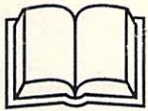


"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

July 2006

God's Law
that Expired,
and God's Law
that Continues

59th Annual Kentucky / Indiana Fellowship

August 7th - 10th, 2006

Theme: **Reconciliation, Encouragement And Exhortation**

Monday Evening, August 7

6:50 - 7:20 pm Woodland Bible Camp Singers Concert

7:30 pm Challenges of Ministering to 21st Century Cultures Julius Hovan

Tuesday, August 8 Theme: A Day of RECONCILIATION

9:00 Prayer Time

9:20 Biblical Forgiveness and Reconciliation Harry Coultas

10:20 Church Leaders, Be Reconciled with Members Don McGee

11:20 Exposition: Philippians Bob Yarbrough

1:15 Church Members, Be Reconciled with the Leader Frank Preston

7:30 Christians, Be Reconciled with Other Christians Darren Johnson

Wednesday, August 9 Theme: A Day of ENCOURAGEMENT

9:00 Prayer Time

9:20 Encouraging the Minister Darren Johnson

10:20 Encouraging the Support Staff Mike Abbott, Dale Offut

11:20 Exposition: Philippians Bob Yarbrough

1:15 Encouraging the Congregation Victor Knowles

7:30 Go Into the World with Vision, Calling and Partnership Victor Knowles

Thursday, August 10 Theme: A Day of EXHORTATION

9:00 Prayer Time

9:20 Cooperation, Fellowship and Partnership Victor Knowles

10:20 Shepherding with Grace and Mercy A. J. Istre

11:20 Exposition: Philippians Bob Yarbrough

1:15 Ministering with Compassion, Not Condemnation Bill Carpenter

7:30 Opportunities of Ministering in 21st Century Cultures Alex Wilson

Children's Classes: grades K-2, 3-4, 5-6 nightly, 8:00-8:45.

Sonny Childs will teach grades 7-12 nightly, 8:00-8:45.

There will be a missions offering Wed. night; make checks to Ky/Ind Christian Fellowship.

Housing Committee: J. R. Satterfield, (812) 949-1959; Clint Dorman (812) 246-2600

DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY

NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ,
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172

For audio cassettes of the messages, contact Don Stump: (502) 477-2252.

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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July, 2006

No. 7

In This Issue

Theme: God's Law that Expired, and God's Law that Continues

| | |
|--|-----|
| Editorial -- Alex V. Wilson | 194 |
| Does the Law of Moses apply to Christians? -- David R. Reagan . . | 196 |
| The Old Testament is Not the Old Testament (and the New Testament is Not the New Testament!) -- Leroy Garrett . . | 203 |
| Avoid Legalism, but also the New Morality -- Ron Mehl | 208 |
| A Tale of Two Brothers--And Their Mother. | 209 |
| Kenneth Preston, My Dad -- Janis Spicer | 210 |
| On The Job -- Kenneth J. Preston | 212 |
| Lessons from the Farm (2) -- Bob Yarbrough | 214 |
| Market-Driven or Spirit-Driven?-- Victor Knowles | 217 |
| The Object of God's Love -- Jodell Seay | 218 |
| The Bryantsville Hunger Relief Project | 221 |
| News and Notes -- Bennie Hill | 223 |
| God Guides & Provides -- Edward Fudge | IBC |

God's Law that Expired, and God's Law that Continues

Alex V. Wilson

Last month we began a study of Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount about God's law. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to *fulfill* them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matt. 5:17-18; last month's study was mainly on verses 19-20.)

Of course the laws which were in effect when Christ spoke these words were the commands of the Old Covenant which God made with Israel – as the words "the law and the prophets" make clear. Among other things, they included such matters as circumcision, Old Covenant feasts and sin-offerings, etc.

We today are under the New Covenant, inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection plus the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. God's commands to us Christians are found mainly in the epistles, though they repeat a number of the commands first given in the O-C scriptures and later repeated or expanded by Christ in the gospels. They are summarized by the two-pronged greatest commandment -- Love the Lord with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

What Jesus Authorized and What He "Abolished"

Note two important points here. First, *He endorsed and certified the Old Covenant Scriptures* – our "Old Testament," as we call it. He upheld those writings as God's Word, here and at many other times. He regarded them not only as fully reliable but also as authored by God Himself (see Matt. 15:4, 22:31). In Mark 12:35-36 He said that when David wrote Psalm 110:1 he spoke "by the Holy Spirit." Our Lord also stated, "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Unless our wisdom exceeds His, we should hold them in the same esteem!

At the same time *He clearly disagreed with the most popular interpretations of Scripture in His day*. His words in Matt. 5:20 must have stunned the audience—"Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." The Pharisees seemed to be the most devout people in the world, and the professional "scribes" (the law-teachers or theologians) were the Bible experts of that time. Yet Christ says they really missed the boat! His statement introduced

5:21-48, where He repeatedly lambasted their mis-use of Scripture, due not so much to thick heads as to hard hearts.

So let's summarize what He says in this passage. "I am **not** rejecting Moses and the Law God gave through him. Nor am I contradicting the stories or teachings of Abraham, David, Isaiah, Ezra or any other parts of God's word in the [O.C.] Scriptures. I have not come to do away with any of this, but rather to fulfill it all.

"But I **am** contradicting many things you have heard from the scribes and Pharisees about the teachings of Moses and the Prophets – for your religious leaders have misled you by misinterpreting God's Word."

We should learn from this to honor and heed God's Word, but not to gullibly swallow everything we hear from preachers and writers. Don't get me wrong--we should highly value Christ-honoring evangelists, pastors, teachers and other godly disciples. We should be attentive to what they say, for God gives such leaders, preachers, etc. to His people (Eph. 4). But be Berean-like, and compare the teachings we hear with God's inspired Word (Acts 17: 11). We are warned many times about false teachers.

How Jesus Fulfilled the Old Covenant Scriptures

Now back to our original text, verses 17-18. Christ said He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to *fulfill* them. (Other versions say to *complete* them or carry them out.) For "the law will not lose a single dot or comma until its purpose is complete" (J. B. Phillips paraphrase) – "before all it stands for is achieved" (NEB). The New Living Translation puts it, "...even the smallest detail of God's law will remain until its purpose is achieved." The question is, **How** did Messiah Jesus complete the Law and the Prophets, the Old Covenant writings?

A. *Their Doctrines or Teachings*, which were incomplete, He explained, supplemented and completed. He did this by His own teaching (Heb. 1:1-2) and later through His apostles' teaching too—as they wrote the New Covenant scriptures. For example, the Old Testament scriptures revealed a little but not much about what comes after death, and only gives hints of the One-in-Three-ness of the Lord God, etc. The New Covenant scriptures fill in many of the blanks.

B. *He fulfilled many of the O.T.'s Predictive Prophecies*. For instance, His being born of a virgin, in Bethlehem. Being a man of sorrows. His arrest, trial and execution. Being pierced, and His clothes being gambled for. He bore the sins of His people. Other

predictions He renewed and greatly expanded – for example, in His teaching in Matt. 24-25 regarding His second coming.

C. The O.T.'s Moral Commands Jesus fulfilled in several ways. 1) His perfect obedience to every divine demand, every righteous rule. 2) He taught their correct interpretation, and applied them to our lives. 3) He died for the guilt of His people's sins, thus paying the penalty we owed for breaking the Law. God didn't nullify His Law or cancel His commands. He didn't say, "Never mind, you meant well -- so I'll simply overlook your evil acts!" No, Christ Himself lived a perfect life and died for us that God's Law might be fulfilled and He might justly justify us. 4) Christ also sent the Holy Spirit "in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" (Rom. 8:4).

D. The O.T.'s Ceremonies, Types and Symbols Jesus fulfilled by being the great Reality of which they were only shadows and pictures. The sin-offerings were fulfilled in the Lamb of God, who took away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). The feasts foreshadowed Him, for "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7). The manna in the wilderness pictured Him as our bread of life. Israel's high priests through the centuries pointed forward to the ultimate High Priest (the book of Hebrews mentions "high priest" 15 times). Etc.

