



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

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

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THE PROMISE THE PROMISE KEEPERS DO NOT POSSESS

First Message of a Series

By Wayne Camp

TEXT: Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

INTRODUCTION

When I read in the Commercial Appeal recently that Promise Keepers was terminating all of its staff due to financial difficulties I was a little amazed that it had come this quickly. Then when I read later in the Denver Post that McCartney was asking every church in the United States to give Promise Keepers \$1,000 to help them stay afloat, I was amazed at his presumptuousness. He might have told his players what they were supposed to do when he was coach and have been perfectly in place doing so. But, when he presumes he has some kind prerogative to tell the churches of the United States what they should do, that is illimitable temerity and unmitigated audacity.

McCartney said, “What I am going to say right now is hard, but I believe it’s what God has given me to say . . . I believe that every church that names the name of Jesus is supposed to give Promise Keepers \$1,000.” Note that he claims a special revelation for what he is about to say. That is supposed to silence all opposition. What is sad is that there are so many naive and gullible people out there who will be seduced with such statements. “God told him to say it so we must do it.”

McCartney further said, “If you’re a big church, you’re supposed to call the smaller churches and say, ‘It wasn’t all that hard for us, but can we help you?’”

“If you’re a smaller church and don’t have the resources, out of humility and out of love for what God is doing, you ought to call a larger church and say, ‘Can you help us out here? We want to facilitate what God is doing’.”

McCartney said some or all of their planned rallies for 1998 may have to be canceled. It is too early to forecast their demise, and I assure you this is not my intention for I am no prophet. But, all this set me to thinking about the promises of Jesus to his church. By the way, Promise Keepers is a para-church organization and cannot claim promises that are given to the Lord’s churches.

In our text, Jesus said, ***“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”*** Again he said to his church, ***“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”***

It occurred to me that these are promises that Promise Keepers do not possess and cannot claim. And with that, let us turn our attention to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the two texts chosen for this message I see three promises made to the church.

First, there is ***the promise of a perpetual doming up of the church.*** Second, there is ***the promise of perpetual protection of the church.*** Third, there is ***the promise of his***

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EDITOR'S ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBERS AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES

The editor, Eld. Wayne Camp, may be reached at the address given above, or at his home address. His home address is: 2065 Tompkins Lane, Millington, TN 38053-5107.

Church Phone at Home: (901) 876-5015

Church Phone: (901) 357-0215.

E-mail address: RWcamp@cris.com

Visit our Home Page on the Internet

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perpetual presence with the church. Then, I want to add from another verse (Eph. 3:21) **the perpetual glory unto God through the church.**

In this message we will consider:

THE PROMISE OF A PERPETUAL DOMING UP OF THE CHURCH

The church to which this promise is given came into existence according to Divine plan

and purpose. God never does in time that which he did not purpose in eternity. **Isaiah 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.** He has declared the end from the beginning and the things that are not yet done before they come to pass. Everything he has declared and purposed, he will surely do. That is consistent with his being God. And, we learn elsewhere that God knows every work that he would ever do from the foundation of the world. **Acts 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen**

God works all things after the counsel of his own will. We can be certain that the first church on this earth and all true churches descending from it came into being according to the eternal counsel and sovereign will of God. **Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.**

The church, coming into existence according to Divine plan and purpose, was purposed to carry out a work appointed to it. It was founded to be the fountainhead of the preaching of the gospel into all the world. **Mark 16:15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

The church was founded to be a place of training for Christians. **Matthew 28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.** No other organization on earth has the authority to assume this work. The government does not have that authority or responsibility. Neither does any parachurch organization. I heard a program on a local radio station recently from a "Bible teaching ministry" out of Texas. When they closed their program the announcer said,

"This program comes to you under the auspices of the Jimmy (forgot last name) Evangelistic Association. No church was mentioned in any way in connection with this organization. This is contrary to the Biblical pattern just as is every parachurch organization that presumes to take on the teaching and preaching responsibilities of the Lord's churches.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ was founded to be the administrator of the ordinances. **Matthew 28:19** *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* During the personal ministry of Christ he delivered the ordinances into the hands of the church and there is no record that that has ever been changed.

