

# 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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## What I Owe to Jesus and Joe!

by Ted J. Clarke

### Introduction

This article is not a "personal testimony" in the way that phrase is used and abused in denominational religion. On the other hand, it does contain personal references to myself and family, but there are scriptural points behind each example which I pray may be helpful to any who are struggling with life as I once did. This article is intended as a tribute to the person and example of Joe Crockett as a Christian soul-winner, and it is for the praise and thanks to my blessed Savior, Jesus Christ.

Every person in this world, who is thoughtful enough to reflect on his or her life, seeks answers to the questions: (1) "Where did I and this world come from?"; (2) "What is the meaning of life and my purpose in living?"; (3) "Where can I find true happiness?"; and (4) "What will happen to me when I die?" Many try to find the answers to numbers 2 and 3 in what the world has to offer, while trying to ignore questions 1 and 4. Often, we do not believe that anyone can answer 1 and 4, so we miss the real answers to 2 and 3. Most seek to find happiness and meaning to life in strictly material, physical things such as secular education, jobs, even our families. On a lower level many seek satisfaction in pleasures such as open sex, alcohol and drugs, wealth, or power and fame.

As much as we may delight in our families (and well we should), as satisfying as our jobs may be, and as interesting and helpful as secular education can be, in reality we know that **something significant is missing** which leaves our longings unfulfilled. We also find the pleasures listed in the paragraph above to be shallow and temporary, often bringing terrible heartaches and troubles in the aftermath. There is no lasting joy in these pursuits, only a feeling that our life does not produce a real peace and satisfaction which can bring us to say, "This is it! This is the best and most satisfy-

ing life a person can know." If you have an emptiness in your life, if you despair of ever really being happy, or if you know others who feel these voids, **there are good answers that can satisfy your deepest longings.** Read on.

### A Tough Guy, Broken

As a teen, I was the tough guy you never want your children to be. Smoking at 10, drinking regularly by 15, I was a juvenile delinquent. Rebellious of all authority, I ran away from home at 16, returning to drop out of school and enter the military. In the service my fighting, gambling, and drinking all increased dramatically. I abused the power I had as a military policeman and learned to steal from the government. I influenced others to abandon their religious principles and join me in what I portrayed as the "good life." After going AWOL for a time, I was court-martialed and sent overseas to Okinawa. Having been married for only a year, with my wife expecting our first child, being sent overseas added to my problems. My drinking became an addiction to escape my despair and my fighting and gambling became my ways of proving I was "somebody." I seriously contemplated suicide on two occasions. My sin-filled mind and life was devoid of the happiness I so desperately desired, but I had no idea how to obtain it. Religion never entered my thoughts. I used God's name daily, but in vain cursing, never in prayer. I hated life and most people and I was hated by many. Only 20 years old, I felt I had lived the miseries of 1000 lifetimes. I didn't care if I died, but could not bring myself to end it all.

My tough guy image was a front. All the things which the world said offered meaning and happiness were lies. My life was broken, shattered, and I didn't know how to fix it.

### A Christian Named Joe

After a fistfight with my roommate he

moved out and the service assigned another young man to bunk with me. He was Joe Crockett, from Coleman, Texas. Joe was 17, maybe 18, the son of godly parents whose father was an elder of the Church of Christ in Coleman. We didn't talk much the first few days, but Joe was watching me and listening when I complained about how unfair life was. Joe could have requested a transfer to another room. He could have looked at me and written me off as one who never would be interested in the subject of religion.

One day, when I was wallowing in the anguish of my life and a hangover, young Joe Crockett looked on this chief of sinners and said, "**You know, I believe if I were in your shoes I would start reading my Bible.**" What he said caught my attention like a slap in the face. I wasn't offended. I didn't want to fight him. I simply thought to myself, "Does the Bible hold out hope for someone like me?" I didn't even have a Bible. Later, the tough, broken guy asked Joe to go with him to the Base Exchange to buy a Bible. As I read and asked questions, Joe helped me to understand a great deal. His parents had trained him well. I had to come a long way and I wasn't sure what my study would lead to, but Joe Crockett had showed me hope for my troubled life. Perhaps, if Joe had not loved my soul I would have ended my life. Dear friend, if you are as I once was, may I say, "Start reading your Bible." Seek help in understanding from a preacher, elder, or member of the Church of Christ. If you truly desire to know God's will, you can (John 7:17). The Scriptures contain all you need to know and do for a truly happy and fulfilled life (John 13:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

### A Savior Named Jesus

Joe and I found a Church of Christ at Ojana, Okinawa, where I studied further with an elder there by the name of Robert George. He helped guide me in a study of the life and mission of Christ, enabling me to see that Jesus died for me, to take away my sin and its misery and condemnation. As I expressed my

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faith in Christ (Romans 10:9-10), repented of my many sins, confessing His name (Acts 2:38; 8:37), brother George baptized me to wash my sins away in Christ's blood (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21; Romans 6:1-5). My burden of sin was lifted and the joy I knew in obeying the gospel of Christ was a real life-saver. He continues to be the best reason for living today.