Norman Anderson wrote, Notice "the difference between the way in which our Lord dealt with the *moral commands* on the one hand and the *ceremonial commands* on the other. The first He fulfilled both in His life and death, but re-imposed on His disciples. The second He not only fulfilled but, in so doing, abolished."

Thus by His life, death, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit our Savior fulfilled the Old Covenant and established the New, Better, Eternal Covenant with His people.

[For further study see Luke 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6-11; and Heb. 7:22-13:20, which mentions "covenant" 19 times.]

Does the Law of Moses Apply to Christians?

David R. Reagan

This question has prompted fierce debate and sharp division within the Body of Christ. Churches have divided over it. New denominations have been formed as a result of it.

I receive at least one letter every week from a Seventh Day Adventist radio listener who tries to prove to me that the Law of Moses requires Christians to observe the Sabbath. Others write to encourage me to teach that Christians should observe the dietary rules of the Law, eating only kosher foods.

The attempt to apply the Law of Moses to contemporary professing Christians seems to be particularly popular among cultic groups, probably because it fits in so well with their legalistic approach whereby they try to control all the activities of their members. At the opposite extreme are the liberal theologians who tend to dismiss the Law as nothing more than "the tribal rules of a tribal god."

My Personal Heritage

When I was growing up, the church I was a member of taught that the Law of Moses was "imperfect" and thus had to be replaced by "the perfect Law of Christ." This assertion made me wonder how a perfect God could give an imperfect Law? I became even more confused when I noted that in the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to the Law as "holy" (Romans 7:12) and "good" (1 Timothy 1:8). And Jesus Himself said He had not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

Our preachers were forever emphasizing that the Law had been "nailed to the Cross" and was thus invalidated by the death of Jesus. Unfortunately, they went even further, for they identified the Law with the Old Testament. They therefore argued that all the Hebrew Scriptures – the entire Old Testament – had been abrogated by the Cross.

We declared ourselves to be "a New Testament Church," and we considered the Old Testament to be inappropriate for serious study. We equated the Bible with the New Testament, and many of us did not even own a complete Bible. We had only a New Testament, with the Psalms added as a sort of devotional appendix. We viewed the Old Testament as a quaint storybook to be used solely for the purpose of teaching children stories like Noah and the Ark.

A Reservoir of Ignorance

I have since discovered that this deprecating attitude toward the Old Testament is widespread within Christendom. The result is that most Christians are biblically ignorant regarding the content of the Hebrew Scriptures. Most would be embarrassed if they were asked to find the book of Hezekiah. They would be even more embarrassed to discover that there is no such book! This is a sad situation

because the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old.

One result of this ignorance of the Old Testament is a grievous lack of knowledge concerning the Jewish roots of Christianity. Most Christians seem to be oblivious to the fact that the early church was composed entirely of Jews and that it was therefore thoroughly Jewish in its worship and customs.

I'm certain that most Christians would be surprised to learn that Paul was speaking of the Old Testament when he wrote the following words to Timothy: "...from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul had to be talking about what we call the Old Testament because the New Testament did not even exist when he wrote those words.

Ignorance of the Hebrew Scriptures is also one of the most important reasons why there is so much confusion in the Christian community today regarding Bible prophecy. Take the book of Revelation for example. How can that book possibly be understood apart from the book of Daniel when the two fit together like a hand in a glove?

Or consider the fact that the book of Revelation contains more than 300 references to the Old Testament Scriptures, and not a one of those references is identified. A good example is the theme of the book. It is expressed in Revelation 1:7 where the reader is told that the Messiah is going to return in the clouds and those who pierced Him will see Him and mourn over Him. That verse is constructed from two Old Testament passages that are put end-to-end, one from Daniel 7 and the other from Zechariah 12.

The Meaning of the Law

The first point we all need to keep in mind is that the Law of Moses and the Old Testament are not synonymous. The Law of Moses constitutes only a small part of the Hebrew Scriptures. If the Law of Moses was nailed to the Cross, that nailing certainly did not include the Old Testament histories, the wisdom literature, or the prophetic books.

But was the Law itself, constituting most of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, invalidated by the Cross? Or, were only portions of it annulled – like the civil and ceremonial laws? What about the moral law as expressed in the Ten Commandments? Does it apply to Christians? And, if so, does that mean we should observe the Sabbath?

A Law for Israel Only

The fundamental point that must be kept in mind is that the Law of Moses was given to the nation of Israel and not to Gentiles or the Church (Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Psalm 147:19-20; and Malachi 4:4).

The Jews recognized this clearly in their oral law that was later catalogued in the Talmud. In their view, Gentiles were subject to the commandments of the Noahic Law, the law given to Noah after the flood. Those commandments are recorded in Genesis 9:1-17.

From those verses the Rabbis drew seven laws for the Gentile nations. The first was an authorization of human government, with capital punishment required for the crime of murder. The other six laws consisted of prohibitions against blasphemy, idolatry, sexual impurity, theft, the eating of blood, and the devouring of a limb of an animal without killing it.

After the establishment of the Church, the issue of the application of the Law of Moses arose when the Gentiles began to accept the Gospel. Should these new converts be required to obey the Law of Moses, including the rite of circumcision?

The issue was so important that a church conference was called in Jerusalem to debate the matter. After extensive discussion, it was decided that the Gentiles should not be "troubled" with the observance of the Mosaic Law except for four rules (Acts 15:1-29).

The rules selected were abstinence from fornication and abstinence from the eating of blood, things sacrificed to idols, and things strangulated (Acts 15:20,29). All of these prohibitions had been included in the Noahic Law for the Gentiles that preceded the Law of Moses. So, Gentile converts to Christianity were not subjected to any laws that were unique to the Mosaic system.

A Temporary Law

Another foundation point is that the Law of Moses constituted a temporary system. God never intended it to be permanent.

The other covenants that God made with Israel – Abrahamic, Davidic, and Land covenants – are all declared to be "everlasting" (Genesis 17:7; 2 Samuel 23:5; and Psalms 105:8-11). The Mosaic Law is never classified in Scripture as eternal. In fact, Jeremiah prophesied that it would be replaced by a "new covenant."

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of

Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers... My covenant which they broke..."---Jeremiah 31:31-32

In the very next chapter, Jeremiah proclaims that this "new covenant" will be an "everlasting one" (Jeremiah 32:40). This New Covenant is the one that was mediated by the blood of Jesus. The writer of the Hebrew letter affirms that it invalidated the Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 8:1-13 and 9:15-16) and that it is eternal in nature (Hebrews 13:20).

A Total Abrogation

The annulment of the Mosaic Law was total in nature. The Bible never speaks of portions of the Law being "carried over" into the New Covenant. As the Hebrew writer reminds us, the giving of the New Covenant "has made the first obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13)

This includes even the Ten Commandments, as Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians 3:6-9. In that passage Paul states that we are "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life". He then refers to the "letters engraved on stones" as a "ministry of death" (verse 7) and a "ministry of condemnation" (verse 9).

The "letters engraved on stones" is a direct reference to the Ten Commandments. Those were the only commandments in the Law of Moses that were written on stone by the finger of God. All the rest of the remaining 603 commands were written down by Moses at the instruction of God.

Does this mean that the Ten Commandments are no longer applicable to Christians? Not necessarily. It means that as part of the Law of Moses they no longer apply. But any of them that are incorporated in the Law of Christ do apply – and the fact of the matter is that nine of the ten have been included in the New Covenant and have even been expanded to cover our thought life (see for example, Matthew 5:21-48). The only one that is not mentioned in the New Covenant is the command to keep the Sabbath.

An Illustration

The best explanation I have ever run across of the relationship between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus is one I found in an article by the Messianic Jewish evangelist and scholar, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Here's how he illustrated the relationship:

I received my first driver's license in the state of California. As long as I drove in California, I was subject to the

traffic laws of that state. But two years later I moved to New York.