The church was founded as the place where the saved, baptized members can have a pastor to watch over them. **Hebrews 13:17** *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.* There are many who presume to take over this work from the pastor and the church. They are intruding into an office and work for which they have no Divine license. Others feel themselves to be such mature Christians that they do not need the watchcare of a pastor and, therefore, separate themselves from any local New Testament church. The local New Testament church is the only place one can find this care.

The church was founded to be the place where truth is proclaimed, preserved, and defended against its many enemies. **1 Timothy 3:15** *But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.* **Ephesians 4:11-16** *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto*

the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the easure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

There are many calling themselves Christians today who oppose any defence of the faith and any opposition to error. The Lord's churches must not succumb to these Satanically inspired seducers but must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to us. **Jude 3** *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

I recently received this letter,

I have just read with amazement some of your baseless articles on the Promise Keepers. How anyone could think that laying aside denominational differences so that millions of men can gather in the name of Christ is a bad thing is beyond me.

You seem to have more faith in your man-made Baptist doctrine than you do in the Scriptures.

The FACT is that all doctrines - Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian (sic. Presbyterian), etc. are MAN MADE. I personally attend a Presbyterian (sic. Presbyterian) church, but my attendance has little to do with my belief in the Presbyterian (sic. Presbyterian) doctrines—it's because I've been blessed by God to have a great minister who speaks The Word in a way that sets my heart on fire.

You seem to need to do more studying of the Word (particularly the Christ message). Jesus taught no theology, no system of doctrine.

Jesus taught the truth.

"Judge not, lest ye be judged."

How will the cause of Christ ever reach the world if we have people who profess to be Christians bashing other Christians ?? With divisive articles like yours (you call them truth, based on your warped interpretation of Scripture), it's no wonder that Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, etc. is spreading more rapidly than the Truth of Christ. It's no wonder that Christians here are ridiculed and defamed. I heard it put best this way : If you saw Jesus on the Cross, would you walk up and cut off a finger or toe ? That's exactly what we do every time we slander another denomination. By that standard, I find your articles tantamount to amputating his legs and pouring sulfuric acid into his side !!!!!

My prayer is that your hardened heart will be softened by the Truth of Christ, and not infected with the doctrines of man. I pray that you will stop ravaging Jesus precious body, and that you will someday be a force for uniting His people.

Concerning people (such as the writer of this letter) who oppose any opposition to what others believe Charles Spurgeon said,

The arch-enemy of truth has invited us to level our walls and take away our fenced cities. He has cajoled some true-hearted but weak-headed believers to advocate this crafty policy . . . 'Away with creeds and bodies of divinity!' This is the cry of the day. Ostensibly, it is reverence for the Bible, and attachment to charity which dictates the clamorous denunciation; but at the bottom it is hatred of definitive truth . . . As Philip of Macedon hated the Grecian orators because they were watchdogs of the flock, so there are wolves who desire the destruction of our doctrinal formularies, that they may make havoc of the souls of men by their pestilent heresies.

In the same vein Horatius Bonar wrote,

For there is some danger of falling into a soft and effeminate Christianity, under the plea of a lofty and ethereal theology. Christianity was born for endurance; not an exotic, but a hardy plant, braced by the keen wind; not languid, nor childish, nor cowardly. It walks with strong step and erect frame; it is kindly, but firm; it is gentle,

but honest; it is calm, but not facile; obliging, but not imbecile; decided, but not churlish. It does not fear to speak the stern word of condemnation against error, nor to raise its voice against surrounding evils, under the pretext it is not of this world; it does not shrink from giving honest reproof, lest it come under the charge of displaying an unchristian spirit. It calls sin sin, on whomsoever it is found, and would rather risk the accusation of being actuated by a bad spirit than not discharge an explicit duty. Let us not misjudge strong words used in honest controversy. Out of the heat a viper may come forth; but we shake it off and feel no harm. The religion of both Old and New Testaments is marked by fervent outspoken testimonies against evil. To speak smooth things in such a case may be sentimentalism, but it is not Christianity. It is a betrayal of the cause of truth and righteousness. If anyone should be frank, manly, honest, cheerful (I do not say blunt or rude, for a Christian must be courteous and polite); it is he who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and is looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God. I know that charity covereth a multitude of sins; but it does not call evil good, because a good man has done it; it does not excuse inconsistencies, because the inconsistent brother has a high name and a fervent spirit; crookedness and worldliness are still crookedness and worldliness, though exhibited in one who seems to have reached no common height of attainment.

