



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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Baptists and the Nature of the Church The New Issue. The Invisible Church Idea.

BY J. N. HALL.

The foregoing pages of this book have no doubt impressed the reader as being expressive of very hard Baptist doctrine. But in my judgment the positions taken by Bros. Pendleton, Graves and Taylor, in the body of the book, and by Bro. Moody in the introduction, are Scriptural, logical and charitable. Consistency and truth are closely allied: and when either is

made to suffer by compromises, or in the interests of a maudlin sentiment, it is ruinous to the real good of Christ's cause, and to the best standing of his truth.

These brethren have been contending against a fraternizing fellowship between preachers, in exchanging pulpits; and also a liberalizing tendency that counts all churches as on a par. Every careful and impartial reader will no doubt agree with Dr. Pendleton that Baptists

cannot consistently co-operate with other denominations in their church work without a surrender of their own distinctive faith. Every careful reader will also agree with Bro. Taylor that the spirit of modern liberalism would be the spirit of death to Baptists. For my part I see no consistently logical course other than to ***Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrines which ye have*** (See J. N. Hall, Continued, Page 2, Left Col.)

A BEWITCHED PROMISE KEEPER'S WRONG ASSESSMENT OF THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

By Wayne Camp

I recently received a short e-mail from a Promise Keeper. He wrote, ***"If you truly read the scriptures, Jesus emphasis was on LOVE, not discerning of truth."*** Note his downplay on the importance of truth. He actually infers that Jesus was not that concerned with the discernment of truth. Nothing could be further from the truth than his statement, ***"Jesus emphasis was on LOVE, not discerning of***

truth." Love was very important in the preaching and teaching of Jesus. But, truth was also very important and strongly emphasized in the teaching of Jesus.

MY ANSWER TO THIS MISGUIDED PERSON

I cannot believe anyone who has truly read the Scriptures could suggest that the discerning of truth was not important to Jesus Christ. He (See BEWITCHED, Cont. P. 6, Rt. Column)

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(J. N. Hall, Continued from Page 1) learned, and AVOID THEM." (Rom. 16:17). Inspiration speaks expressly to this effect: **"If there come any unto you, and bring not his doctrine, (Christ's doctrine) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (II John, 10-11).** In these Scriptures a distinct line is drawn between truth and error, between false and true teachers, and an emphatic prohibition against all affiliation

is plainly expressed.

Baptists may be wrong in the distinctive doctrines they hold, but they cannot be wrong in standing consistently to them while they believe them to be truth. If they are wrong they should be abandoned; but until discovered to be wrong they should be unflinchingly maintained. At the present time it seems to be conceded by everybody that in the main, the doctrines of the Baptists are Scriptural, and the world is willing to grant us reasonable toleration if we will be liberal and allow a mutual fraternity in church and pulpit with all others. But we cannot do this, without a contradiction of our own essential and fundamental doctrines, and, hence, cannot do it at all.

Our fathers were bitterly opposed in the consistent stand they took for strict Baptist practices, by those who believed in what was known as the "church-branch theory." It was contended that the "real church" was the "universal church," composed of "all the saved," and that all visible churches were mere human conveniences, and that, all taken together, the Christians amongst them made the "true church," while the denominations were "branches of the church," and all on a par. On this plea it was argued that pulpit affiliation, union meetings, alien immersions, open communion, open baptism, open ordinations, and all else, should be regarded as perfectly proper. It was a hard fight our fathers had, to meet this seemingly large, brotherly, liberal spirit, and refuse to concede that all the different denominational churches were merely "branches of the one true church." But they fought the battle, and gained the victory, until now it is a rare thing we hear any one speak of the "branches of the church."

But we have fallen on a more deceptive and plausible religious strategy, if possible. The enemy, though defeated, has not been destroyed. Baptists have always had to contend for the faith, and this contention will not end until the Lord shall destroy the last enemy with the brightness of his coming. Nor is this contention confined to Pedobaptists and anti-Baptists. In our own ranks false teachers have arisen who are perverting the faith, and leading away some disciples after them. They join hands with the

enemy on the outside, and seek to aid in breaking down the walls of the Baptist citadel, while they pose as the best of Baptists. The specious theory we now confront is close akin to the "branch-church" theory, and is an outgrowth from that theory. It runs as follows: The conversion of a sinner introduces him into the spiritual, invisible, universal church of Christ. This invisible church is the only church that has a succession through past ages. All visible churches are necessarily human, and subject to the changing conditions of their environments, and are therefore sister churches, and should affiliate with each other on terms of perfect equality. This invisible church embraces all Christian people, of all classes and names.