After returning to the States from Okinawa in 1962, I became a backslider into the ways of the world again. There was no more satisfaction to living an ungodly life the second time, and the same types of problems plagued my life. One day, a wrong turn down a street took me by a Church of Christ and I remembered the Jesus to whom Joe had introduced me and found His incredible forgiveness was still held out to me as a wayward child of God. I repented and prayed for His restoring grace to cleanse me and to restore unto me the joy of salvation (Psalm 51:12; Acts 8:22-24; 1 John 1:7-10). My wrong turn down the street became a right turn in my life.

Christianity - Profitable  
Now and Eternally

When I really got serious about being a Christian, dedicated to the service of God, my wife soon obeyed the gospel of Christ and our lives got even better. Together, we have worked through some difficult times in our lives. Both of us are convinced that our marriage would not have survived without our commitment to Christ and His teaching (Ephesians

5:22-33). We have tried to raise our children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-4; Proverbs 1:8-9; 22:6) and we pray that they will raise our grandchildren the same way (cf. Deuteronomy 6:1-9). One of our sons preaches the gospel for the church in Southaven, Mississippi, and we pray that one or more of the grandsons will continue the line of preachers.

Indeed, the teachings of Christ in our lives have blessed us beyond description. With Paul we say, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-9). All of this joy and happiness is ours because a young Christian man, taught by godly Christian parents, loved this sinner's soul and was bold enough to carry on the Great Commission in telling me about our Wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Romans 3:9-23; 6:23; 8:1-5). You can see why I offer this tribute to Joe Crockett for caring for me and loving me, and to Jesus Christ for giving my life hope and purpose (Colossians 1:27; 1 Timothy 1:1).

No Conclusion

This is a story with no conclusion till Jesus comes again. You see the power of one person, like Joe, who is not ashamed of the gospel, to influence the lives of thousands of others. As long as I faithfully preach, teach, and write, trying to help others as Joe helped me, his influence will live on. Even after Joe and I are gone from this earth, his influence is extended to another generation through my children, perhaps especially through B. J. as he ministers God's word to thousands through his years of preaching. It may be extended generations further through our grandchildren.

Brethren, this situation is not unique to my family. It has happened thousands of times over 2000 years as Christians like Joe have perpetuated the gospel of Christ by teaching others. Other men, like myself, are preachers today because of other "Joes" who loved Jesus and souls. But each of us must be faithful and bold to continue to speak to sinners who are lost, confused, and looking for hope and meaning to life, as I was. Remember 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, and do not look at drunkards, thieves, prostitutes, homosexuals, idolaters, and such like, and say to yourselves, "They wouldn't be interested in hearing about the gospel of Christ." I shudder to think of what my life would have been if Joe had said that

about me and had turned away without trying to teach me. Some, perhaps most, will not be interested, but let each one make that decision for himself/herself! Read and reread the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:1-18). There are "good and honest hearts" searching for the only thing that can give life true and lasting meaning - salvation in Christ.

A Postscript

I left Okinawa to return to the States before Joe did. A short while after he returned to Coleman, Texas, he had an automobile accident and broke his neck. He has been a quadriplegic (paralyzed in all limbs) for over 30 years. His caring but aging parents cared for him at home as long as they could, but Joe has had to have the kind of care provided in nursing homes for much of that time. The strong faith in Christ which he displayed in talking to me about the Lord has carried him through some very difficult times. He was engaged to be married when his accident happened, but he never married. He has not known the joys of wifely love, nor the happiness of nurturing children and grandchildren in the Lord's ways. But Joe's faith is rooted in the knowledge that the Jesus in whom he has trusted and taught to others for so many years, shall give him a new body for all eternity, an incorruptible body free from pain and disability. Paul says Jesus will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21). Our family is Joe's family. One of our grandchildren has "Joe" as his middle name and another bears the middle name of "Crockett." Of course, I can never repay Jesus nor Joe all that I owe them.

May I ask you a favor? If you are blessed by this paper, by my ministry in other ways, or through the love of Jesus as shown by my wife or children, would you send Joe Crockett a card or letter and let him know that his labors in the Lord are still bearing fruit. Send your correspondence to: Mr. Joe Crockett, c/o Songbird Lodge, 2500 Songbird Circle, Brownwood, Texas 76801.

Then too, will you let Joe's example of soul-winning encourage you to speak to someone else about salvation from sin and the good life in Christ Jesus? Although Joe cannot do what he once did, his influence will live on. Think of the possibilities for church growth if such could be said of each of us. We all owe Jesus and men like Joe!

