save one who does not believe and obey. Man must comply with God's requirements (conditions) in order to receive the benefits of God's saving grace. Since man must submit himself to God's will and obey it, man has a part in his own salvation, without which, he cannot be saved.

HOW DOES ONE RECEIVE GOD'S GRACE?

In order to receive God's grace,

one must comply with the requirements that God made. But even when one meets those conditions, he cannot say he has earned grace – that he deserves it. The offer of forgiveness and eternal life is too great. It cannot be earned. At no time can anyone perform a task or duty and thereby obligate God to grant him a reward. Nothing I do can place God in my debt where I deserve His favor. For example, a wealthy man, by his grace, may offer you a check for a million dollars — absolutely free. In order for you to benefit from it you would have to accept it. The condition may be as simple as stepping forward to take the check, signing your name on the back and taking it to the bank to deposit in your account. If you did so, have you earned the million dollars? Could you say you deserved it and that it was owed to you because you took it, signed it and deposited it? Absolutely not! But, you still had to meet certain requirements to receive the money.

The requirements God makes in order to receive His grace are:

- **Faith** in Jesus as the Son of God and savior of the world (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; Mark 16:16),
- **Repentance** of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30),
- **Confession** of Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10), and
- **Baptism in water** for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-6, 17-18).

There are also requirements to remain in God's grace:

- Deny ungodliness, worldly lusts and live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11-12),
- One must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18),
- Continue steadfast and unmoveable in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58) — be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10).

Have you met these conditions? If not, will you meet them? You can't be saved without faith and obedience!

"TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY" A DOCTRINE FROM THE DARK AGES

Carl O. Cooper

It would be unfortunate for any person to feel that he was so "depraved and spiritually dead" that he had no hope of understanding God's simple plan of salvation and therefore made no effort to try to understand.

Allow your mind to drift back a little more than 400 years — long before you were born or even before America was populated by Europeans looking for a new land and a new freedom to practice their religious beliefs without persecution. It was during these times in 1594 that modern science was a mixture of alchemists, sorcery, and superstition. Witches were considered to exist and many were burned at the stake. Houses were considered to be haunted by ghosts, and spirits were said to walk the corridors at night. People were afraid of those who were thought to be possessed with devils and evil spirits. Religious leaders performed exorcisms to rid people of demonic possessions. The Bible talked about a "Holy Ghost."

It was "common knowledge" in 1594 that ghosts and spirits haunted, inhabited, and indwelt people and things. And what's more, they caused things to move, shake and tremble. Would the Holy Ghost do any less? It was easy to believe that the Holy Ghost would cause great miraculous events to occur in the lives of those of whom he dwelled. It was in this environment that John Calvin advocated and promoted the doctrine of "Total Depravity." This doctrine by Calvin, along with others, is still widely accepted by many religious people today. Many churches of many different denominations teach this doctrine as part of their creed.

"Total Depravity" or "Total Hereditary Depravity" as some teach it, says that all mankind inherits the sin of Adam and becomes guilty of Adam's sin and are spiritually lost even before they are born. They teach such a person is totally deprived of salvation and is spiritually dead. He is so dead and so depraved, that he cannot even have faith, nor can he understand the Scriptures, or even obey God's will. In

fact, he cannot even come close to God until the Holy Ghost indwells him and allows him to have an understanding of spiritual things and to come to salvation.

Considering the environment in which Calvin lived, it is easy to see how this teaching could have been perpetuated 400 years ago. But today, it's very hard to see how so many people can be led astray in their thinking with the amount of resources and knowledge that is available for everyone to study. Just a quick look at Matthew 18:3 shows that God does not consider children to be depraved, lost, and guilty of sin. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In fact, this passage says just the opposite. Children are pure and without sin. We need to be like them in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Surely everyone has read the passage in Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Is this passage not crystal clear proof that no one inherits the sins of Adam?

What about the teaching that we cannot understand or obey the Scriptures until we are indwelt (enlightened) by the Holy Spirit? Many people teach and hold this view. But another check of the Scriptures shows this also to be wrong.

There are many doctrines taught concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There are many good books on this subject for more information. I would recommend the books by Howard Winters, Rod Rutherford, and Robert Taylor. These are very good sources for more study. But no matter

what you believe about the Holy Spirit, whether you believe in a literal personal indwelling or whether you hold that the Holy Spirit dwells in us indirectly through the word, or if you believe that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is all the blessings given to those who are "in Christ"; almost all would agree that the Bible teaches in Acts 2:38 that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is given AFTER salvation. "Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

It is true that the only way to salvation is through the Gospel. The Gospel has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Bible, the Inspired Word. In this sense, we have been guided into salvation by the Holy Spirit and taught what we must do to be saved. In fact, anything that man knows about God or God's will comes to us by the revelation of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:10-11). The Holy Spirit reveals God's will to us through the inspired word.

