

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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TAKING A DAY AT A TIME

by Bob Spurlin

This writer has preached the gospel for thirty years and served churches in five different states, while being privileged to preach in evangelistic meetings in nine various states across the U.S. Presently I am a fifty-four-year-old man, diagnosed with multiple sclerosis since April of 1995. Currently I am house bound and confined to bed, totally dependent on family members to wait on me day and night. My type of MS has rendered my legs useless while there is serious impairment and restriction on my right side.

When the doctors announced that it was a debilitating disease, imagining my life changing so dramatically caused me great anxiety. For one who was active and engaged in such a demanding schedule to suddenly have his life turned upside down was a shock. Now reduced to a family member who is unable to accomplish the simplest of tasks is humbling and at times a humiliating experience. Throughout this ordeal facing embarrassing circumstances was difficult initially, but in time I learned to grin and bare it as doctors and nurses were simply doing their jobs. While at home my beloved wife nursed me as only she could, but as my condition deteriorated she was unable to do certain things. Bathing was a monumental task, and since my wife was no longer able to do the job, my father and two brothers pitched in and benevolently accomplished this task. Yes, having family to pitch in is wonderful and helpful when one of their own is in need. I have been blessed beyond measure with family members that are so thoughtful, who deprive themselves to give attention to their spouse, son, and brother.

People have often asked, "How do

you cope with such a confining existence?" The answer is, "Taking one day at a time," without trying to think about tomorrow or next week. Taking one day at a time is, after all, the only thing we have and we should not worry about tomorrow (James 4:13-15). This is the problem that many have when dealing with adversity. Following my diagnosis at Mayo Clinic, four days later our daughter, Bethany Ann (16), suffered a fatal automobile accident. We were devastated with an unbelievable hurt that defied words that we could not speak. My wife and I were in days of shock, followed by disbelief, denial, and blame, while pursuing peaks and valleys of coping with such a loss. We found ourselves acknowledging we had made the adjustment, only to be crushed further. People are all different, having divergent timetables in making the adjustment at such a loss. My wife took a week off following the death of our daughter and then returned to her teaching position at Barkley Bridge Elementary. Faith in God is the only sustaining power that allows one to overcome adversity of any kind. This writer has drawn strength especially from patriarchs like Abraham, Job, Joseph and others who could look above and know that God was in control of His universe. Giving up was not part of my agenda, although days of depression were difficult to manage. Paul's immortal words gave me great strength, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Being always a realistic person did not mean optimism and a positive spirit would be nonexistent. God has given me life, and we will embrace it with a natural enthusiasm from which God was the author. We must all seize life in whatever form and refuse to complain, but take

advantage of whatever opportunities come our way (Gal. 6:10).

During the close of my third year of convalescence, although keeping a positive attitude, it was becoming more difficult to handle the depression and stress of confinement. The early stages of my illness allowed us to use the van in getting me outside to escape the four walls of the bedroom. My wife and father were totally dedicated to this endeavor. Although fatigue prevented me from getting out as much as we would like, it was deeply appreciated. This writer can say with certainty that during this time of confinement, my prayer life had become richer, deeper, and more intense than any previous time of my Christian pilgrimage (2 Cor. 4:16-18). Paul was pressed on every side, and though the outward man was decaying, yet he noted we are renewed as we rejuvenate the inward man. We realized that the more confined, the more my spiritual man was growing and the spiritual strength of the inner man was keeping me strong. My wife decided that I needed a way to express myself via writing articles on the computer. She then moved her computer to the side of my hospital bed and I struggled to get acquainted with this new piece of technology. If it were not for my son and wife, this writer could not turn on the machine. Brother Tom Holland, who visited me several times, urged me to do some writing. He thought this writer had something to offer even though I had great doubts about my ability. Thanks, brother Tom, for your constant interest and encouragement. To say I was a novice would be the understatement of the year. Yet, each day we would learn something new and it was not long before we were printing articles. Several publications received my work and graciously printed them. It was not long before brethren

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began writing notes, sending cards, making phone calls, even writing e-mails expressing their gratitude for my efforts. Native missionaries from Ghana and Nigeria, Africa, sent me kind letters stating they had read some of my articles. We assisted them by sending Bible school literature and other related things that would be useful in their work. We have received letters of thanks from them, thanking us for the material, of which they were acutely in short supply.