Now, the reader can see how easy it is for one who believes such a theory to also believe that Baptists are chargeable with bigotry when we refuse to have perfect fraternity with all other sects. In fact, if it be true that the "real church" is the "invisible, universal church," and all "Christians are in it," it is clearly an inexcusable presumption on the part of the Baptists that they do not heartily co-operate with their "sister churches" in all Christian effort. If Methodists, Presbyterians, Campbellites, Catholics, and all others who are Christians, are in this big church, they are evidently as much in it as the Baptists are, and are entitled to its special privileges as truly as the Baptists can be. Why then should the Baptists assume to control the ordinances of this "true church," when others have membership in it as well, and on the same terms? If we accept the "big church" idea, let us also accept the open communion, open baptism, and open ordination ideas.

If we have nothing distinctive for a plea, we should not assume to lord it over others who are as much in the thing as we are. The charge is unhesitatingly made that those Baptists who accept the big, universal church idea, are inconsistent in contending for close communion, Baptist immersion only, and Baptist ordination. If all others are in this big church, then they have as much right to these ordinances as Baptists have.

For our part we deny this whole "invisible, universal church" idea. There is but one sort of a

church in the New Testament; and that is a local and visible church. A few passages are here cited to show the existence of local, visible churches: **Acts 9:31, Then had the churches rest. Acts 15:41, Comforting the churches. Acts 16:5, Churches established. Acts 19:37, Neither robbers of churches. Rom. 16:4, Churches give thanks; vs. 16, Churches of Christ salute you, I Cor. 7:17, In all the churches. I Cor. 11-16, No such custom, neither the churches of God. I Cor. 14:33, As in all the churches; vs. 34, Keep silence in the churches. I Cor. 16: 1, Given to all the churches; vs. 19, The churches of Asia. 2 Cor. 8: 1, The churches of Macedonia; vs. 19, Chosen of the churches; vs. 23, Messengers of the churches. 2 Cor. 11:8, I robbed other churches; vs. 28, Care of all the churches, 2 Cor. 12:13, Inferior to other churches. Gal. 1: 22, Unknown by face to the churches. 2 Thess. 2:14, Churches of God. 2 Thess. 1:4, In the churches. Rev. 1:4, Seven churches; vs. 20, Angels of the churches; the candlesticks are the seven churches. Rev. 2:7, What the Spirit saith to the churches. &c., &c.** Any reader can see that the references above are to visible assemblies of people; and that these assemblies had a local meeting place as well as a visible multitude to make the congregation.

The word "church" means an assembly; most generally a small assembly that can conveniently meet together. But always an assembly considered as in convention. In a few passages in the Scriptures, like Heb. 12:23—"The General Assembly and church of the First Born"—the aggregate of the saved is considered as being collected in one meeting, and they thus constitute a church. But there is not a passage in the Bible where the word "church" is so used as to embrace all the saved, in their divided, scattered, uncollected dispersion. When all the saved are included they are considered as assembled together. When they are scattered they are never spoken of as a church. There is, therefore, no such a thing known in the Bible as an "invisible, universal church." This fiction is of modern creation, and is designed to include all those who are supposed to be saved, so to

allow them to have some sort of ecclesiastical fraternity in church matters. But Jesus Christ, the founder of New Testament churches, never gave us such an imaginary body, and no inspired writer ever makes mention of such a church. All the churches we read of in the Scriptures were local bodies, with local meeting places, for visible assemblies of men and women.

When we look at the New Testament churches as visible assemblies we can see the meaning of several patent points:

1. It could be said to them, "**Let your light so shine before men,**" &c. **Matt. 5:16.** Visible church members can do this. Invisible church members cannot.
2. It can be said ye are as "**a city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid.**" **Matt. 5:14.** An "invisible church" must always be "hid," else it would not be "invisible;" but a visible church can be thus manifest, like a city.
3. A visible church can receive and execute the commission of Matt. 28:19-20. But an invisible church cannot. Because—
 - a. If there are any preachers in the "invisible church" they could not deliver the gospel message to visible audiences for the reason that visible audiences would not quietly listen to the "invisible preacher" while he would talk.
 - b. If there is any baptism in the "invisible church" it could not be administered by "invisible administrators" to visible subjects, for the reason that no sensible man or woman would allow the ghostly fingers of the "invisible preachers" to be fumbling around their necks or waists.
 - c. They would have no ability to administer the Lord's Supper, because it is a memorial service to be seen by men, and an "invisible church" could not thus observe it.
 - d. It could not formulate nor propagate the doctrines of the commission for the reason that this must be done in the use of visible means, and for the good of visible people, which could not be done by an "invisible church."
 - e. It could never have the fellowship that is contemplated in the commission, because this fellowship is of the disciples who may be converted under the preaching of the gospel,

