

# 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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## “PREACHER, WHAT WILL YOU PREACH THIS YEAR?”

by Bob Spurlin

Gospel preachers have many tasks to perform during the course of a year. Among their greatest priorities is choosing suitable sermon material for the congregations where they serve. Sermons come in different categories including: expository, topical, character studies, doctrinal, and devotional. A preacher would be wise to regularly conduct a thorough self-examination of his work. The New Year offers the local preacher an opportunity to assess his preaching, while taking into account his pulpit work for the coming year.

The primary duty of the gospel preacher is to preach. But, “What will he preach?” Paul writes, “*Preach the word, be instant in season; out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*” (2 Timothy 4:2). This is a charge of great importance as the minister virtually holds life and death in his tongue. The apostle Paul declared, “*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Preachers are to feed their hearers the pure gospel. The apostle Peter declares, “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (1 Peter 2:2). The local preacher, like the cook, must provide a balanced diet.

Our families deserve a healthy diet; and likewise a preacher must feed his hearers spiritual food, which will enhance their spiritual health. The following are some suggestions for those that will preach this year:

### A HEALTHY PORTION OF FIRST PRINCIPLES

Faithful preachers will include a healthy dose of the first principles of the gospel during the year. The writer to the Hebrews said, “*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip*” (Hebrews 2:1). The American Standard Version renders the last part of the verse, “*Lest haply we drift away from them.*” We see those in the church “drifting” from a life of faithfulness and we wonder why this is happening. The ABCs or fundamentals of the gospel should be stressed regularly. Preachers must never assume their listeners are fully cognizant of God’s plan for redemption. The fundamentals of the gospel must be regularly preached and reviewed. I fondly recall as a child that gospel preachers would take their place in the pulpit with “book, chapter, and verse” preaching. Also, due emphasis was given in each lesson to the five steps to salvation. Since the eternal destiny of souls is always in the balance, gospel

preachers will not neglect this needed practice.

### A HEARTY DISCUSSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is possible to lose sight of the valuable lessons rooted in the Old Testament. Recently a gospel preacher was going through his “annual review.” He was informed that preaching from the Old Testament was no longer effective. Let us not exclude an important part of God’s revelation, as the Old Covenant needs to be studied with keen interest. The apostle Paul emphasized, “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*” (Romans 15:4). Consider how character studies from Abel, Abraham, Moses, Noah, Daniel, Elijah, and others give us illustrations of faith, obedience, and devotion to Jehovah (Heb. 11:1-40). Imagine the difficulty of understanding Romans, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Hebrews without a knowledge or familiarity with the Old Testament. Preachers of the past used to say: “The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, while the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.” We have often heard it said, “The church of Christ does not believe in the Old Testament?” Those hungry souls that listen from week to week need to hear sermons regularly on the Old Testament. This section of the Bible highlights the many shadows and types

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pointing to the covenant of Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 9:15-17).

**A HEFTY EMBRACE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING**

One of the greatest needs for the child of God is staying informed of the basic tenets of Christian living. The minister should give serious attention to this much-needed subject. Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away”* (Matthew 24:35). Living the Christian life, or any other aspect of Christianity, is to be guided by the absolute Word of God (Psalm 119:89; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). We live in an age when moral relativism is the rule of the day. Thus sermons about Christian living should include warnings concerning such subjects as immodest apparel, dancing, tobacco use, fornication, alcohol, and drugs. We must never forget a Christian is

a person who wears the name of the Lord. We belong to Jesus; therefore, our daily lives should be conducted in accordance with His will (Matthew 7:24-27).

**AN HONEST DOSE OF CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES**

Positive encouragement and instruction is received when the local preacher devotes time to a study of Christian evidences. These studies benefit all hearers in strengthening their faith in God. Listening to sermons will edify all that hear the message (Ephesians 4:15-16). The theme of Christian evidences includes the following topics: the existence of God, the deity of Christ, the age of the earth, and the problem of evil. Several years ago a wise preacher was quizzed about the single most important Scripture in the entire Bible. He replied, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). The preacher predicated his remarks on the fundamental premise that if we do not believe in the integrity of Genesis 1:1, the balance of the Bible has little meaning (John 6:44-45).

**CONCLUSION**

For preaching to be effective, there must be sincerity of presentation, clarity of speech, simplicity of lesson, and, as we have noted, suitability of material. Following this pattern will accomplish a three-fold purpose: (1) It will bring people to Christ so that they might be saved (John 6:44-45); (2) it will cause Christians to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 3:13); and (3) will keep Christians saved (James 1:21; 1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

Hartselle, AL

**GOD LOVETH A CHEERFUL GIVER**

by Lee Moses

*“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

The Holy Spirit gave this admonition to the church at Corinth as a contribution was being taken up for needy Christians in Judea. But this admonition for each Christian to be a cheerful giver is not limited to that time, those people, nor that situation. It remains just as true today that “God loveth a cheerful giver.”

**WHAT? A GIVER!**

In response to the question, *“Who is my neighbor?”*, Jesus responded with the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37). This spoke of an unsuspecting traveler who was accosted by highway robbers and left for dead. Two men each passed by and did nothing to help the suffering man. The robbers and the two men that passed by were **takers**—they looked out only for themselves at the expense of others. But fortunately for the wounded man, a **giver** also came that way. That giver happened to be of a group that was at odds with that of the wounded man, but this did not stop the giver from giving. He dressed his wounds, brought him to an inn, and upon departure told the innkeeper that he would meet whatever additional expense the wounded man incurred.