Again, we must not succumb to these calls from the New Evangelicals to give up any opposition to error. We are to earnestly contend for the faith, the body of truth once delivered and recorded in the Word of God. We must always be set for the defence of the word of God. If men, in the name of the Lord, do not teach according to the Word of God we must expose their error. ***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.*** That is one of the purposes for which the Lord established his church.

This is a promise to continue doming up the already established church. Jesus established

his first local church on this earth during his personal ministry. When he said, **"I will build my church,"** in our text, he was not referring to the actual establishment of the church. He was speaking of a progressive **"doming up"** of the already existing church.

It was the mission of John the Baptist to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. **Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**

Shortly after his baptism by the Baptist, Jesus took the disciples who had been baptized by John and, in gathering them into an assembly of properly baptized disciples, he formed an ekklesia, a called out assembly, a congregation of baptized believers. The record of the gathering of this church is found in the first chapter of John.

Shortly after Jesus' baptism, John and two of his disciples saw Jesus and the two disciples of John left him and followed Jesus. **John 1:35-37 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! 37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.** There is no indication they ever again followed John. Jesus was calling his church into being and these are the first two of that organization.

One of those disciples who followed Jesus was Andrew, the Brother of Simon Peter. He found Peter and Peter joined the group. **John 1:40-42 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.** Contrary to what some have taught, this is not the calling to salvation of these people. They were already saved and baptized by John. Jesus was calling them out and establishing his first church on this earth.

The following day Jesus went into Galilee where he found Philip, another disciple who lived in the same city as Peter and Andrew. **John 1:43-44 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.** Then Nathaniel was brought into the assembly and Jesus was doming up his assembly of baptized believers who were assembling from then forward. **John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** In fact, on the day of Pentecost, Peter indicates that this assembly dated back to the baptism of Jesus by John. **Acts 1:21-22 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.**

Evidence that his church was established during the ministry of Jesus is obvious from the setting of apostles in the body. Paul tells us that the first gift set in the church by the Lord Jesus Christ was apostles. **1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles.** That this occurred during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ is evident from Luke's account of the gospel of Christ. **Luke 6:12-16 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.**

Verse 13 makes two things very clear. **Luke 6:13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose**

twelve, whom also he named apostles. First, Jesus already had a company of disciples. It was out of, or from that company of disciples that the twelve were taken. The Greek word **apo** (*απο*) is used here. As used the word speaks **“of separation of a part from the whole; where of a whole some part is taken.”** Of the whole of the assembly, twelve were taken and separated to the office of apostles and thus apostles were set in the church. **1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles.** When Jesus set them in, he set them in the church. The church existed before he set them in it. He chose them out of it; ordained them apostles, and set these who were already members into it as apostles.

After apostles, others gifts were given to the church as Paul tells us in verse 28. . . . **secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.**

All of these were set in the church during the personal ministry of Christ with the exception of the diversity of languages, commonly referred to as the gift of tongues. Even these were set in the church and exercised on the day of Pentecost **before**, I repeat, **before** the three thousand were added, the time which some set as the origin of the church.

The giving of instructions for church discipline should also convince doubters that Christ established the church during his personal ministry. **Matthew 18:15-17 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.**

Jesus instructed his people to **“tell it unto the church.”** If there had been no church to which they could tell it, surely Peter, if no one else, would have raised the question, “What church?”

The unanimous silence of the disciples

speaks loudly to the proposition that the church was, indeed, already a functioning body at the time.