and they are all visible people, and would not know how to be in fellowship with an "invisible church."

f. But all this could be true of visible churches, with visible preachers, and visible ordinances. Hence Christ gave the commission to his visible churches.

4. There is no need for this "invisible church." (1). Christians don't need it because it can do them no good. (2). God doesn't need it because it cannot manifest his glory. (3). The world doesn't need it because it neither preaches the gospel by precept or example, and could be of no service.
5. This "invisible church" cannot perform any of the functions of a church. It cannot have a church meeting, nor a pastor, nor deacons, nor a church record, nor exercise discipline, nor receive members, nor exclude members, nor sing, nor pray, nor preach, nor do anything else a church is expected to do!
6. The members of the "invisible church" are entirely ignorant of their surroundings. There is nobody who can prove he is in such a church. If he is in it, he doesn't know it, and no one else knows it. If any one else is in it his neighbors, his brethren, nor any one else can ever know it. If it had an enemy no hurt could be done by him, because he could never find the thing he hates. Nobody could ever hate it, because it has neither form nor fashion, and is without form and void. No one knows who else is in it. No one knows that he is himself in it. Men get into it unconsciously, if at all. It seems to be accidental, and by birth. A man is no more responsible for being in the "invisible church" than for being in the world, for he was not consulted about it any more than about being born. He gets no good out of it to himself, and does no good in it for anybody else. It really has no fellowship, for no one knows to whom fellowship should be extended. Such a "church" never had Christ for its founder and head.
7. The "invisible church" is a medley of contradictions, if it is anything. It is said to have in it the saved of all denominations. These "saved" people at the same time that they are in the "invisible church" are also in their different denominational churches, and hold to all the peculiar doctrines of their several

denominations. They have Mormons with their polygamy, Catholics with their water god, Episcopalians with their sacramental ritualism, Universalists with their no-hell doctrine, Presbyterians with their unconditional decrees, Methodists with their apostasy, Campbellites with their baptismal salvation, Baptists, with their close communion, all mixed together in one "invisible body," cemented together by the conflicting doctrines of infant baptism vs. believer's baptism; salvation by grace vs. salvation by works; final perseverance vs. apostasy; open communion vs. close communion; episcopacy vs. congregationalism; affusion vs. immersion, and a hundred other conflicting doctrines! All these people, with all these doctrines, are supposed to be peacefully and unconsciously pillowing their heads upon the bosom of this "invisible church!!" Is it possible that such an outrage on common sense to say nothing of the outrage on the Bible, can have serious advocates amongst men?

8. It would be hard to draw a picture of an "invisible church," but it must have resemblance to a monstrous beast whose head is a lamb, whose neck is a lion, whose legs are a tiger, a hyena, a bear and a panther; whose body is made up of babies, fawns, birds, and bugs, whose tail is a stinging, vicious scorpion, and whose every part is feeding upon every other part, to its inevitable destruction. Such a beast would be no more monstrous than the modern fiction of an "invisible church" made up of devouring, conflicting, contradictory, absurd, irreconcilable doctrines and peoples of the religious world, so-called. There is no conception of Christ's church that is not outraged by this monstrous thing.

9. I most emphatically deny that I have any membership in such a thing as this "invisible church." If I am a member I don't know it, and it is against my will. I have been kidnapped into it as clearly as any infant was ever kidnapped by a Romish priest into the Romish hierarchy; and if that is its plan of receiving members it is no better than the Romish superstition of infant baptism. If I am in it, I am determined to get out of it if possible. It is a Babel of confusion, and God is not its author. As it has no law of ingress, no stimulus to progress, and is only an occasion

of distress, I must respectfully decline its duress, being disgusted with its process, and with the thing itself.