It would be unfortunate for any person to feel that he was so "depraved and spiritually dead" that he had no hope of understanding God's simple plan of salvation and therefore made no effort to try to understand. That person would be forever spiritually dead waiting for God to reveal what the Holy Spirit revealed long ago through and in and by his holy word.

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THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

James W. Boyd

The soul outlasts the physical body and all the things of this world.

“If a man die, shall he live again” (Job 14:14)? We all have asked that question. We ask it as we are by the grave of those we bury. There have been various explanations given by people as to what immortality is. Some say we are immortal only in the sense that the human race continues after we are gone. Others say we continue to live but only in the memory of those that knew us. Still others contend that our immortality is merely a continuation of our influence after our death. But what does the Bible teach about the immortality of a human being?

Solomon wrote, *“then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”* (Eccl. 12:7). The death of the body does not mean the cessation of the existence of the spirit of man. Death means there is a separation of the body from the spirit. *“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”* (James 2:26).

Jesus taught, *“Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28-29). Certainly this contends for existence after physical death. Both good and evil shall be raised. Both enter into judgment. They are separated there because one enters life, and the other enters damnation.

When Lazarus died, Jesus said, *“Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this”* (John 11:23-26)? There is no way to deny the continued existence of man beyond the grave unless you flatly contradict the Son of God. *“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of*

the living” (Matt. 22:23). At the time Jesus spoke those words, these Old Testament patriarchs had been physically dead many years. Yet, Jesus said God was the God of the living; that God was their God; and therefore they must have still existed somewhere and lived in some sense personally.

In First Corinthians 15, Paul taught the reality of the resurrection. In his concluding remarks he said, *“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (1 Cor. 15:53).

Moses led the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage, wandered with them for forty years in the wilderness, but because of his own transgression was not allowed to enter the promised land. He died and the Lord buried him. Yet, hundreds of years later, after John the Baptist had announced Jesus as the Christ, Christ having been born in Bethlehem, and having reached manhood and coming to the mount where He was transfigured, He had a conversation with Moses, and not only Moses, but also the great prophet Elijah who had also physically died long ago. *“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and, bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid”* (Matt. 17:1-6). Who can read this and doubt the Bible teaches life after death, and the immortality of the spirit of man even though the body has died? You may not agree with what the Bible teaches, but no honest

man can deny that it teaches the immortality of man’s spirit.

What are you worth? We are not concerned with what amount of material wealth you may have accumulated. We are talking about the most valuable of all things of your existence. What material possessions you may have will soon belong to somebody else anyway. Your physical body would bring a very small price. We are more concerned than just with the material body. Man is also a soul. *“For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul”* (Matt. 16:26)? Man’s body is but the place where his soul or spirit resides for a while.

WHY IS THE SOUL SO VALUABLE?

It’s because it will never cease to be. Man may change cars, houses, clothes, etc. You might even rid yourself of your own body. But you must live with yourself as a spirit for eternity. The soul outlasts the physical body and all the things of this world. We are speaking of that which is the inward man, the part of man that has been created in the spiritual likeness of God (Gen. 1:27). The fact that Jesus placed such a value on the soul proves to us that it is of great value. The fact that He died that the spirit might be saved shows the value He placed on it.

Someone may say, “I do not believe I have a soul or that I am a soul.” Whether one believes it or not is not really the question. Whether the Bible is true or not is the question. The Bible affirms we are souls and spirits. But some object on the grounds that the soul cannot be seen and has no measurable weight. But why should we deny something we cannot see in this matter while we accept the reality of so many other things we cannot see? We accept the reality of their existence on the basis of evidence. So it is with the soul of man. Man’s thoughtability, his mind, his reasoning capacity, are evidences that man is not merely an animal, merely physical and nothing more.

THE LOST SOUL

In Matthew 16:26 Christ mentioned the losing of the soul. James speaks of saving the soul (James 1:21; 5:20). Peter speaks of the salvation of the soul (1 Peter 1:9). He also mentions the purifying of the soul (1 Peter 1:22). Souls can be beguiled and unstable (2 Peter 2:14). The existence of the soul of man is not a debatable matter when one believes the message of the Bible.