Both the ordinances were set in the church during the personal ministry of Christ. Jesus turned the matter of administering his baptism over to the church early after the church was established. **John 4:1-2 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, 2 (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,).**

Jesus instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper shortly before the end of his ministry and this he did in the church. **Matthew 26:26-30 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.**

In his epistle to the church at Corinth, Paul referred back to this night and indicated that the ordinance was for each of his churches to keep. **1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.**

We saw a moment ago that after the supper was instituted they sang a hymn and then went out into the garden; this is referred to by Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews as his singing in the midst of the ekklesia, the church. **Hebrews 2:12**

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Another evidence that there was a church established during the personal ministry of Christ is the fact that about 3,000 were added on the day of Pentecost. ***Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*** There had to be an assembly to which these could be added. A house must be built before a room can be added to it. There must be apples in a basket before you can add more to them. On the first Pentecost after the death of Christ, 3,000 were added to the already established church. ***“there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”***

The number of 120 is mentioned earlier. ***Acts 1:15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,).*** In the light of John 4:1-2 there is

every reason to believe there were many more members than this by that time but these 120 were assembled together on that occasion. It was to these that the 3,000 were added. And, the Lord continued to add to it daily. ***Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*** Jesus was continuing to keep his promise of his perpetual doming up of his church.

It is unequivocally evident that Christ did, during his personal ministry, establish on this earth a local, visible church of which he was the Founder, Head and Chief Shepherd. To that church he promised a perpetual doming up. He promised her his perpetual protection, as we will see next time. He also promised this church his perpetual presence from that day to the end of the age. And, God will receive to himself perpetual glory from this church in this world and in the eternal ages, world without end.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

(CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE)

By Wayne Camp

Israel had been carried away captive into a foreign land because they had not been faithful to the Lord. Now they longed to worship God in Jerusalem and could not. Dear friend, if you despise the Lord's churches and continue to absent yourself from the fellowship and membership of one you may one day find yourself longing for that blessed fellowship in the ***habitation of God through the spirit*** and be deprived of it. If you are willfully in this strange land, if you are willfully unchurched, you have forgotten your Zion and Jerusalem. If you do not love the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ enough to be a member in one and faithfully attend and support one you should not open your mouth to speak for Christ for you cannot love him as you ought and not love his church.

In a vein very similar to what has already been said, it should be pointed out that the local church is the house of God. ***“But if I tarry long,***

that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15).

The first thing that needs to be understood is the fact that it is in the house of God that the child of God is to behave himself. Any person who willfully absents himself from the fellowship and/or membership of a local New Testament church is misbehaving, regardless of his excuse for so doing. I do not speak of those who are providentially hindered. I speak of willfully absenting one's self from the assembling. Paul is not concerned with the behavior of this young preacher Timothy outside of church membership for it is the normal thing that he be a member of a local church and he was a member of the church at Ephesus. If Timothy misbehaved, he would misbehave as a member of that local, blood bought church at Ephesus for Paul had taught him the importance of

church membership.

There are some strange things in this world. Last night, Monday, Nov. 16, 1987, there was a story on CBS News about a giant male sea lion that had fallen in love with a bunch of cows. He had left the sea and was bellowing out mating calls to these cows and could only be kept from the herd by an electric fence. His attachment to these cows was abnormal and strange. He was as out of place and confused as a termite in a yo-yo. He was behaving in a most strange manner.

It seems to this writer that a child of God who has no connection with, or fellowship in the house of God is acting just as strangely as that misguided, confused male sea lion. He is out of step, out of order, and misbehaving. To try to serve and worship God without being a part of his house, a local church, is simply out of order.

A MAN'S HOUSE IS THE CENTER OF ALL THAT HE DOES

Have you ever been around a large factory at shift change? Have you ever been around a large office complex at quitting time? My, how the people rush out of the building to get to their cars! They peel out of the parking lot and rush like mad toward home. When it is time to go to bed, there is no place like one's own house and bed. When it comes time to eat, most folk would rather eat at home. We spend most of our time together as a family in our house. All our activities center around the house. A good portion of most folks' salary goes to pay for a house and to furnish that house.

God's house is his local church. Paul told Timothy that the house of God at Ephesus was the local church at Ephesus. That is true of every true New Testament Church. It is a house of God and the center of God's activities in this world.