There were many laws that were different. In California I was permitted to make a right turn at a red light after stopping and yielding the right-of-way. But in New York this was not permitted.

On the other hand, there were many similar laws between the two states, such as the edict to stop at red lights. However, when I stopped for a red light in New York, I did not do so in obedience to the state of California as I once had, but in obedience to the state of New York. Likewise, if I went through a red light without stopping, I was not guilty of breaking California law but New York law. Many laws were similar, but they were, nevertheless, under two distinctly different systems.

This illustration should make it clear what I mean when I say that the Law of Moses has been nullified and that we are now under the Law of Christ. The two laws have many different commandments. For example, under the Law of Moses the eating of pork was forbidden. The Law of Christ permits it. But there are also similar commandments. Thus, both prohibit adultery and theft. But if you commit adultery, you stand guilty of violating the Law of Christ, not the Law of Moses.

Freedom in Christ

So, the answer to our original question "Does the Law of Moses apply to Christians?" is that Christians are free from the necessity of keeping any of the commands of the Mosaic Law. But, it is very important to keep in mind that Christians have the freedom in Christ to observe portions of the Mosaic Law if they so please.

This point is what Romans 14 is all about. That chapter makes it clear that a Christian has the freedom to observe or not observe the Jewish feast days and dietary laws. Paul wrote that chapter, and he practiced it by observing the Sabbath, the feast days, the laws pertaining to vows and the purification laws. Yet, he did not try to enforce these observances upon other Christians.

Like Paul, many Messianic Jews today observe various portions of the Law of Moses. They have the freedom in the Messiah to do so. But they must be cautious that they do not carry their observance too far. Here's how Dr. Fruchtenbaum expresses that caution:

There are two dangers that must be avoided by the Messianic Jew who chooses to keep portions of the Law of Moses.

One is the belief that one who does so is contributing to his own justification and sanctification. This is false and must be avoided. The second danger is that one may demand or expect others to keep the Law. This is equally wrong and borders on legalism.

The one who exercises his freedom to keep the Law must recognize and respect another's freedom not to do the same.

The Words of Jesus

Some of you at this point may be wondering what Jesus meant when he said in His Sermon on the Mount in Galilee, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). How can these words be reconciled with my conclusion that the Law has been abolished?

The answer is so obvious that it is hard to see. The Law of Moses did not end with the coming of Jesus or with the initiation of His ministry – but with His death. As long as Jesus lived, He – as a Jew – was under the Mosaic Law and was obligated to fulfill it, which He did perfectly. But when He died, He became the testator of a New Covenant that completely replaced the Old.

The Question of Salvation

One final point – many people are under the *mistaken* impression that a different way of salvation existed under the Law of Moses. The argument usually goes this way: under the Mosaic Law salvation was obtained by obedience to the Law, whereas today, under the New Covenant, salvation is by grace through faith.

Obedience to the Law never saved anyone; first, because it was impossible to obey the Law perfectly, and second, because the sacrifice of animals was insufficient to atone for human sin.

The Law served as a tutor to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah (Galatians 3:24). It did this first of all by convicting people of their sins. Second, it motivated them in this sin-consciousness to look for a Messiah who would shed his blood to atone for their sins.

--The Lamplighter

The Old Testament is Not the Old Testament (and the New Testament is Not the New Testament!)

Leroy Garrett

It is a liberating truth to realize that the Bible you hold in your hand is not the Old and New Testaments, not really. Those are the names we have given to the two divisions of the Bible, but they are in fact misnomers. First of all, we should use the word "Covenant" instead of "Testament," for that better represents the Biblical terms *berith* in Hebrew and *diatheke* in Greek. So, already we are closer to what I am getting at in this installment: The "Old Testament" (so-called) is not the Old Covenant, and, subsequently, the "New Testament" (so-called) is not the New Covenant. The old and new covenants are not books or writings but agreements that God has made with His people.

There was the Old Covenant, which God made with His people at Mount Sinai, long before there were any writings that made up the 39 books of the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 5:2 says, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb (or Sinai)." The record goes on to say that the Lord spoke with the people face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. Then the Ten Commandments are recorded. Then Moses declares in verse 22: "These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me."

This was the (Old) Covenant, ratified at Sinai, in the giving of the Ten Commandments, but it wasn't called "Old" except in reference to the "New" Covenant that came through Christ: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrew 8:13). This does not mean that the books of the "Old Testament" would vanish or no longer be relevant, but that the covenant itself that God made with Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai would end.

The New Covenant superseded the Old in that we now have fellowship with God through Christ. This became a reality on the day of Pentecost when people were baptized into Christ – into a new agreement, a new relationship, a new community. This was before there were such writings as we call the "New Testament."

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people, for all the earth is Mine.

One of the beautiful truths of the Bible is that the God it reveals is a covenant-making God. He made covenants with Noah, Abraham (which was repeated to Isaac and Jacob), David, and with Moses and all of Israel. It is always God Himself who makes or initiates the covenant, and a blessing or a promise attends it. The basic covenant in the Old Testament Scriptures was the one given at Sinai, which included these special promises for Israel:

Recently in a Church of Christ - and this was unusual for one of our churches! - I heard a drug addict give a testimonial of his faith. He told how he had sold his body in prostitution to get money for his addiction. He praised God for delivering him from his sins through faith in and obedience to Jesus Christ. It was beautiful! But the man doesn't know much theology, and at this point in time he may know little of the New Testament. He would be lost in Romans or Revelation. But he knows Christ and he is in covenant relationship with Him through faith and baptism. To lay on this struggling brother the idea that to be faithful to the New Covenant he has to understand and obey everything in the 27 books of the New Testament would be a burden too heavy for him to bear. And it would be wrong! He is faithful to the New Covenant when he loves and obeys Christ the best he knows how. In time the Scriptures that were produced by the New Covenant community (the church) will deepen and strengthen his faith, for they are holy Scriptures. But they are not the New Covenant!

This liberates us from the legalistic notion that "faithfulness to the New Testament" is a matter of exact obedience to a book. When God made a covenant with Israel at Sinai, both parties were to be faithful, always a covenantal condition. But this did not mean that the people had to understand and obey everything in the 39 books making up the "Old Testament," which did not even then exist. They were to be faithful to God and not go after false gods, which they were hardly ever able to do. In like manner, being faithful to the New Covenant is being true to our relationship to Christ, which does not necessarily require an exact understanding of and obedience to a collection of documents called the New Testament.

So, strictly speaking, what we call the Old Testament is really the *Old Covenant Scriptures*, and the New Testament is the *New Covenant Scriptures*. This means that they are documents produced by the Old Covenant community and the New Covenant community.

And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”
(Exodus 19:4-5)

The people accepted the terms of the covenant when they responded with: “Then all the people answered together and said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord” (Exodus 19:8). The promise to Israel, if they kept the covenant, is that they would be God’s special people above all other nations, a holy nation and kingdom of priests. Since Israel violated the covenant, over and over again, these promises were never fully realized, and God’s plan for a holy nation and a royal priesthood had to find fulfillment in a New Covenant, ratified by Christ.

The promise in the *covenant with Noah* (Genesis 9:9-17) was universal, everlasting and unconditional: Never again would the earth be destroyed by a flood of water. The rainbow was given as a sign. The promise in the *covenant with Abraham* (Genesis 15:8-18; 17:1-14) was both land and descendants. Circumcision was the sign. The covenant with Abraham was renewed again and again in the generations that followed. Then came the *Mosaic covenant* at Sinai, which was the basic covenant in that it centered in the giving of the Ten Commandments and the actual creation of the covenant community. Its sign was sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood.

The *covenant with David* promised an everlasting kingdom. The sign was that God’s mercy would never be taken from David as it was from Saul (2 Samuel 7:12-17). The promise of the *New Covenant in Christ* was the remission of sins and the indwelling Spirit, God’s continuing presence, and the sign was baptism (Acts 2:38).