10. There are not two sorts of churches of Christ—one big, invisible church, and the other little, visible churches. If so, then a man would belong to two churches at once. He would get into the big church unconsciously, and unavoidably, and into the little church on purpose. In the big church he would do nothing but look wise, feel good, and be nobody; while in the little church he could suit his fancy in faith and practice, since all the little churches are human institutions! It is not possible for me to believe such absurd stuff.

11. Separate particles cannot form organizations except by being collected together. There are many Masons in the world. Any number of them can be organized into local lodges, but all of them taken together would not make a lodge out of which there are no Masons. Amid the governments of the world there are many Republicans, and these could be formed into a Republican party, or parties; but all the Republicans in the world do not make a great big Republican party out of which there are no Republicans. Stones can be built together and thus make houses; but all the houses do not make one great big, universal house, out of which there are no stones, or houses. So God has a family of children, and these can be organized into churches; but all the children of God do not make one great, big universal church, out of which there are no children of God. The very idea of such a big church is absurd from every standpoint.

12. The believers in the universal church are not agreed as to how one gets into it. Baptists are supposed to be put in by conversion; Methodists are supposed to be born members of it; Presbyterians baptize their babies into it; Campbellites baptize sinners into it; Episcopalians enter by confirmation; the Hardshells have been in from the foundation of the world; Mormons are immersed into it; Catholics are sprinkled into it, and the Universalists get into it without doing anything! If there is such a church, it should have some uniformity about it, and it would have. But the dreamy fiction has neither form nor fashion, in

either its membership, its laws, its terms, or anything else. It is all a dream.

13. How different from all this is the New Testament idea of a church. A visible company of disciples, with a pastor, deacons, a place of worship, gospel, ordinances, songs, prayer, worship and a visible influence and existence in the world. Such a church can honor God, bless the world, have fellowship one with another, stand for the truth, be persecuted, be loved, be hated, and be known in the world. That is a New Testament church—a Baptist church. It has no conflict of doctrines, no antagonism of faiths, no self-destroying inconsistencies. Such churches were in existence in the Apostolic day. They were Baptist churches. They were on the Baptist model, had the Baptist mould, preached the Baptist faith, observed the Baptist ordinances, and had the Baptist promises of perpetuity to the end of the ages. There has not been an hour of time since the Son of Man walked on the earth in his ascent to the mountain summit to preach his inaugural sermon to his kingdom, that there have not been Baptist churches, after their scriptural model, witnessing to men the gospel of Jesus Christ, and administering to believers the ordinances of his house. Here on this solid rock Baptists stand. They refuse to affiliate with man-made churches because they are man-made. We don't have to affiliate because we are not man-made. The Baptists keep open their doors for the reception of all believers who desire their fellowship. All believers can get in on the same terms Baptists had to comply with, and all who are in have one common fellowship. But they form no entangling alliances. Our principles are scriptural, consistent, reasonable.

1. No "invisible church."
2. Visible churches administer the ordinances.
3. Visible churches authorize the preaching.
4. Visible churches were entrusted with the entire work of the commission.
5. Visible churches are New Testament churches.
6. Visible churches are Baptist churches.
7. Therefore Baptist churches are authorized to do all the work committed to New Testament churches.

How, then, can we affiliate with other

churches without a surrender of these patent truths?

Baptists very cheerfully consent to the doctrine that there are Christians outside of Baptist churches; but they are outside of New Testament churches whenever that is the case. It is their duty to come into New Testament churches, and not the duty of New Testament churches to go out to them. Everybody admits Baptist churches to be as true churches as any others can be. Hence, if everybody should become Baptists they would be as truly in a New Testament church as it would be possible for them to be in any other, even allowing others to judge the case. That shows that Baptists have the essentials of a New Testament church, others being judge. If that be true, then all others must fall short of these essentials, since they differ from the Baptists; and that leaves the Baptists occupying the ground. It is plainly the duty of the Baptists to stand consistently on their safe ground, to decline all compromising affiliations with other churches, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to them, to preach "all the words of this life," to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine, and to walk by the "Landmarks" of the faith as our fathers did. Then wise men will respect us for our consistency, admire our logic, and be convinced by our gospel; God will be honored, the churches of Christ will prove faithful to their trust, and man-made institutions, and false churches, will receive their well deserved rebukes. Thus Baptists will be able to do what no other people under heaven can do, that is, do the work of New Testament churches.