There is no lack of takers in the world today. People feel free to take whatever they believe they need or deserve, although they may neither need nor deserve what they take. Of course, no society can function properly with a disproportionate number of takers to givers. And this returns to haunt the takers as well as, and worse

than, the givers. As one country and western singer crooned, “The road you leave behind you is another road you’re gonna have to go back down.” This is a truth affirmed by the word of God: *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7).

You see, we were not placed on earth to be takers, but givers. This does not mean that we do not receive, for we do—and abundantly. But should we respond to our abundance by taking more, or by giving? *“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* (1 Corinthians 4:7). Every good thing we have is from God (cf. James 1:17)—our lives, our health, our families, our ability to earn our livelihoods—and this leaves us debtors to God. Admittedly, our debt to God is not repayable, particularly if we have received the forgiveness of our sins that can be found only in Christ (Colossians 1:14). However, the abundance that we have received should fill us with a deep sense of gratitude and obligation toward God.

All we can give Him in return is . . . **everything**. Considering all things come from God, the apostle Paul wrote, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”* (Romans 12:1). The only reasonable response to God is to give yourself. It is impossible that we could ever repay God to such a degree that He would owe us—He is debtor to no man: *“Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (Romans 11:35-36).

## HOW? A CHEERFUL GIVER!

We are definitely told **how** we are to give—willingly and cheerfully. If it is only reasonable that we give ourselves entirely to God, why would it dampen one’s mood to give only a portion of himself to God?

What is the secret to cheerful giving? Perhaps the Macedonian Christians could tell us something in this regard. When the aforementioned contribution for the Christians in Judea was collected, the churches in Macedonia enthusiastically gave: *“[I]n a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality”* (2 Corinthians 8:2). These were poor Christians themselves, yet they eagerly jumped at the chance to help their brethren in greater need. Paul said that they gave *“beyond their power . . . praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift”* (verses 3-4). One can clearly see that the Macedonians were marked by **gratitude**. They were thankful for what they had received, and thankful for the opportunity to help their brethren in need. But one who lacks gratitude can never be a cheerful giver. Also, before the Macedonians gave to the collection, they *“first gave their own selves to the Lord”* (verse 5). Being committed wholly to Him, they trusted their welfare to His providence; a most reasonable trust (compare with Matthew 6:25-34; 7:7-12; Hebrews 13:5-6). If one combines his gratitude with **trust in God**, the ingredients are in place to make a cheerful giver.

One who gives himself wholly to God will find his disposition cheered in ways unimaginable to those outside of Christ. Even writing from prison, Paul exulted, *“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice”*; fully enjoying *“the peace*

*of God, which passeth all understanding”* (Philippians 4:4, 7; cf. John 10:10). Some apparently believe that God is a tyrant, seeking whimsically to impose His will in such a way as to rob mankind of any joy in life. Nothing could be further from the truth. *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* (1 John 5:3; compare with Deuteronomy 10:12-13). May each of us realize the joy of giving, and *“remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35).

## WHY? GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER!

Nobody likes a begrudging giver. If a young man gives his sweetheart a necklace, all the while bemoaning the hassle of buying her a gift, he just might find the necklace back in his hands and his sweetheart out the door. In this respect, God is no different. He only asks what is appropriate and necessary (whether or not we realize why it is appropriate and necessary)—so why should He be pleased with a begrudging giver?

But we are told that God **loves** the cheerful giver! What greater motivation can one have to be a cheerful giver? That there is something we can **do** to prompt the love of God is amazing, considering we all have done so much to **spurn** the unconditional love that God has for us (Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2; Romans 3:23; 5:8; Ephesians 2:1-5). When one has a heart inclined to give cheerfully, that person shows he has a heart like that of God Himself. There is no greater love that one could receive than the love of God (John 3:16; Romans 5:7-8; 1 John 3:16). When one acts according to the will of God, including by being a cheerful giver, that person receives back a love accompanied by greater blessings

than he could ever give. As Jesus said, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

Are you a taker or a giver? Give yourself entirely and cheerfully to the will of God, and *“know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”* (Ephesians 3:19).

## SUNDRY AND DIVERS MATTERS

For you computer/Internet-savvy truth seekers, we invite you to peruse our new website at [www.fulton-countygospelnews.org](http://www.fulton-countygospelnews.org) (not .com). Of course, we have had a website for a while; but it has recently undergone a major overhaul. You will now be able to read articles directly and search archives without having to download .pdf files. As of your receiving this issue, the website should now be ready. Thanks to computer guru, Gospel preacher, and good friend Brian Dixon for his long nights and diligent work. Brother Dixon preaches regularly to the Lord’s church in Locust Bayou, Arkansas.

For those of who have recently moved or will be moving soon, please remember to send us your changes of address. Also, if your area has recently updated to “911” addresses, please send us your new mailing address. The expense of one bad address is greater than that of sending out several issues to good addresses, and we incur a fair amount of unneeded expense because of this.

Thank you to all our supporters—we appreciate your help in making

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[Lee Moses]

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### GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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