When we ask why the God of heaven in all His holiness would choose to make covenants with sinful man, we have no answer except that God is love. God has power but the Bible never says that God is power. God has wisdom, but it never says that God is wisdom. “God is love!” is the great declaration of the nature of God, and that is why He is a covenant-making God. God takes the initiative. While man is of course to respond, it is God who, as “the Hound of Heaven,” pursues man so as to bring him close to Himself. This is expressed in one of the great words in the Old Testament Scriptures, *hesed*, God’s covenant love, which is translated as His loving kindness or as His mercy.

When finally in Jeremiah 31:31 it is foretold that God will make a *New Covenant* with His people, there were to be two things that would be significantly different. While in the covenant with Israel the law was written upon tables of stone, in the New Covenant it

would be written upon their hearts and minds. This means that inner response would replace outward demand. They would obey God by "second nature" and because of their love for God rather than because they had to.

The other distinction of the New Covenant is puzzling if not incredible, for it implies that teaching would no longer be necessary: "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34).

Since those of us who are part of the New Covenant community believe that we continue to need teaching and to teach, we may conclude that the prophet's vision reaches beyond where we are presently. The time may come when every Tom, Dick and Harry will know God's will without having to be taught, something intuitive perhaps, but we are not there yet.

The coming of the New Covenant also emphasizes the great promise, "I will be their God and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33). While this promise was identified with the New Covenant, we can think of it as basic to all covenants God has made with His people. That is why He made covenants, because He is our God and He wants us to be His people – and to behave as if we were His people! This is the point of covenant making. God shows His mercy, His covenant love, by being our God. We respond by being His people and conducting ourselves accordingly. Therein has been the problem all along, that God's people hardly ever conduct themselves as if they are His own special people. This is why the prophets were forever condemning the people for not keeping the covenant. While God was always faithful, Israel did not act as if they were a covenant community. Do we Christians do a better job of behaving as a covenant people than did ancient Israel?

In concluding this I am left wondering if I have made myself clear as to the vital distinction between the Old Covenant and the writings (39 books) produced by the Old Covenant community – and subsequently the difference between the New Covenant and the Scriptures produced by the New Covenant (church) community. It appears to be very difficult for us to see that what we call the "New Testament" is not really the New Testament (Covenant). The word "Testament" is the Latin for "Covenant." To say that the "New Testament" is not the New Testament seems threatening to people, and they suppose it to be heresy.

I have searched for an illustration, and I find one in another kind of covenant, the marriage agreement. When a man and a woman are joined in holy matrimony, they have made a covenant with each other and with God, and that is why it is so serious to be unfaithful. They may be married a half century or longer, but the covenant was made when they first married. In the meantime they might write love letters to each other during times of separation. These letters might be collected into a volume. Would those "Love Letters" be the covenant between them? Of course not, for the covenant was the agreement they made when they got married. The "Love Letters" are products of their covenantal relationship. Those letters might point back to the covenant and draw from it, but they would not be the covenant itself.

That is what the Old Testament and New Testament writings are – love letters, history, prophecies, wisdom, psalms – documents produced by God's covenant community. But the covenant itself was made at Sinai (Old Testament) and Pentecost (New Testament).

This distinction disentangles us from a lot of legalistic thinking about the Bible. Once this distinction dawns on us we will not accuse people of being unfaithful to the New Testament when they do not agree with our interpretations. We will see that one is faithful to the Covenant when he is loyal to his commitment to Jesus Christ, and this can be the case when his understanding of the Bible is less than perfect. One might be wrong about a lot of things and yet be right in her relationship with Jesus Christ in the New Covenant.

[I thank the Lord for the clear presentation made in this article. These truths became precious and life-changing to me in college, when a teacher recommended Andrew Murray's book, *The Two Covenants*. That book is still in print. You may order it @ \$7.65 from Christian Literature Crusade (on the web @ *CLC Publications—books by Andrew Murray*.) Even if you do not agree with all of Murray's ideas and implications (I don't), the overall teaching will truly deepen your relationship with the Lord. I checked today in Brother R. H. Boll's personal library—kept at Portland Christian School—and found he owned at least 20 different books by Andrew Murray, including the one just mentioned. –avw]

Thought-Provokers:

Avoid Legalism but also the New Morality

Ron Mehl in his book, **The Ten(der) Commandments:**

“The Ten Commandments are one of the most powerful examples of God’s love in all of scripture. Some people, of course, imagine it to be the exact opposite. They don’t hear love in these statements, they hear the clink of chains and the rattle of padlocks.”

But they are “a tender message of love from a protective and affectionate Father God...not harsh, restrictive rules, but a love letter from a wise, all-knowing Father. He uses them to remove confusion about right and wrong, protect us from the consequences of our own moral weakness, and guide our thinking and actions.

“The Ten Commandments will keep us from destruction. Carefully heeding these ten warning signs in the power of the Holy Spirit will change the whole course of our lives. It will allow us to discover our very destiny as children of God.”

* * *

Dr. Arthur Holmes, retired professor at Wheaton College, made these discerning observations: “**The Bible contains two kinds of rules.** [1] Some [like Commands #5-10, for instance] are **unchanging, universal moral obligations stated in general terms.** [2] Others, as in Exodus 21-23, **apply these moral obligations to changeable particular situations.**” Here are some examples of the latter, which are stated in the chapters immediately following the Ten Commands: “Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death. Anyone who kidnaps another ...must be put to death.” “If a man steals...a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back four sheep for the sheep” (compare Luke 19:8). “If a fire breaks out and... burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.” (Ex. 21:15,16; 22:1,6.)

Dr. Holmes continued, “The first kind we may call ‘*moral laws*,’ the second ‘*prudential rules*.’ The **legalist** elevates all rules to the level of moral laws, while the **new morality** reduces them all to prudential rules.” That is, the legalist tends to say that *all* Biblical commands are **absolute**. They don’t grasp that some of them are limited to the time and culture where they were given -- though their underlying principles may still be valid. On the other hand, the new morality is inclined to say that *all* Biblical commands are **relative** and have many exceptions.

* * *

If we are to apply [the ten commandments] to our society, we must learn to use moral persuasion as it was used in Old Testament days through prophetic preaching, through legislation and other means. Therefore, we need morally informed, morally responsible people at strategic points in society. We need them in international affairs, in national and local government, in criminology, in law enforcement and the military, in medicine and medical ethics, in the mass media, and in education. We need Christian preachers with the courage and the wisdom of the Old Testament prophets who will apply the law of God to the life of our land. The commandment, then, becomes God's call to bring love and justice to bear in the conflicts and violence of a broken world, in eloquent testimony to the redeeming love and the justice of God Himself." --Arthur Holmes in *God Speaks to an X-rated Society*

A Tale of Two Brothers-- And Their Mother

Once there was a wife named **Hanna Preston** who lived in central Kentucky. She had five sons, and then her husband died! At that time the youngest son, **Kenneth**, was 1-1/2 years old and the oldest, **Paul**, was 13. But **Hanna** was diabetic, and a doctor told her she would live only 6 months. So she prayed: "O Lord, let me live till all my boys are grown up!" And God answered Yes: she lived another 20 years, till her youngest was 21.

Having five young sons was never easy. They themselves admit they were a lively bunch—not quite angelic. She never remarried because "I feared a second husband might be mean to my boys." She took them to church every time there was a meeting, though they walked half a mile to get there.

The Lord honored such love and faith. Each of the first three sons (**Paul**, **John** and **Everett**) became an elder and a Bible teacher. **Harold**, the fourth, became a missionary and minister. **Kenneth**, the fifth, ministered at three churches through the years. Praise God for praying mothers; praise Him that He is a prayer-hearing Father.

Harold R. Preston

Harold was born in Lexington in 1926. During World War 2 he served in the army for two years. Then in 1948 he answered the Lord's call to preach the Gospel. He attended Kentucky Bible College in Louisville from '48-52. During that time he preached at Bohon Church of Christ, and there met and later married **Vena Sheperson** (1949).