SAVING THE SOUL

What must I do to save my soul in heaven? You must first admit the truthfulness of the inspired record that you have and are a soul. You have to admit that the soul can be lost in hell as well as saved in heaven. You have to admit that the soul will exist in one of two eternal destinies: heaven or hell. You have to admit that you cannot save yourself by yourself. You must acknowledge that God has provided a Savior and that only Savior is Jesus Christ, His Son. Then, in **faith**, you must obey the commands to **repent** of your sins, **confess** your faith in Christ, and be **baptized** into Christ for the remission of your sins. Upon your obedience, God adds you to His church which is composed of the saved souls.

Once a saved soul, you are to **live faithfully** in Christ as His disciple, being the light of the world, the salt of the earth, as a city on a hill to be seen of men that they might glorify the Father in heaven. You must live in the realization that physical death will eventually overtake you as it will all others. You must realize that though you die, you shall be raised, and judged, and sentenced to heaven or hell.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10). *“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matt. 25:46).

*Vol. 1 No. 9, A Burning Fire
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Questions About The Flood...

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concentrations of coal deep beneath the earth's surface. These deposits are the result of huge quantities of vegetation which have been compacted together into the earth's crevices, forming coal.

How could such vast quantities of vegetation have been brought together? This is again the result of massive amounts of water! No other explanation can account for the accumulation of such unbelievably large amounts of vegetation. As water was sucked back into the earth's crevices, massive floating islands of vegetation were deposited into the earth.

Evidence abounds, both in scripture and in the earth's geological makeup, confirming that the Genesis flood was global in nature.

WHERE DID THE FLOOD WATER COME FROM?

To many, this is a staggering question, but only because it has not been properly evaluated. For the average person the flood is pictured as resulting from nothing more than extended rainfall, with water slowly rising to a great level. Rainfall was certainly one means of flooding the world, but this does not tell the whole story. Not only did the heavens open up with rain (*“the windows of heaven were opened”*), but we read that *“all the fountains of the deep [were] broken up”* (Gen. 7:11). The word “deep” used in this passage has the Hebrew meaning of “subterranean waters,” no doubt referring to the underground reservoirs of the antediluvian world.

During this historic event, the volcanic regions of the world belched forth with a tremendous amount of fury. Water, steam and all sorts of matter from beneath the earth's surface must have poured out with unbelievable magnitude. To see just one “fountain” of the earth “break up” is beyond description, but what was it like when “all the fountains” of the great deep broke up simultaneously? No doubt, the outer crusts of the earth were twisted, mangled and torn into deformity. Notice that the text shows the “breaking up” of the fountains lasted for 150 days (Gen. 7:11-8:2). This was five months of chaos giving some insight into the geological “mix-

up” of the outer crusts of the earth. Such vast and prolonged geologic upheavals (or a series of catastrophic events) is the only reasonable explanation for the gross irregularities in the earth's surface. As Morris and Whitcombe express it, “Presumably, then, the ocean basins were fractured and uplifted sufficiently to pour waters over the continents, in conjunction with those waters which were above the ‘firmament’ and which poured down through the ‘windows of heaven.’” Indeed, much of the water that flooded the earth came from within the earth itself.

WHERE DID THE FLOOD WATER GO?

As noted, much of the flood water receded back into the earth. However, there were other places for the water to go.

1) During the flood as the earth's crusts were being twisted and contorted, no doubt some land masses were raised while others were lowered (cf. Psalm 104:5-9). These lower areas would serve as basins into which water would naturally flow, forming the oceans of the earth present today.

2) Much of the water was captured at the earth's Arctic and Antarctic regions. The discovery of frozen animals and plants in the Arctic shows that at one time the entire region held a tropical climate. If, as some scientists project, the earth at one time was not tilted on its axis, but rather had its north/south pole perpendicular to the sun, this would have produced an evenly spread temperate-to-tropical condition around the globe. This, in turn, would explain why such animals and plants would be flourishing in our present colder regions. If, at the time of the flood, the earth was tilted on its axis, this would have quickly produced massive frozen regions at the poles, and accounting for much of the flood water being retained in ice form. It has been estimated that if all the ice at the poles were to melt, many land masses would be inundated with water.

3) Much of the flood water, of course, evaporated and found its way back into the atmosphere. Today, the earth's atmosphere contains billions of tons of water.

*Part 1 of 2
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A WATCHMAN WHO WILL NOT HEAR WILL NOT WARN!

Marvin L. Weir

Ezekiel, a prophet of God, is reminded in almost identical words some thirty chapters apart, that he is to be “a watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ezek. 3:17; 33:7). Those who profess to be godly people often **live** as if there is no danger or consequences to their actions. A truth that must not be overlooked is that if there is no danger, there is no need for a warning from watchmen.