Whatever our circumstance in life, to overcome the hardship and tribulations of life we must seek God. Paul writes, "When we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass and ye know" (1 Thess. 3:4). Paul was confident that tribulations would come in Biblical times. Therefore, should we expect less today? The secret is accepting them, so we may use them as stepping stones to enhance our spiritual growth. This

writer wishes you well and prays for peace and blessed assurance as we overcome this temporary trial during this life (2 Tim. 3:6-8). Remember, "Live faithful unto death, and (God) will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Our Lord will be with us every step of the way, so we must live close to him. Godspeed to all my suffering friends and brethren, and "Take a day at a time."

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[Editor's Note: Brother Bob Spurlin has been and is a faithful gospel preacher with a dedicated sense of duty. Bob and I were in the Memphis School of Preaching together where he was a year ahead of me. Even in his declining health he has remained as faithful as ever and as active as possible for him to be so. As one might suspect, his condition has put his family in great financial difficulty, from his medical bills and his inability to help provide family income.

With the help of brother Tom Holland, Bob has published a book of about 50 articles on various biblical topics, many of which have to do with dealing with life's difficulties. The article above is one of those in his book, **Tackling Life's Troubles**. As you can imagine from reading the article above, Bob has gained personal and valuable insight on how to accept and handle the serious problems that often confront us. He shares that insight and gives Biblical guidance to help us overcome disappointment, disaster, and depression. You can help yourself to deal with your problems and help brother Spurlin at the same time by ordering one or more books from him. All the profits from the book go directly to help Bob's financial needs. Buy a copy for yourself, one for your preacher or family members, and one for the church library. This is a valuable addition to anyone's library. The cost of each book is \$10.00, plus postage and handling. You can reach Bob at the address at the end

of his article, by telephone (256) 778-8020, or by e-mail <prechteach@aol.com> Please note that we do not have the books for sale at our FCGN address.]

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KINGDOM OR CHURCH - WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

by Ted J. Clarke

Previously, we have discussed the church and the kingdom, stating that, while some claim that the two are different and that the kingdom is yet to be established, the Bible teaches that the church of Christ and the kingdom of Christ are the same institution and has existed since Pentecost in Acts chapter two. Does it make a difference to God what we believe about the church and kingdom? Indeed it does!

First, we should always desire the truth of God's word on every subject, (Proverbs 23:23). Jesus said that only the truth will set us free (John 8:31, 32). **Second**, to say that the kingdom did not come as prophesied by 84 inspired men is to make God a liar (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:1, 9; Luke 10:1, 7; Romans 3:3, 4). **Third**, to say that Christ did not establish the kingdom as He promised is to make Him a false prophet, a liar and a failure. Jesus came to set up His kingdom, said that He would do so and also said that He had finished the work which God gave Him to do (Matthew 4:17; John 17:4; 18:36, 37). If none of that is true, then Christ lied and failed! **Fourth**, many of those who believe that the kingdom is yet to be established also contend that the church is really not all that important. They contend that one can be saved and not be a member of the Lord's church. However, if the church and kingdom are the same, and they are, as shown previously, then one must be a member of the Lord's church to be a citizen in His kingdom. Read Matthew 16:18, 19; Colossians 1:2, 13, 18; Revelation 1:4, 9. These verses show the church and kingdom to be the same. Christ is **now** King of His kingdom and head of His church (Acts 2:29-33). He has been for nearly 2,000 years. Since Christ is the Savior only of His body, the church, if one is saved, one **must be** in the church/kingdom (Ephesians 5:23). It is the present kingdom/church which

Christ will deliver up to the Father when He comes again (1 Corinthians 15:23-26). **Fifth**, some teach that sinners will be offered a "second chance" to be saved and enter the kingdom when Christ comes again to establish it. But, if the kingdom **now** exists, and we have shown that it does, there will be no second chance! Our "chance" is now in this life according to Hebrews 9:27-28. Also, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 says that Christ will come "in flaming fire" against those who do not obey the gospel **before** He comes. To offer a false hope of a second chance for salvation is to condemn those who are deceived by such teaching.

Christ **is** King! The church for which He died and purchased with His own blood is His kingdom (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 16:18, 19). Christian citizenship is in the heavenly kingdom of the Lord, even though we are in the world (Philippians 3:20, John 17:11, 14). When Jesus comes again, faithful saints will meet Him in the air and ever be with Him in the everlasting kingdom in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 1:5-11). Feel free to write or call if you have questions or comments.

BELIEVING A LIE

by Russell M. Kline

In II Thessalonians 2:10-12, Paul wrote to the members of the church of Christ in Thessalonica about some people who would be lost in their sins, because they "*believe a lie.*" They believe this lie, because God has sent them a "*strong delusion,*" because they "*believed not the truth.*" Some assert that this text contradicts the rest of the Scriptures, because it would be contrary to God's nature for Him to hinder anyone from obedience by sending them a "*delusion*" of any kind (II Pet. 3:9). What these critics of the Bible fail to realize is that God is responsible for this "*delusion*" only inasmuch as it is He who gives everyone a choice between belief and unbelief (Rom. 6:16-18). God is responsible for creating the possibility that we may become deluded into believing

something which is false, and then be led down the wrong spiritual path (Mat. 7:13, 14). God Himself does not do the misleading.