[Continued on following pages]

They had six children. Renwick, Jonathan, and Deborah were born in Kentucky, but Rebecca, David, and Cindy were born in the Philippines. For in 1958 the Lord had called Harold and Vena to serve Him there, mostly in the city of San Jose on the island of Mindoro. A church had been established there before the war by Celso de la Serna.

Harold's great love for Christ and people plus his practical skills as airplane pilot and mechanic, led to church growth in San Jose and elsewhere. He had a wide knowledge of Scripture and held deep convictions without being quarrelsome. And Vena was a gracious partner and mother. It was always a joy to be in their home. But in 1966, her recurring bad health led to their return to the U.S.

In 1968 they were called to Channelview, Texas, to help with a small congregation of believers meeting in the home of Marvin and Gen Fontenot. Later Harold and Vena felt the Lord wanted them to help in the Brethren assembly in South Houston.

In 1982 they moved to Lexington, Kentucky to help with a new assembly meeting in a home there. That assembly eventually moved to the basement of the Prestons' home and then to an office building close by--where they still meet.

Harold was involved in the Emmaus Prison Ministry for some time. And until his health failed him he also had a ministry of circulating Bible teaching via cassette tapes - over 9,000 messages by various teachers!

Several years ago he got Alzheimer's, followed later by cancer. His condition declined till he did not recognize anyone, even Vena. Later his eyes became blank and unfocused. But on April 20, Vena and their son Jon were with Harold when suddenly his eyes focused upward, a big smile wreathed his face, then he looked at them--and was gone! He had been called Home at last to be with the Lord whom he loved from the depths of his heart.

Kenneth Preston, My Dad

Janis Spicer

Dad was particularly fond of a poem called "The Dash." It has to do with the little dash between a person's date of birth and date of death. He preached several sermons about exactly what your dash will say about you. In Dad's case, I think the dash should be the biggest thing on his monument because he sure packed a lot into his dash.

He spent 51 of his 74 years as a minister. That amounts to 69 percent of his life. He began his preaching at East Grand in Dallas,

Texas, during the summer of 1955 as a sort of "intern" and took his first full-time pulpit at Sugar Creek in Kentucky in 1956. He preached at Melrose in Lexington for 6 years and at Parksville for 10 years. But Bohon Church of Christ was always "home" for him and he filled their pulpit at three different periods for a total of 28 years. He used to joke that the folks at Bohon must be real gluttons for punishment because they just kept asking him back! Twice he retired, but he wasn't really happy unless he was preaching and so retirement never lasted long for him. He held revivals at dozens of churches in several states and he must have preached hundreds upon hundreds of weddings and funerals. He baptized in rivers and ponds and church baptistries. He visited the sick in body, counseled the sick in heart and witnessed to the sick in spirit. He didn't often sit still, but when he did it was usually with his Bible in his lap, preparing a sermon for Sunday morning or a lesson for Wednesday night. His sermon preparation didn't entail much in the way of writing because he was excellent at extemporaneous speaking and was known on occasion to change his entire sermon on the way from the pew to the pulpit. He was particularly good at using illustrations to make his point and we kids were often the subject of those illustrations, sometimes much to our embarrassment!

50 years of his life also were spent married to my Mom. That makes 68 percent of his life. I don't guess I have to say much about that. The sheer number of years says it all. I never much wondered what it was like when they were dating - I think they spent their entire lives together in the dating mode. How many kids out there have parents who are still holding hands and snitching kisses after 50 years?

I am the oldest of Dad's children and I am about to give away my age here, but Dad spent 48 years being a daddy. That's 67 percent of his life. And what a daddy he was! He was firm when he needed to be and a tough disciplinarian when the occasion demanded it (as it often did where I was concerned in particular!). But he loved us all unconditionally and was always there when we needed him. He played ball with us, went to school functions, took us fishing and swimming, taught us to drive, lent us money when we were broke, did home repairs, built us furniture, fixed our cars, hauled us to emergency rooms for stitches and casts, was inordinately proud of our accomplishments and endlessly understanding when we thought our worlds were collapsing because of broken dreams and broken hearts. I never have to wonder what would be the right thing to do - all I have to think is, "What would Daddy do?"

Dad worked for IBM for 35 years, another 48 percent of his life. He started out on the assembly line and worked his way into management over the years. [See his article that follows. -avw.] He told

me once that two of the biggest days of his life were the day he started at IBM and the day he left. During his time there, he traveled often and to many far-flung places, both in the U.S. and overseas, and for a period of time during my growing-up years, a lot of my memories involve seeing him off from the Lexington airport and going to pick him up later. He always brought us souvenirs and we were absolutely wide-eyed at his descriptions of the places he had been.

While Dad wasn't particularly fond of the times when he had to travel for IBM, he loved traveling for pleasure. I believe he and Mom visited every state in the continental United States. After his retirement, they bought an RV and would take off at a moment's notice. Often, I would get an early-morning e-mail from him, telling me that they were going to a car race in Tennessee or Indiana or somewhere and would be back in a few days. Once, I called him and asked what he was doing. He said, "Well, I've bought a new truck and we're going to pick it up." I asked him where it was and he said, "Texas." Another time when I called asking what he was doing, he said, "We're having lunch at such-and-such a restaurant." I'd never heard of it and asked where it was. "Chicago," he said. You just never knew!

So Dad spent 69 percent of his life preaching, 68 percent of his life in love with my Mom, 67 percent of his life being a daddy and 48 percent of his life working. It's pretty obvious where his priorities were. And it's also obvious that he packed 252 percent worth of living into his life! Now that's a big dash.

Before he went into the hospital the last time, he told everyone that he was at peace with it. He said, "If the surgery is successful, I'll go home. If it's not, I'll go home. Either way, I win."

ON THE JOB

Kenneth J. Preston,
Reprinted from Feb. 1989 *W&W*

All Christians are familiar with John 3:16, but do we know John 3:21? "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be manifest, that they have been wrought in God." I suppose that many feel that this has only a spiritual connotation. I believe that this verse applies to one's entire lifestyle, whether at work or play or involvement with various "church activities." Too often people soothe their conscience with the belief that their work is to be separated from Christian activities in much the same way that church and state are separated.

The Lord is very explicit in regard to the way a Christian is to conduct oneself. This is very evident in the fact that Jesus has placed such emphasis in *doing* the truth, not just *saying* the truth. What does that mean to the Christian in the workplace? Quite simply, it means that we are to handle our business affairs in such a manner that they are always above reproach. Remember, we Christians are being scrutinized today more closely than ever by those who would seek to justify their non-Christian activities.

Doing the truth! What does it mean? Permit me to use some personal examples. I have retired recently, after 30-years as an employee with the IBM Corporation. During that time, I was involved in various positions from assembly line work to management positions. In essence, although there was no written contract, I was under a contract which meant 40-hours of work for 40-hours of pay. During those 30-years IBM lived up to its contract by never missing a payday. I would have been negligent if I, for any reason, did not give my best effort for 40-hours. By being negligent, I would have brought reproach upon the Lord. Those that I worked for, and with, knew my stand for the Lord. In many instances, more responsibilities were given because of my reputation. In many confidential matters, trust was given, not because of what I said, but what I did.

I remember an occasion when I had to make a very difficult decision on the promotion of an individual. Several of the candidates being considered were qualified and deserving of the position. My main responsibility was to the company. Who could do the best job? When asked by the manager when I would make the decision, I simply stated that I needed to give some time to the decision. He said, "Are you going to pray about this?" My answer was, "Yes." It is important that you note that this manager made no profession of being a Christian. So, you see, there are certain expectations that other people have of us, as Christians, in the workplace. These expectations can only be met by doing the truth.