God is gracious and loving to remind man of his enemy who “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). What God said to Ezekiel about the obligations of watchmen is as valid today as it was then. Those who serve today as elders of a congregation of the Lord’s people are to “watch on behalf of” the souls they oversee (Heb. 13:17). Men serving as watchmen (elders) will surely be held accountable for failure to fulfill their duty, but may we remember “all” have an obligation to “watch” (Mark 13:35,37).

Let us learn from Ezekiel a couple of indispensable traits of godly watchmen.

A godly watchman is responsible to:

“Hear the word at [His] mouth” (Ezek. 33:7)! It should be understood that a watchman is of no value if he does not have eyes with which to see and a mouth with which to speak. Many people, however, put great confidence in watchmen who have perfect vision and loud voices but are useless because of lockjaw. They dare not sound forth any warning regarding danger to the soul for fear of disturbing the flock.

The first obligation of a godly watchman is to hear and heed the Word that God speaks. God speaks to us today through His Son, and His Son through His Word (Heb. 1:2; 12:48). One who will not hear and heed God’s Word will **never** qualify as God’s watchman!

“Give them warning from me” (Ezek. 33:7)! Warnings are sounded forth in this world on a regular basis.

Meteorologists warn of the impending danger of hurricanes and tornadoes. Law enforcement agencies warn of escaped criminals and other threats to society. Financial planners warn of the downside of certain investments. Physicians warn patients of certain physical conditions and test results. Manufacturers warn about recalls of certain foods because of contamination to the product. People desire and expect to be warned about these matters.

Warnings that come from God’s Word regarding spiritual matters are generally not welcome. People say, “Don’t judge ... it is nobody’s business ... everybody else does it (as if that make’s it legal and right) ... this world is all that matters ... or I deserve to be happy and this is how I’m going to live.” People do not want to be told “no” or “it’s sinful and wrong” or “it’s immoral and detrimental to society.”

God told Ezekiel, however, “give them warning from me.” The soul is more valuable than the physical body and earthly matters even though most people do not think so (Matt. 16:26). Watchmen who are devoted to God know there is impending danger in this world and are willing to warn people of such danger. Watchmen devoted to God understand they are responsible to warn people of soul damning sins and Satan’s snares! As was true in Ezekiel’s day, the same is true today: “When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand” (33:8).

We also learn of the responsibility of those who are warned. Let us observe:

Their condition! People may convince themselves that their sinful actions are no big deal but sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness (transgression of God’s law) without repentance leads to eternal death. This death is the result of separation from God. So many people living in sin are convinced God is with them and bless-

ing them when God clearly states, “Behold, Jehovah’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2).

Their opportunity! Those living contrary to the Lord’s will are given an opportunity to repent when they are warned by God’s watchmen. It is tragic to be deluded and deceived regarding sacred matters, but it is an act of mercy for God to allow His watchmen to warn of those dangers. The warning to repent or perish (Luke 13:3) is given in love of one’s soul. John recorded in his Gospel account, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (3:36).

Their responsibility! Ezekiel, God’s watchman, was told: “Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul” (33:9). The warning is to turn, change directions — repent. The unashamed warning of the consequences of spurning God’s law may be despised and the watchman may be considered behind the times and out of touch with society’s demands, but hearing and heeding God’s Word is the only thing that will save the soul!

We see then that both the watchmen and the warned have obligations and responsibilities for which they will be held accountable. God takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked” and desires “that the wicked turn from his wicked way and live” (Ezek. 33:11).

What a terrible fate awaits those who have been warned of their sins but they steadfastly refuse to repent! But the most nauseating and despicable thing is the professed watchman of God who knows what God’s Word says but refuses to sound forth the warning to those living in sin!

May congregations learn before selecting elders that those who have

not demonstrated they will hear and heed God’s Word will not sound forth the soul-saving warning! Let us make sure that our brethren’s and friend’s

blood is not on our hands!

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THERE’S POWER IN THE WORD

Steve Miller

Man has always been impressed with power. Power is “the ability to control others; to have authority; and to have influence” (Webster’s New World Dictionary). Some men have spent a lifetime trying to obtain power only to abuse it. Others have been successful in using it. There is a power that can divide asunder the soul and spirit (Heb. 4:12). It is the Word of God.