CENTER OF EVANGELISM

The local church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the center of evangelism. It is likely that in a pole of the readers of this paper who are saved many would confess that they were saved in a service of some New Testament church. It is likely that the majority of those who were saved

elsewhere were saved as the result of witnessing by members of a local church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The proclamation of the gospel into all the world has been committed to the Lord's churches. Through individual members and the ordained ministry, the gospel is to sound forth into all the world (Mat. 28:18-20). No person, be he preacher or otherwise, is commissioned and charged with the preaching of the gospel separate and apart from membership in a local New Testament Church. When Paul was saved, the very first thing that he did was to unite with the church at Damascus and submit to baptism at the hands of that church. Then, as a member of that church he began to preach the gospel in that area. When he went up to Jerusalem to preach there, he first **"assayed to join himself"** to the church at Jerusalem and then went forth preaching. When God was ready for him to go forth as a missionary, he sent him forth as a member of the church at Antioch and he periodically returned to report to this church all that God had done through his work. Paul never, in his ministry or life, divorced himself from fellowship and membership in a local church. It was too important for him to even consider such. When he wrote to the church of God at Corinth he rebuked them for many schisms and errors. **He never even hinted** that the faithful members of that church should withdraw themselves from its fellowship or membership because of those errors. It was, at that time, the only true church in Corinth. It was better to be a member there than to be isolated and deprived of the blessings that were theirs even among that carnal membership.

Because of his high esteem for the local church of the Lord Jesus Christ Paul conducted all his missionary work out of a church. He also made it his business to establish churches wherever he went preaching the gospel. The care of the churches was a great concern of his. He looked to churches for his support. **Paul knew that the center of God's evangelistic activities in this age was and is the local church.**

GOD'S PLACE FOR BAPTISM

From its early origin the Lord committed the ordinance of baptism into the hands of his local churches and the ordained ministers thereof. **"Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, BUT HIS DISCIPLES)"** (Jn. 4:1-2). When he left this earth the Lord delivered the ordinance of baptism to an organization that could administer it until the end of the age. When he spoke to the apostles in Mat. 28:18-20, he spoke to them as ordained ministers of a local church out of which other New Testament churches were destined to come. He had promised a perpetual existence to his churches and therefore the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper were placed in their hands.

Just as a man's house is the center of all his activities, so the Lord has ordained that his house, the local New Testament Church, will be the center of much of his activity. That is why baptism is one of the **two ordinances** of the local church.

GOD'S SCHOOL FOR CHRISTIANS

The local church is God's school for Christians. It is the church that has the commission to **"teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."** The local church is the **"pillar and ground of the truth"** because God has sent his Spirit to **"guide"** them **"into all truth."** There is no station for the propagation and proclamation of truth such as a local church. The association or convention loved by so many is not the pillar and ground of truth. There is a continuous chain of associations and conventions that have gone into rank error over the last 200 years or so. You cannot trust such man-made organizations to be the pillar and ground of truth.

Seminaries and Bible Schools that are operated by conventions and associations cannot be trusted with truth. These schools that are not under the ownership and control of local New Testament Churches have been virtual volcanoes erupting with the lava of heretical leaven. The only way to keep a Seminary or

similar Bible School true to the word of God is to have it sponsored by a true New Testament church. The Lord has charged his churches with the protection and propagation of truth.

Dear unchurched child of God, you will be deprived of the opportunity to learn all the truth you can if you are not a member of and faithful in a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have been a member and learned truth but have now separated from a local church as a member in fellowship, you are likely to stray into all manner of error. We need the fellowship of brethren. We also need the protection from error that is found in fellowship. If one in the fellowship of a church starts departing from the faith, brethren can reason with him. He can have his thinking tested by the questions that brethren might ask in discussions of Scripture. This is why the Lord's churches have been charged with the defense and proclamation of truth.

GOD'S GLORIFYING INSTITUTION

"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). We live in one of the ages of which this verse speaks. It is God's purpose for his churches that they be the place where he receives the ultimate glory that is possible in this age and in the eternal ages. God will get glory from the destruction of the wicked in the eternal flames of hell. God will let no one rob him of that glory. Yet, it is very clear from Paul's word to the Ephesians that God has chosen to receive the ultimate and greatest glory from the lives of his children when they are members of a local New Testament Church.

If there is a place where a man should be king it is in his own house. Louisiana once had a governor whose slogan was something like this: "A chicken in every pot, and every man a king in his own house." In advancing that cause he sponsored laws that protected the rights of citizens in their homestead. One who lives in a moderate home pays no property tax on the home or the land on which it is located within certain limits. Even in the city one can still keep a cow, chickens, horses, and such.