A story has it that a certain young man, after finishing school, set out to find a job. The only job available to him was work as a lumberjack. Their reputation was one of a rough and tumble lifestyle, not caring for man nor beast. The young man's mother was very concerned about his spiritual wellbeing and she expressed this concern to him. Nevertheless, he accepted the job. After being gone from home for a few months, he returned. His mother asked him, "How were you treated when those men found out that you were a Christian?" His answer was, "They never knew about that!" The Lord exhorted us to let our light shine, not hide it under a bushel.

Our conversation is to be kept clean. In today's work place, it will be very noticeable when your choice of words does not include those of the "four letter" variety. Have people apologized to you after the use of those words? This tells you what your effect is on them. Just like anything else you do, the more you practice, the easier it is. I have had others express envy because I was able to make effective presentations to various groups of individuals without the use of profanity.

What is your work attitude when the "boss" is not around? The Christian works the same, regardless of who is present. The absence of supervision does not give us the right to shirk our job responsibilities. The Christian gives a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. What is a fair day's pay? It is whatever is agreed upon with the employer. Read Matthew 20:1-14. If we make a bad bargain, live up to it and live with it. We are to tell the truth and do the truth. There will be peer pressure to "goof off". When the pressure is applied, use the opportunity to inform them that your responsibility to God as a Christian is to do the job that you were given to do. Your employer will soon know who is to be trusted. It will make his job easier and yours more rewarding. We are in the world, but not of it. We should conduct ourselves accordingly.

In a world of "What's in it for me?" and "Get away with whatever you can." attitudes, there are many opportunities to witness for the Lord. We cannot, must not, let ourselves get caught up in the various motivational terminologies currently being used, such as "self-esteem" and "self-fulfillment." On the surface these appear to be very innocent; however, a closer examination reveals them to be centered on self. God clearly teaches us to "deny ourselves and follow Him." The only real esteem and fulfillment come from serving God first and letting Him give us lasting joy. Serve Jesus, in all that we do and all that we say.

Lessons from the Farm (2)

Bob Yarbrough

I live on a farm. One of the things I learned rather quickly is that farm animals don't act or think like humans. I know that sounds profound, but I wish to make a point about this later. From the beginning of our move to the farm we have raised goats. We have had as few as three and as many as eighteen. They can multiply rather quickly - often a female will have twins. I raise goats for two reasons - first, for agricultural tax purposes, and second, for my grandkids' pleasure. Our grandkids like to pet and chase the goats, and

especially, they like to hold the young ones. I have learned that goats like to get out of their penned area; it seems that their mission in life is to be where you don't want them.

Like cows, goats think that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, and that can lead to trouble. Once in a while a female goat will get her horns caught in the fence and she cannot extract herself. I have learned to call to them at feeding time (in goat language, of course), and they reply, and come running to the gate. I can always tell when a goat is in trouble by the desperate call it makes. Even though she calls back like the rest, you can hear a sense of misery in her call; so I walk along the fencerow until I find the goat in distress. Thus begins the tedious task to extricate her from her predicament while thinking that she should have known better! I will pull, then push, then pull some more. The goat will let out several death-curdling wails as I try to get her horns untangled. The entire time I am working, she is not cooperating. As I pull, she pushes; as I push, she pulls. She does not make things easy for me. I say to the obstinate goat, "Hold still Goofy. I'm trying to help you. Just relax and let me do the work and I'll get you out of the mess you created for yourself. All I'm trying to do is help you and you're not letting me. You thought the grass was greener on the other side of the fence, but all it got you for your trouble was this tangled mess." However, since I am much bigger and stronger, and since I know how to maneuver the wires in the fence, I finally release the goat, sometimes getting my hands bloody in the process. And then, without a thank you, she runs back to the other goats as fast as she can. The saddest part about the entire episode is that she may repeat this foolish act on another day, and I will start the process of freeing her again just as before, because I care for her.

This story has taught me some important spiritual lessons. While partaking of the Lord's Supper one Sunday morning I was reminded again of the importance of being set free because of the cross. Just as my goat was freed from its hopeless condition, so our Lord has set us free from our sinful predicament. The scripture says, "All we like sheep (*goats*) have gone astray, (*head in the fence*) each of us has turned to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). Because of our inherited sin nature, we purposefully poke our heads through the proverbial fence in search of sinful pleasures and become caught in the entanglements of this world. And there we are - caught, hopeless, and in need of salvation. There is nothing we can do to free ourselves. However, a powerful and loving Father knew of our condition and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross to set us free from the penalty of sin. Remembering this great thought at the Lord's Supper is what the supper is all about. His blood was shed to set us free because He cared for us. Thus we break the bread and

drink the cup in full recognition that our redemption was paid for at a terrible cost by a loving Savior.

Another lesson is relevant to my story. One would think that the goat would cooperate with me as I helped her out of the fence, but she didn't. She fought against me every step of the way until she tired and submitted to me. Only then could I get her untangled. We like to think that we can cooperate with God in the salvation process. We cannot. The Bible says that we are dead in our trespasses and sin. The last time I checked, dead people cannot save themselves; in fact, they cannot do anything. They're dead. That is why the Bible says that it is "by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by *works*, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus has completed the *work* on the cross. Our natural tendency is to fight against what God has to offer because the sin of pride keeps us from submission. As long as we keep working at trying to free ourselves from the entanglements of sin, we will remain "caught in the fence." It is only when we submit and accept by faith God's plan of salvation that we will be set free. As long as we struggle, thinking that we can free ourselves, we will never be free. Only Christ can set us free (Gal. 5:1). My goat struggled and wailed. The only thing she got for her troubles was a bloody neck and a tighter fence wire. Just like br'er rabbit and the tar baby, the more the rabbit struggled, the more entangled he became. I was the only one who cared for and who came to save the goat. The other goats were certainly of no help whatsoever. All they did was butt at her in her hopeless situation. I am the one who came seeking her, not the other way around. Jesus said, "No one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." (Jn. 6:44). The goat had to submit, however, before I could help her; and I even bloodied my hands in the process. Jesus bloodied his hands and His feet on the cross as the spikes ripped through His flesh. But the job on the cross was completed when Jesus said, "It is finished." And just as I felt a sense of satisfaction when the goat was released to join the herd, so much more must it greatly please the Lord when sinners are set free from the penalty of sin, death, and judgment. Also, as a believer in Jesus Christ, I have learned that even now He continues to untangle the messes that I have made in my life as I present them before Him; because His promises are perpetually and forever true: "Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28; Jn. 6:37)). As believers, we should encourage one another to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Let's not purposely stick our head in the fence!

One final thought. I did not expect the goat to look at me and say, "Hey, thanks! I couldn't have done it without you." After all, she is a goat. But I do wonder if those of us who have been set free

remember to continually give thanks for so great a salvation. The psalmist reminds us to “come before Him with thanksgiving” (Psa. 95:2), and to “enter His gates with thanksgiving” (Psa. 100:4). The Apostle Paul encourages us to be thankful as well (Phil. 4:6). I attended the funeral of an elderly Christian man recently, and the preacher made a comment that really impressed me. He said, “Ray never got over his salvation.” What he meant was that this man had a deep, profound, and on-going appreciation of the fact that he was now a saved man. Since he had been saved later in life, he knew what he had been before, and what he now had become in Christ Jesus. Thus, he never got over the fact that Jesus had saved him. Those who knew him best reflected on the fact that he always gave thanks and praise to the Lord for his salvation. Christ had set him free, and he was continually grateful. Are we missing out on being continually thankful that we have been saved and set free? We, too, should never get over it!

Market-Driven or Spirit-Driven?

Victor Knowles

Are today's programs of the church empowered by the Spirit or overpowered by human ingenuity? Samuel M. Shoemaker (1893-1963) observed, “It would take a theologian with a fine-toothed comb to find the Holy Spirit recognizably present with power in much of our ecclesiastical routine.” From her oldest members to her youngest converts, the church should be living daily in the promised power of Pentecost.