The Psalmist said, “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*” (Psalm 119:105). The Word reveals the way to heaven. It is the guide for our lives. We cannot go wrong in following God’s inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

A study of the Word of God shows its effect upon the disciples in the early church. When Paul and Silas came to Berea, they found those who “*were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). The Bereans did not go home and take the preacher’s word for what they heard. They studied the Word of God to see if the message was correct. How many people in the pews do this today? How many return home from worship to discuss, much less to study the passages they heard in the sermon or Bible class? Hopefully, more than we can tell. People who take the message as “Gospel” without checking the Word of God are living dangerously in their attempt to be pleasing to God. An open mind and heart in our study of the Scriptures is essential in having the attitude of changing our lifestyle or religious beliefs to fit God’s standard. There is power in the Word — if we will study it!

The powerful Word of God brings results. When Peter preached the first Gospel sermon on the first Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection, the Word he preached brought results. “*Then they that gladly received his word*

were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). Paul stated, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom. 1:16). The power is in the Gospel, the Word, the good news of Christ. God’s Word convicted the people on Pentecost of their sins and it will do the same today when it is preached uncompromisingly and in love. The Word of God will bring results if we will just preach it, teach it and most of all, live it.

Not only is the Word powerful enough to bring results, but it can also be a comfort to those who are in Christ. Paul comforted the Thessalonian brethren by revealing the truth concerning the dead in Christ. “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him ... For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words*” (1 Thess. 4:14-18). It is comforting to know that Jesus has prepared a home for the faithful. We should look forward to the second coming of Christ in that we will be taken up with Him in the clouds to stay for ever and ever.

The Word of God is just as powerful as it was in the days of Abraham, Moses, Peter and Paul. Even man’s wisdom in 2022 cannot surpass the all-inspired, authoritative, living, active, comforting, convicting, powerful Word of God. Let us be prepared to “*take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph. 6:17).

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Neelys Bend C/C, Madison, TN	\$125
Beginning Balance	\$21,461.81
Contributions	\$3,800.00
Debits	
Postage	\$2,027.04
Supplies	\$102.06
Repairs.....	\$61.20
Returned ck.....	\$210.00
Ending Balance.....	\$22,861.51

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND KEEP IT

Roger Campbell

How can it be wrong to teach about keeping the commands of the Lord if Jesus talked about the necessity of such?!

As Jesus was teaching on one occasion, a woman spoke up to say that His mother was blessed because her womb bore Jesus and she nursed Him (Luke 11:27). The Master's response to that woman's statement put things in perspective: "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (11:28).

The word "blessed" means one who is happy. In God's sight, a happy person is one who hears and keeps His word.

From the creation of the first humans, it always has been God's will for people to learn His will and keep it. That was true for Adam and Eve. It was true for Deborah, David, and Daniel. It was true for Ezekiel, Esther, and Ezra. It likewise was true for Andrew, Agabus, and Aquila.

It is true for every person living today as well. In our society (compared to days gone by), less emphasis is put on learning and following the Bible. That sad however, reality does not change what the Christ said: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

As unthinkable as it sounds today among some who identify themselves as Christians, there is not a premium placed on learning and heeding what God says. Yet, Jesus' words still are true: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

And did you know that in God's church there is a tendency on the part of some to look unfavorably on Bible lessons which highlight the need to keep God's word? Though that be the case, this truth remains unaltered: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Some deplore the mention of keeping commandments, as if it were a degrading, vile concept. Yet, our Lord told His close followers, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). How can it be wrong to teach about keeping the commands of the Lord if Jesus talked about the necessity of such?! We would prefer for the God of heaven to recognize us as *keepers* of His word rather than *breakers* of His instructions, would we not?

Jesus taught that those who enter the kingdom of heaven are those who do the Father's will (Matt. 7:21). Would we not conclude from such a declaration that "doing" the Father's will is a *positive* concept rather than being an *evil* one?

There is no denying the Bible's teaching that a person's salvation comes about by God's grace (Titus 2:11). It is equally true that God's grace does not save people who do not respond to His message of grace in the proper manner. God, by His grace and the gospel of grace, saves those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9), which is the same thing as hearing and keeping God's word (Luke 11:28).

No grace, means no salvation. In the same way, no submission to God's word, means no salvation. We understand that when we make the choice to obey God's instructions given to us in the Bible, and He blesses us as a result, we do not *deserve* His blessings. We cannot *earn* His favor. We could never do enough good things to put the Lord in a position where He becomes a debtor to us. God does not *owe* you and me anything, period.

The Christ's words still ring true: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." We will never outgrow the need to learn and obey what God's word says.

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked "not for publication." The church building is located at: 2132 Old McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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