A good husband and father is magnified in his own house. Certainly our Heavenly Father

should receive the ultimate glory possible in his house, the church of the living God. But, you who are unchurched are not bringing him the glory that you could if you would become a faithful member of a local New Testament Church.

AN UNFLOCKED SHEEP

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of god, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:28-29).

Two times in the verses here cited Paul refers to the church at Ephesus as a flock. It is a gathered flock of God's sheep with shepherds to look out for its welfare, to watch over it and protect it from ravenous wolves, i. e., false prophets.

If you are one of God's sheep and not a member of a New Testament church you are like an unflocked sheep. It is natural for sheep to flock together. It is unnatural for a sheep to not desire the company and fellowship of the flock. Those who are out of the flock are considered ***"sheep"*** who ***"have gone astray."*** Are you a stray sheep? If you are out of fellowship and/or out of the membership of a local church of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a ***stray sheep.***

When Jesus was preparing his church for his departure and their future days without his bodily presence with them he said: ***"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"*** (Lu. 12:32). Dear unchurched child of God, this promise was directed to a flock, a church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a promise that you have no claim in as a ***sheep with no flock*** of which to be a part.

The sheep without a flock has no shepherd to feed him. ***"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."*** Here we see described the gentle care of a shepherd

for his flock. It is used to describe the Lord and the care of his sheep. It is sad to see a herd of sheep without a shepherd to feed and to care for them. It is sad to see a church without a pastor to care for them, lead them, and watch for their souls. It is an even sadder spectacle to see a sheep that does not belong to a flock and has no shepherd either. This is the sad plight of the unchurched child of God. ***He is a sheep without a flock and without a shepherd (pastor) .***

No one should join a church just to be a member when he dies so that his obituary will sound good if read at his funeral. It has fallen my responsibility on several occasions to be asked by a family to read the obituary furnished by the funeral home at the services for someone. I have read several that went like this: "Although Mr. _____ was not a member of any church at the time of his death, he did profess to be a Christian." That is one of the saddest statements that can be made about a child of God, if indeed he were one. It is like saying: "Here is a sheep without a shepherd; here is a sheep that was a part of no flock." May God be gracious to the unflocked sheep and bring them to one of his flocks where they will have the comforts of the flock, the fellowship of the sheep, and the watch and care of a God-appointed undershepherd, a pastor.

AN UNBODIED MEMBER

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (I Cor. 12:27).

In the church at Corinth there were various schisms. Paul used the analogy of a human body to show them their need of and dependence upon one another. He declared that they were each individual members of one local body, the church of God at Corinth. He said: ***"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were the hearing, where were the smelling?"*** He then says:

"The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have not need of you." (I Cor. 12:15-21). It would be a sad occasion indeed if one of your hands said to one of your feet, "I don't need you." Sadder still, and worse still, and more absurd still would be the case if one of the hands said to the entire body: "I have no need of you. I will sever myself from the body. I can exist just as well or better separate and apart from the body." That would not be true. Neither is it true that a saved person can be a better Christian outside the body of Christ, the local church, than in one of Christ's blood bought churches.

CONCLUSION

As I conclude this article, I have mixed emotions. I pity that child of God who does not see the importance of being in the fellowship and membership of one of the Lord's true churches. He is like a glowing ember that is removed from a bed of coals and is soon black and smoking. It gives no heat and no light and smells of smoke. He is as salt that has no savor and is cast out to be trodden under the foot of man. He is like a light that is covered by a bushel basket.

I feel concern for those around this unchurched child of God. He is a stumbling block and not a good influence for Christ. He has shown that he despises (lightly esteems) the local church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray that God may open your eyes, if you are an unchurched child of God, and show you that you tread under your feet the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ when you sever yourself from the services of his church. May he show you that you are especially guilty of this sin if you have severed yourself totally from the fellowship and membership of one of his churches. I pray that he might deal with you and give you godly sorrow and repentance for this.

Bouquets and Brickbats

NOTE TO THE READERS: Due to many things I have gotten behind on the letters I have

received. Thank you all for writing. Some of these letters are from late November, December, and January so material in the paper appearing before that is mentioned. Editor

WEST VIRGINIA: I just read your "Tangled Web" treatise—**EXCELLENT**.

FLORIDA: Just a note to let you know we The Sovereign Grace Baptist Church . . . are always in prayer for you. Continue, by God's grace, to proclaim the truth of Jesus christ in your paper.