In almost every aspect of life (justice, politics, war, science, etc.) man is deeply concerned about knowing the truth. When it comes to religion, the philosophy of many is, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere in your beliefs." Yet, the text which was cited in the previous paragraph clearly teaches that **what** we believe is just as important as how fervently we believe it! A lie is a lie, and it will not become the truth, even if one believes it with all of his heart. The Bible indicates that, on the day of judgement, there will be multitudes of people who will be shocked to find out that the system of faith which they believed was false, and that it has cost them their home in Heaven (Mat. 7:21-23). Indeed, a great deal can be learned from the examples of Biblical characters who believed lies, and then found out what their misplaced belief had cost them.

First, there is the example of the Old Testament patriarch, **Jacob**. He had a son named Joseph, who was exceptionally blessed by God (Gen. 37:1-11). Joseph's brothers resented him so much that they could not say even one kind word to him (Gen. 37:4). Because of their intense jealousy over him, Joseph's brethren took advantage of their first opportunity to get rid of him, and they sold him as a slave to a band of traders who were going to Egypt (Gen. 37:12-28). To cover their tracks, Joseph's brothers told their father that he had been killed by a wild animal, and they offered his blood-stained coat as proof (Gen. 37:29-33). Later, Jacob learned that he had believed a lie (Gen. 46:28-30). The lie that he believed him cost him an infinite amount of grief and pain (Gen. 37:34, 35).

Then, there is the example of a nameless **prophet from Judah**. He came from Judah to Bethel to deliver a message from God to King Jeroboam (I Kin. 13:1-6). Although the King personally invited him to stay and refresh

himself, the Lord had instructed the prophet not to eat or drink in Israel, and to return home by a different route than the one he used on his way to Israel (I Kin. 13:7-10). On his way home, he encountered an older prophet who lied to him, saying that the Lord had instructed him to take the younger prophet home, and feed him (I Kin. 13:11-19). Although this young prophet from Judah had been sincere in his belief, he had believed a lie, which cost him his life (I Kin. 13:20-24).

Then, there is the example of **Saul**, who later became known as the apostle **Paul**. The first mention of him in the New Testament is in Acts 7:58, where he is seen as a participant in the stoning death of Stephen, a faithful gospel preacher (Acts 8:1a). After that incident, he made it his personal mission to completely eliminate the church of Christ (Acts 8:3; 26:9-12). He was a faithful Jew, and a Pharisee, who thought that he was doing exactly what God wanted him to do (Acts 22:3, 4; 26:4, 5). Although Saul was zealously sincere in his belief, he was sincerely mistaken (I Tim. 1:12, 13). Saul did not have to pay a spiritual price for his crimes against Christianity, because he obeyed the truth, as soon as he learned it (Acts 9:1-18).

Today, there are **billions** of people who live every day believing a vast array of blatant lies! Many believe that there is no God, in spite of the evidence which shows that such a belief is completely unreasonable (Psa. 14:1; Heb. 10:31). Many believe that the Bible is not sufficient to guide us to Heaven, in spite of its own proclamations of all-sufficiency (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1: 16-21). Many believe that one church is as good as another, in spite of the Bible's clear teaching against denominationalism (Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1:20-23). Many believe that faith alone is all that is required to save the souls of men, in spite of the New Testament's emphasis upon obedience to salvation (Jam. 2:24; Mat. 7:21). Many believe that once one is saved from sin, he will always be saved, no matter how he conducts his life, in spite of

numerous warnings against falling from grace, in the New Testament (Gal. 5:4; I Cor. 10:12).

In this article, we have listed only a few examples of people who believed lies, and only some of the lies that many people commonly believe today. When it comes to spiritual matters, the cost of believing a lie is higher than anyone wants to pay (II The. 2:10-12). Usually, when I sit down to study the Bible with someone who does not know the truth about what it teaches, I will tell them that there will come a point in our study when what they believe to be true contradicts what the Bible actually says. At that point, they will have to choose whether they are going to do what they *think* is right, or what they *know* the Bible says is right. Perhaps you, dear reader, need to make that choice today. If so, then I pray that you will let go of the lies you have believed, and embrace the truth (John 8:31, 32).

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GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP - COLOSSIANS 3:17

- LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
- PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
- SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically *singing* (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
- GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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