Most sincerely do I trust the plain truths of this book will cause all who love Christ to duly consider the absurd things they are now, possibly, accepting; and also enable all to see how consistent, and reasonable, and Scriptural are the positions occupied by the Baptists.

(BEWITCHED, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

was the very embodiment of truth. He said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.*" (Jn. 17:17). He said, "*Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*" (Jn. 8:32).

His concern for discernment of truth is again

set forth in this verse. ***John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.***

He indicated on another occasion that those who do not worship in truth worship in vain. ***Matthew 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.***

In the final words of Scripture, it seems that our Lord Jesus Christ was very concerned with the discernment of truth. ***Revelation 22:18-19 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.***

Jesus was concerned with all the words of God, not just his message on love. When Satan was tempting him, he did not answer with a message about love. He spoke of the importance of all the word of God. Please note his statement, ***“It is written”*** in the following verses. ***Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Matthew 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Matthew 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.***

Jesus, in addressing a multitude of folks in the sixth chapter of John said, ***John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*** Michael, in the words of Jesus in this chapter, you will not find the word ***love***. He makes no mention of it. He is concerned with truth and with those given to him by the Father coming to him. But, not one time does he mention love in these words that he says are ***spirit*** and ***life***.

When I read your letter, the first thought that came to mind was another case in which Jesus sets forth the importance of discerning truth.

Some religious leaders of Israel were asking him some questions about marriage and the hereafter. He told them that their questions revealed their error that was caused by not knowing the truth. ***Matthew 22:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*** I fear, my friend, that you also err, not knowing the Scriptures.

Jesus again reveals the importance of discerning the truth. ***Luke 24:44-45 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*** Notice, Michael, he did not open their understanding so that they would have some kind of perverted love that would cause them to overlook and condone the error of others. Rather, he opened their understanding that ***“they might understand the scriptures.”***

The imperative importance of the discernment of truth is repeatedly set forth in Scripture. God certainly emphasized its importance. ***Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.***

God has magnified his word, which is truth, above all his name. I believe that speaks of the importance of discerning the truth. ***Psalms 138:2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.***

The importance of the discerning of truth is certainly revealed in Paul's letter to Timothy. ***2 Timothy 3:15-17 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*** Add to this his statement in chapter two. ***2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto***

God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Certainly the one who has no love would not be approved before God. But, the discernment of truth, "**rightly dividing the word of truth**", is of paramount importance in being approved unto God.

The Promise Keepers theme is diametrically opposed to those teachings of Jesus and others on the discernment of truth. They advocate sweeping all doctrinal differences under the rug in the name of some kind of perverted, unscriptural sort of love. You, Michael, have been bewitched into believing that kind of perverted love is more important than discerning the truth. But, my friend, it is the knowledge of the truth that will set you free from this heretical, para-church organization. My prayer and concern for you is set forth in the following. **2 Timothy 2:25-26 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.** I pray that God may grant you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth that you may recover yourself out of the snare of the devil and his latest tool for ecumenism, the Promise Keepers movement.

Let me add to this answer some other things about truth that are set forth in the God-breathed word.

Abraham's servant praised God that he had not left his master, Abraham, destitute of truth. **Genesis 24:27 Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth.** This godly man was convinced that God had truly blessed Abraham by revealing his truth to him.

Jacob rejoiced that God had blessed him with truth. **Genesis 32:10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant.**

Joshua admonished the Israelites to serve God in sincerity and truth. **Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side**

of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

Samuel admonished the people of Israel to serve God in truth. **1 Samuel 12:24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.**

God was concerned that David's children walk before him in truth. In some of his last words to Solomon he reminded him of this and urged that he follow that admonition. **1 Kings 2:4 That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel.**

When Solomon became king, he was praying. In that prayer he mentioned that David had walked before God in truth. **1 Kings 3:6 And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.**

Hezekiah considered it important that he had walked before the Lord in truth. **2 Kings 20:3 I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.**

The Psalmist prayed that the Lord would lead him in truth. **Psalms 25:5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me.** He declared that the path of the Lord is truth. **Psalms 25:10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.** He declares that he has walked in truth. **Psalms 26:3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.**

A very wise man named Solomon was so concerned with truth that he admonished that his readers buy the truth and sell it not. **Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.**

Let me jump to near the end of the New Testament. I could quote many other Scriptures

from Proverbs to Revelation. But I will just show how another man of God felt about truth. The apostle John has sometimes been called the **apostle of love**. But, read John's concern about truth. **2 John 1-4 The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; 2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. 3 Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.** This man who had been so close to the Lord Jesus Christ considered truth to be of paramount importance. This man who had been taught directly by the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoiced when he heard that his children walked in the truth. Again, note his words in another of his epistles. **3 John 1-4 The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. 2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. 3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.** Note that even in expressing his love Gaius, John speaks of the fact that he loves him in truth.