The church should not be market-driven but Spirit-driven. All the self-help programs in the world cannot match the beautiful and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of penitent, baptized believers, for only the Holy Spirit can transform us into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18), strengthen our inner life (Eph. 3:16), shed abroad God's love (Rom. 5:5), produce a lovely cluster of nine-fold fruit (Gal. 5:22-23), assist us in our understanding of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14), aid us in our prayer life (Rom. 8:26), and grant assurance of our right relationship with God (1 John 4:13).

Make sure the promised power of Pentecost is yours today!

[Victor Knowles is scheduled to speak 3 times at our August Kentucky / Indiana Fellowship.]

The Object of God's Love

by Jodell Seay, Executive Director
Portland Christian School / High School

God has spoken very clearly and boldly about his love for us, an undying, selfless, sacrificial love. It is good news. It is good news that this generation needs to know.

I was blessed as a high school student at Portland Christian School. I saw this example of Christ's love through my teachers, my classmates and the families of my classmates. I watched them go through the challenges placed before them with God by their side. Their witness of living with Christ, impacted and changed my life.

Through the years I have watched my own classmates give their lives wholly to the Lord. One in particular, who termed himself incorrigible in school, has gone on to be a minister and now is an elder in the church. He credits this change partly to what he learned at Portland Christian School. Another lost her first child and has gone on to be a wonderful Christ-like mother to a daughter with special physical needs. My friend's aim has always been to follow Jesus. The training she received at home and at PCS has helped her achieve this goal.

I could share many Portland Christian School parent stories, but I will share only one because it is fresh and recent. It was wonderful to have Wanda Carley at the Spring 2006 Alumni Banquet share her story of Portland Christian School and its impact on her family, especially her daughter, Trisha, a freshman. That evening Trisha sang and blessed us all. The testimony given by this mother as thanks to all of you who support Christian education at Portland Christian School through your prayer, sacrifice and work bears repeating.

Wanda Carley's Testimony:

Forgive me, I'm a little nervous. This is only my second time of doing something like this; with the exception of a grade school experience that, believe me, wasn't pretty. But I'm willing to step out of my comfort zone to thank you, God, and the other wonderful folks who keep Portland Christian School going - from the hard working janitors, to the sacrificing teachers and bus drivers, and to all those who've generously given of their financial resources throughout the years.

Whenever asked, I proudly describe this school as "a little oasis in the middle of a storm" because it is. Not only is it an oasis in the

heart of the community of Portland, but it's also our little oasis in the midst of our personal storm, specifically for our daughter, Patricia.

Nobody knows how it happened, but Patricia lost her hearing somewhere around 18 months of age. But it took seven doctors and to the age of three for her to be diagnosed with a bi-lateral, moderate to severe hearing loss. So at age three she was enrolled in Louisville Deaf Oral School, then fitted with her very first pair of hearing aids. (They were so cute!)

Her speech remained very good, but in every other area she was way behind. It was thought best to mainstream her, taking full advantage of the services provided through her local school. God is good; with lots of hard work she quickly gained ground, keeping pace with her peers. She even excelled in reading and writing. From what I've been told that is very unusual for a child with early hearing loss. Being Mom, I encouraged this newfound gift of writing. But Patricia had other ideas, "No, Mom, I want to sing!"

Can you imagine? Yes, at one point I would have thought that possible, but I heard the changes in her voice. I heard her struggle with notes that once came so easily. So I continued to encourage, "Patricia, you have such a gift for writing!" But she determined, "I want to sing!" Early on Patricia tried out for a singing part in her school play. Her hopes were quickly dashed as they gave that part to another. They, like me at the time, lacked vision. But one thing I did know for certain, "with God all things are possible," but also in my mind at the time, not very likely. So reluctantly I approached different teachers and choir directors asking for help. Once informed she was hearing impaired, their reactions were all the same. They just smiled and did nothing.

For the most part, Patricia's grade school experience was a good one. But you and I both know, without God in the picture, there is little or no discipline. So upon entering middle school, two little girls (who were once her good friends) turned on her. For some reason they determined and I quote, "You will never have a friend in this school."

With each attempt to make a new friend, one of the girls would take that person aside and tell them, "Patricia said this or that about you," which was not true. They also drew pictures and put Patricia's name under them, then passed them around class. Between that and the rumors, they were able to deliver on what they promised. Patricia had not a single friend in school. Even friends she knew from grade school turned away.

It was at that point she started cutting and hurting herself. Her dad and I were determined to do something, but what?

After much research, soul searching and prayer, an "odd" series of events brought us to Portland Christian. But how could we afford it? We didn't know. We had to believe God would provide, and He has! I must say it was the best thing we've ever done. Her confidence and self worth quickly turned around. I only wish we had done it sooner. I also wish we had sent her older brother to the school, but we didn't and I know that God's timing is perfect.

It was around this time that we "just happened" to come across Margaret Searcy (a PCS parent and wife of an alumnus). Margaret was the only person who didn't shy away from working with a hearing impaired vocal student. She assured me she'd test her and give an honest appraisal. I worried...what if Margaret tells her she can't sing? That could throw her back into that pit of despair. I asked Trisha, "Are you sure you want to do this? What if she tells you, 'You can't sing'?" Her response? "Well Mom, I'm not singing now!" (Sometimes she amazes me.)

Patricia and I were both so nervous on the day of testing. Margaret had her repeat some simple notes, and then she asked her to repeat after her the song, "Amazing Grace" each time going higher and higher up the scale. Then Margaret stopped, whirled around in her chair and said, "She can sing!" I was so excited I wanted to dance!

You know what I like best about Portland? You don't lack vision. You don't look at a hearing impaired child and think she can't. Because you believe "with God all things are possible," you know things can happen and you act on it.

Here it was Patricia's first year at PCS. Nobody really knew her or her struggles and yet the staff, particularly Mrs. Phyllis, was going to let her sing a solo at the Christmas program. But poor Patricia was so scared she backed out. You would've thought that would have been the end of it, but not so. She was asked again to sing and this time she did. What a blessing!

We are so proud of Patricia and so thankful to all of you at Portland Christian School. For without you, who knows where Patricia would be or if she'd be with us at all. God used your love, your faith, your dedication to discipline, and your belief in possibilities to change a struggling little girl into a hopeful young lady.

Maybe I'm just being simplistic, but I believe that God's still in the business of miracles. I believe He still heals the sick. Still opens the eyes of the blind. And still makes the deaf (or if you will, the hearing impaired) – to sing!

[Jodell Seay now resumes:] I share this with you because of how Mrs. Carley's sincerity moved us that evening. This isn't a story just about a school. This is about the love of our Father in Heaven. A Father who loves us so much, He cares about the details. A Father we want to praise and honor at Portland Christian School. He blesses us so much! We want to give thanks to the Lord for the many families like Patricia's that He allows us to serve. He has blessed us with you. Yes, God loves us! We praise Him for the promise and power of His great love.

I want to personally thank all who allow us to serve families through their commitment and support of the work at Portland Christian School.

[The above is condensed from *Of Good Report*. Contact PCS to get on their mailing list: 2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212. 502:778-6114.]

THE BRYANTSVILLE HUNGER RELIEF PROJECT

www.bhrp.org
Spring 2006 Newsletter

BHRP CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF HUNGER RELIEF

On July 31, 2005, the Bryantsville Hunger Relief Project celebrated its 20-year anniversary. Activities began with an open house, demonstrations, and dedication of the new grain-handling facility, and then moved across the street to the Bryantsville Church of Christ, which provided a pitch-in dinner for everyone.

The evening concluded with a program about the past, present, and future of the BHRP.

Many thanks to all who have supported the Project this last twenty years, prayerfully and financially.