I know you have been taking a lot of heat for your stand against the PKs.

Personaly, I turly enjoy your messages. I am privileged to have met you. . . .

TEXAS: I have read some of your papers and enjoyed them. I appreciate the information about PKs. Please add my name to your mailing list.

KENTUCKY: I certainly enjoyed reading and studying your articles on church chain-link succession.

GEORGIA: I agree with you that a "Mother" church is unnecessary in the way some claim.

Thanks again for the truth. We appreciate it so much.

ARKANSAS: Thank you Bro. Camp. God bless you and your work. I think about you a lot.

WWW: I do enjoy your Web site and hope you keep up the articles. They are needed in times like these.

VIRGINIA: Keep up the good work & may the Lord richly bless you.

USA: In the November issue of *The GP&P* you mentioned there would be another write-up about PKs in the December issue. We waited "on pins and needles" during much of December. It arrived Dec. 27th and we devoured it quickly. Surely there must be something sinister about this movement. Some of us feel it, but do not know enough. The huge numbers of men deceived and taken in by it is shocking. There's something out there event beyond its appearance and that's bad enough . . . We appreciate all those who stick their neck out to reveal what is going on about this new movement. Perhaps it could be dangerous to health and even life. May our Lord make his faith to shine upon you and your work.

ARIZONA: I did watch the 20/20 segment with Bill McCartney . . . he sure came across as a jerk who was out in the stadiums basking in glory while his wife was at home groaning over suicide. We'll pray God's hedge be placed around you and the Pilgrims Hope Baptist Church.

Would you please add a man to your mailing list? He is one of the prisoners with whom we have been working. He is getting sound in the faith, strong on the Doctrine of Grace, and truly coming to church truth. I guess he and one other fellow at Huntsville are standing alone against PK's which according to him is coming in to the prisons through the Chaplain Ray and

Chuck Colson ministries. He would, I am sure truly appreciate your back issues on PK, as well as your future issues. He has access to a copy machine, and copies a lot of stuff that we send him. He makes a couple of dollars a day, and the copy machines cost 5 cents a sheet, but as he said, he'd rather give out truth than eat cookies from the commissary.

And be sure, of the prayers of the Saints here for each and every soldier of Christ's Cross at PHBC.

GEORGIA: I have been enjoying yours and Bro. Joe's discussion on the proper way to set up a church. I whole heartedly agree with you. I must admit that I did not use to, but I do now. I had begun to see this truth for a while. I am certainly convinced that you are right . . . you gave sufficient proof from Scripture and then gave historical evidence as to how churches are set up. What more could anyone want or need.

I am looking forward to the next issue on the Promise Keepers. May the Lord bless you in your work, both in the church and **The GP&P.**

MICHIGAN: I have read your so called, debate with Bro. Joe Wilson, and I still don't know what you really believe. You were very dishonest with the way your represented what Bro. Joe believes about "Church Organization."

Since I see how inconsistent you are on the Doctrine of Ecclesiology you do not need to send me your paper any more.

I do thank you for sending your paper at my request in the past.

{EDITOR'S NOTE: It is amazing to me that this reader says what he does. I gave Bro. Joe every opportunity to present his position and he could have shown it if I misrepresented his position. I set no limit on the amount of material he could write. When he was producing no Scripture for his position, there was no point in continuing. It is also amazing to me that this Brother says he still does not know what I really believe. Many have written and commended the articles for clearly setting forth the position I hold (and the Biblical and historical position of Baptists).

CALIFORNIA: Praise the Lord! I knew I wasn't alone, but it sure is a blessing to find someone else publicly standing up to the "pedigree pushers." I've been fighting the same battle here in California for some time.

Bro. _____ sent me copies of the April through September issues of **The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator.** You have done an exceptional job of sticking to both the Scriptures and history in your debate with Bro. Joe Wilson.

PLANNING TO MOVE? If at all possible, please notify us three weeks in advance of your change of address so that we may keep your paper coming. It costs us 70 cents to get your new address from the Postal Service and that may take long enough that two papers are returned at a cost of \$1.40 before we get the correction. This will mean you miss one or two papers. Your help in saving us this expense will be appreciated.

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