Love, without truth, is a farce. Truth with love, and love with truth, are godly. But, the correspondent's suggestion that Jesus did not emphasize truth during his ministry is clearly not true. The Promise Keeper should have been more concerned with truth in his own statement. I am not minimizing the importance of love. One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is 1 Corinthians 13. In that chapter Paul does emphasize love as the greatest of spiritual gifts. But, this should in no way be construed to mean that Paul was not vitally concerned with the truth. He tells us that love rejoices in truth. **1 Corinthians 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.** He admonished the Ephesian brethren to speak the truth in love. **Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things,**

which is the head, even Christ. In another place he spoke of those who do not have a love of the truth. **2 Thessalonians 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.** Men will be condemned because they do not believe the truth. **2 Thessalonians 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

I have hardly scratched the surface on this matter of truth as it is set forth in the word of God. Jesus and his apostles, and the writers of the Old Testament, provide abundant testimony to truth and its importance. May we be careful that we walk in truth, preach truth, sing truth, pray in truth and love in truth.

NEW MEXICO: The letter you posted concerning the Pentecostals who allowed their diabetic son to die was very impressive. I forwarded to several of my friends, also to Brother Calvin Gardner who receives support from our church. I thought you might be blessed to read his comments.

BRAZIL: Thank you so very much for forwarding this letter from Bro. Wayne Camp on to us here in Brazil. It will be very profitable reading to many here who are being deceived. I get "hate mail" weekly from our internet posting of Bro. Laurence Justice's booklet **SHOULD BAPTIST CHURCHES EMBRACE PENTECOSTALISM?** This letter by Bro. Camp will be sent to those who send me the hate mail as soon as I get it translated.

MISSISSIPPI: I want to thank you for printing the article on Freedom of Conscience in the January issue of The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator. I whole-heartedly agree with your conclusions and appreciate your approach.

Study has shown me that there are only three cases in the epistles in which we are commanded to break fellowship with another Christian and all of those cases are issues that call into question one's profession of faith.

1 Cor. 5:9-11 admonishes us not to keep company with those who profess faith and live in an openly unrepentant state because (1 Cor.

6:9,10) such a profession is false.

We are told not to fellowship with those who bring another gospel, Gal. 1:8,9, because (obviously) one who believes a false gospel is unconverted.

And Titus 3:10 admonishes us not to fellowship with a schismatic (heretic), one who creates unbiblical barriers to fellowship, because he is deeply and profoundly deceived, v.11.

On the flip side, we are admonished to work really hard for unity in a spirit of humility and forbearance.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (KJV)

It really does seem that some have it all backwards. He who professes the gospel in true repentance, proclaims that gospel, and labors for unity is, apparently, a believer that we ought to receive as a brother, even though he may have some things wrong, Rom. 14.

Thank you, brother, for your continuing work.

WWW: You article on Christmas, Interesting point of view. I was just wondering of what religion are you? I am baptist and we do celebrate Christmas and I have friends who are Jehovah Witnesses that do not celebrate and every now in then we debate over the issue. I guess more than anything to me I don't really celebrate anything rather I just take part in the annual customs of getting together and sharing gifts with the family. What about this point of view; "Every day we should celebrate Jesus and await his 2nd coming and every day we should give thanks and be thankful. 'So what if his birthday is not on that day, lets not celebrate his birthday, but yet his great things he has done and be thankful. 'And on christmas that is what I will celebrate with my family whether it be on Dec. 25 or July 25. Thanks.

TEXAS: OK, so my name is mud. I am currently on your mailing list for the Baptist Proclamator and Promulgator. Please remove me from your mailing list as soon as you receive this request.

WWW: You have the right to say what you wish, however, what a narrow view you possess of

the Roman Catholic Church. Your interpretations are so narrow and self-serving .I presume outside of your faith leads to eternal destruction. Pray that all Christians become one in Christ Preach Christianity not decisiveness. Pray that all may be one in the Body of Christ A very Merry CHRISTMAS

WWW: Well, I am a Catholic and I do celebrate "Christes Mass" and I DO believe in the Virgin Birth of Our Lord...and His ONE atoning sacrifice for our sins, and His work on Calvary, and His physical coming to snatch away the believing saints, and His final judgement of the world. I am not the "heathen" you think we Catholics are.