2005 – 2006 SHIPMENTS

Loads of High-Lysine Corn sent out in 2005:

May 3: 700 bags to “National Relief Charities,” bound for various destinations

June 3: 700 bags to Nicaragua, via “World Mission Outreach”

June 17: 717 bags to Honduras, via “Feed the Children”

June 17: 717 bags to El Salvador, via “Feed the Children”

June 30: 717 bags to Guatemala, via “Feed the Children”

June 30: 717 bags to Nicaragua, via “Feed the Children”

Sept. 13: 720 bags to Honduras, via “Fame”

Oct. 26: 714 bags to Moldova, via “Missions Without Borders”

2006 Shipments thus far [as of end of Feb.]:

Feb. 3: 700 bags to El Salvador, via “Feed the Children”

Feb. 10: 700 bags to Honduras, via “Feed the Children”

Feb. 24: 700 bags to Moldova, via “Missions Without Borders”

This brings our total to 115,028 bags of High-Lysine corn shipped since the project started, back in 1985! (That’s about 6,901,680 pounds....)

Thanks to all the volunteer workers and contributors who made these loads possible! And, of course, thanks to God, in whose Name we do this work!!

[The above is only page 1 of a challenging 4-page report about this excellent ministry. Contact them at BHRP, P.O. Box 1023, Bedford, IN 47421 (email: mail@bhrp.org ; on the web: www.bhrp.org) and ask to be put on their mailing list. –avw]

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

Highland Community Church (Louisville) has welcomed Phillip Mullins as their new Youth Director. Phillip will be responsible for Children's church (K-5) and teaching the teenage class on Wednesday evenings. He is a graduate of Portland Christian School and Indiana University South East. He currently works as a chemist in the Research Department in UK's School of Pharmacy. He is married to the former Abby Price and they have a nine-month old daughter, Annie.

Update from Moto Nomura, who is now on his 3rd book (in Japanese) about Thomas Campbell and the Restoration Movement. "I'm hoping to complete it by the end of the year and distribute it to the folks in Japan. I consider this one of my ministries to edify our people to help them deepen their appreciation for our Stone/Campbell Movement and remind them of our glorious heritage... something no one in Japan has done so far. Since I am a KBC/SCC product, I need to fulfill my duty for His Church in Japan."

The Church of Christ Worldwide (P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555) is always happy to receive and forward funds in support of Bro. Moto's work.

Should the Preacher Do It All? Not according to Ephesians 4:11-12. "And He gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for (note their work) the perfecting of saints, (note their work) *Unto The Work of Ministering*, (result?) unto the building up of the body of Christ." Again,

Should the Preacher Do It All? Not according to that!

The Value of Life. Human life is not valuable simply because somebody is pretty, or smart, or physically healthy. Its value is not dependent on gender or perceived perfection. Human life is valuable because humans were created in the image of God. God gave His Son, His Only Son, to die -- the highest payment possible -- in order to redeem humankind. Humans are extremely valuable to God -- to God, who knows all things. If God looks on the little deformed child as valuable, as precious, then we must do so as well.

(From www.khouse.org
- Chuck Missler)

The Antioch Church (Frankfort, KY) had a farewell service on June 18, 2006 for Sis. Asa (Ruth) Tipton and her daughter Beverly who have moved to Louisville to live with her other daughter, Sharon, and her husband, Mike Graham. After over 50 years of faithfulness to God's Kingdom and the Frankfort community, the church wanted to give her family the opportunity to say "good-bye" to all of their friends.

LaGrange Church of Christ (KY) Louis Schuler reports the roof that was blown off several weeks ago is now back on and they're gearing up for Vacation Bible School the week of July 24th. He wishes to thank everyone for their prayers and encouragement during this time of adjustment.

Goin' Fishing Ministries... will be hosting a supper on Wednesday (Aug. 9th) during at the Sellersburg

Church of Christ All-Purpose Room. This is an important part of the week to join with others in talking and praying about missions around the world. Sis. Fonda Carey has agreed to cater the supper again this year. If you plan to attend, please let GFM know.

Revivals:

July 9-14
Mackville Church of Christ
55 South Church St.
Mackville, KY
Sam Marsh, Evangelist

July 9-14
Cherry St. Church of Christ
302 Cherry St.
New Albany, IN
Sonny Childs, Evangelist

Woodland Bible Camp (Junior Week) was wonderful! Jeff Adams & Jerry Carmichael were directors and used the theme of the "Voyage of the Christian Life." Christ the captain of the ship, log-book was the Bible, Captain's orders are about the plan of salvation, and the Captain's Code of Conduct was about how we live and act as a Christian. There was a total of 97

people which was the largest the camp has seen in a long time. (Jerry Carmichael)

Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship begins Monday night August 7, 2006 at the Sellersburg Church of Christ (Indiana) Why not try to come with your church group on the opening night and hear Bro. Julius Hovan? Having a large number in attendance the 1st night is always a tremendous encouragement for everyone! This is not a "Preacher's Conference" but preachers are encouraged to set aside this week and be edified and encourage respective congregations to attend.

5th Sunday Song Rally can be a tremendous blessing and encouragement to supporting congregations. It provides the opportunity for fellowship and hearing other song leaders lead in worship. Coming on July 30, 2006

Borden Church of Christ
(North side)

Waterford Church of Christ
(South side)

Mackville Church of Christ
(Central Kentucky) 6:30 p.m.

GOD GUIDES & PROVIDES

Edward Fudge

A gracEmail subscriber writes that he is worn out in his work for God. He started a local church about a decade ago, and has no help in carrying it on. He preaches, leads singing, serves Communion, teaches Bible class and leads prayers. Can I offer any encouragement?

* * *

There are two possible reasons why you might be worn out. It might be that God has called you to the particular task you are doing, but that you are trying to accomplish it in your own strength. Or it might be that you are relying on God's strength, but in a work to which he has not actually called you. Dedicated Christians often make both those mistakes, and continue to be depleted, because they either missed where God "guided" or they missed what God "provided." One way to tell what God expects us to do as his stewards is to observe what God provides for us to accomplish the work.

Peter tells us that when God guides, he also provides. The apostle therefore urges us not only to speak, but to speak as the oracles of God -- that is, with God providing the message. We are not only to serve, but to do so in the strength which God provides (1 Peter 4:10-11). In other words, if God assigns a task, he also gives the strength to perform it.

I encourage you to take the issue to God. Tell him, "Father, I believe you have put me here, but I cannot do your work in my own strength. I will serve you faithfully, but I must have your provision to do your work to your glory." It might be also that you are not called to do this work. God will show you that if you ask him and listen for his answer. Jesus said to pray, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." We are to seek God's agenda -- not confusing that with our own sense of duty. Then we are privileged to perform our assignment from God in the strength which he provides, giving God all the credit for the good that results.

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01/2007

Mackville, KY 40041 - 0846

Jerry Samples Goes Home

The following is based on the *The Town Talk* (Alexandria, LA).

Funeral services for Jerry Lee Sampies were held Sunday, July 16, 2006 in Oakdale, LA with Bros. Stanford Broussard, Dillard Fontenot and Bob Morrow officiating. Brother Samples, 65, of the Cypress Creek Community entered eternal rest on Thursday, July 13, 2006 in the Dubius Hospital in Alexandria.

He was born on August 11, 1940 to Floyd Lee Samples and Myrtle Colbert Samples in Wills Point, Texas. He attended South-eastern Christian College in Winchester, Kentucky and started preaching at the age of twenty-one. He was minister of several different Churches of Christ -- in Hopkins, Missouri; Livonia, Michigan; Harrodsburg, Kentucky; Fisherville, Kentucky; Alexandria, Louisiana and Cypress Creek.

His daughter, Jennifer Ann Samples and his father, Floyd Lee Samples preceded him in death. He leaves behind his loving family to cherish his memory: his wife of forty-four years, Judith Eileen Samples of Cypress Creek Community; two sons, Samuel Lee Samples of Garland, Texas and David Lynn Samples of Lakeland, Florida; one daughter, Nicole Renee' Duplechain of Oberlin; mother, Myrtle Samples of Mesquite, Texas; two sisters, Jeanette Clevenger of Little Elm, Texas and Wanda Ann Krantz of Washington; nine grandchildren and one step-granddaughter.

[We will publish testimonies re: this good and faithful brother as they arrive. Be in special prayer for Judy and also Anna their granddaughter. -avw]