Did you ever stop to think why the Church named Dec. 25th as the celebration of Christ's birth? Could it be that maybe, just maybe, it WAS on this date that the only Son of God came into the world. Early Christian writers such as Augustine of Hippo (so loved by Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Zwingli et al) certainly thought so. Ever read Augustine? Hmmm...might learn something.

And we do NOT believe Jesus is sacrificed again at Mass...that would be BLASPHEMY! We DO believe that the Holy Communion is a sacrifice of "praise and thanksgiving" for what God our Father did in Jesus Christ...once, for all. It is written in the Jewish fathers that, when "Messiah the King shall have come, all sacrifices will have ceased except the sacrifice of thanksgiving." That is what the word Eucharist means (the proper name for the Lord's Supper); it means "thanksgiving".

Yes, we do believe that the "Lamb once slain" is truly present to feed us with Himself ... everything that He is. But we DO NOT believe Jesus can be sacrifice again...for "death hath no more dominion over Him." I should know what we believe...I am a Catholic theologian.

Study what we REALLY believe, not what you've been TAUGHT we believe. AND "judge righteous judgement"...lest you blaspheme God.

USA: Thank you for your article you wrote. It's been a long three to four year process of God opening up this doctrine of grace and election to me. It is a comforting doctrine and now I see it in almost every sentence of the Bible.

My church is a fundamental Baptist Church

and the Pastor teaches both election and man's free will. That is so frustrating to me. He will read a verse in John 17, such as verse 2. He will say how wonderful a statement that is, and then in the next breath tell us our destination is in our own hands and we make the choice as to where we will spend eternity?

I have family that seem to be trying their hardest to see to it that I must constantly protect my two small [children] from their influence. It seems that if they could, they would just go ahead and throw them into the flames of judgment. Any bad influence they can give to my children, it seems they do, and with delight too.

The church I have attended for almost 10 years seems to lean more towards Armenian. Through the years, I have tried to protect the kids from evil influence, teach the word of God and anything else I might do to ensure their salvation. I'm tired! I can't do it. I can't save them. My church has even told us to make sure our kids get saved before they are too old. What a job!

Anyway, I'm thankful to God that he has revealed this doctrine of truth to me and set me free. Not free from obeying Him, but free from the work of saving others. I still witness when led to and still pray for the salvation of others, but I now realize that getting someone to say "the sinners prayer" is not always true salvation. How would one know if he had meant it enough or prayed hard enough, or said the right words?

The Lord tells us how we may know if we are born again. We will love the brethren if we are passed from death to life. Our attitude towards the word of God will be different. His spirit will bear witness with ours that we are the children of God. Salvation truly is of the Lord. It is a miracle, not a choice. Yes, we do choose, but willingly because he first gives us the ears to hear and the Spiritual eyes to see.

The only thing not too comforting to me in my path to seeing and believing this clear teaching, is what if one or both of my children are not chosen? The Lord has given them to me to raise in the nurture and admonition of Himself. But why if they may not be one of His? I love them so much, and can't bear the thought of them going into eternity without Him. Maybe you could help me through with this rock in the road?

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Titus 1:5 & 7**

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Titus 1:9**

**Earl Smith "Why God's Qualifications For
Pastors Are Necessary" Titus 1: 10- 16**

**John Kohler "The Pastor's Work Of
Rebuking" Titus 1:3**

**Jack Duplechain "How To Instruct Various
Groups In The Church" Titus 2:1-6 & 9-10**

**Royce Smith " The Pastor's Life As An
Example Of His Preaching" Titus 2:7-8**

**Jack Duplechain "Making Practical
Application Of God's Grace" Titus 2:11-15**

**Earl Smith " Preaching On Good
Citizenship" Titus 3:1-7**

**Wayne Camp "The Importance Of Preaching
On Good Works" Titus 3:8 & 14**

**Ron Crisp "Some Things Pastors Should
Avoid" Titus 3:9**

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[Editor's note: Due to a bad case of flu that kept the editor inactive for over a week, the services scheduled for January had to be rescheduled. I am sorry for the inconvenience but it could not be helped. See you in Brandon Feb. 23-27, 2000 RWC

New Book For Sale!

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