## NOAH THOUGHT HE WAS THE ONLY ONE

by Brett Johnson

"What arrogance! Noah, what haughty pride to think that you and your family are the only ones in the world that are going to be saved!" Such very well could have been the accusations thrown at Noah during the long years that he preached to the unresponsive antediluvian world (Genesis 6-9). But what shock! What horrible dismay when the world, overwhelmed by the raging storms and violent floods, watched Noah's prophecies come to pass!

The same accusations are still hurled at the small minority in the present world who follow and teach God's word. People are naturally optimists, and it is very hard for most to accept the fact that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Satan plays on this misguided optimism, and many people doubt the clear, plain teaching of the Bible simply because of whom it condemns. But whether the majority accepts something or not has never been the test of truth. In fact, it might be said that what the majority accepts is generally not the truth. During the golden years of Asa's reign, all Israel turned to God with their whole desire, but other times were not so good (1 Kings 15). When Elijah was preaching, as few as seven thousand out of the hundreds of thousands in Israel were not idolaters (1 Kings 19). In Noah's day, only eight people in the entire world were not lost and going to hell. Friends and brethren, this could easily happen again.

It would be nice if the golden age of evangelism were a continuous thing. During the early days of the church, sometimes people were added by the thousands. Since then, we have had our ups and downs, just like Israel of old. In all this, the truth never changed, only the number of people that believed it and practiced it. When I see truth and commandment in God's Word, whether or not my dear, departed loved ones believed it or not is irrelevant. Whether or not the church in which I grew up has traditionally taught it, or whether I have never even heard it before, is not important. The important question is, "Does the Bible really teach that?" If it does, let's believe it, teach it, and not be ashamed of it.

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## SECULARIZING THE CHURCH

by Max Patterson

In recent years it has not been difficult to see a secularization of the church take place. This has also been seen in our writings, in our Christian schools, and in our view of what Christianity is all about. There have been several reasons for this:

1. There is a strong desire among some brethren to be recognized by the denominational world. This desire is so strong that many actually avoid preaching on themes of truth that are distinctive.

2. If there is any possibility that some issue might affect the local budget, it is avoided like the plague. Keeping people happy and giving is the chief goal. Never mind that these are not genuinely converted.

3. There is no question that there is less Bible knowledge among the members now compared to a few years back. There may be several reasons for this, among which would be TV and various "programs." We don't have time to read and just visit with each other and discuss the Scriptures.

4. The view that it is a "mortal sin" to make someone angry with the truth has made great inroads into our thinking. But this cannot be avoided. We are often saddened and frustrated, and we hate it when someone gets angry at the presentation of the truth. But just remember this, Christ, and every apostle, except possibly one, was put to death in agonizing ways because some did not like what was being taught. But, their feeling was, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

When we feel it is necessary for the church to have a warm and comfortable relationship with the world, and materialism becomes more important than the truth, the inevitable result is a secularizing of the church. Paul warned, "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

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*No man can afford to face the storms of life without the Divine Captain. His presence alone brings calmness, confidence, and courage.*

## 10 Ways to Find Time to Read the Bible

1. Wake up ten minutes earlier each morning and read.
2. Put a Bible portion under your pillow to read each night before sleep.
3. Talk less and you will have a few more minutes to read.
4. Keep a copy on hand in the kitchen or at the telephone to read while you "hold."
5. Carry a copy of the Bible in your purse or pocket to read while waiting for doctors, unpunctual people, etc.
6. Never go on a trip without your Bible.
7. Keep a copy in the glove compartment of your car.
8. Remember, a Bible in your hand is worth two on the table.
9. Turn the TV off and read to your children.
10. Read a verse or two at mealtime when all the family is together.

## Christian ABC's

Act instead of Argue  
Build instead of Brag  
Climb instead of Criticize  
Dig instead of Deprecate  
Encourage instead of Envy  
Fight instead of Faint  
Give instead of Grumble  
Help instead of Harm  
Invite instead of Ignore  
Join instead of Jeer  
Kneel instead of Kick  
Love instead of Lampoon  
Move instead of Mould  
Nurture instead of Neglect  
Obey instead of Obstruct  
Pray instead of Pout  
Quicken instead of Quit  
Rescue instead of Ridicule  
Shout instead of Shrink  
Try instead of Tremble  
Undergird instead of Undermine  
Vindicate instead of Vilify  
Work instead of Wilt  
Exterminate instead of Excuse  
Yield instead of Yell  
Zip instead of Zigzag

- Alvy E. Ford



**BOOK BLURBS**

**Recommended Reading**

**Major Lessons from the Major Prophets** is the 1995 Power Lectures, edited by B. J. Clarke, lectureship director. These lectures will be held annually during the third week in August at the Church of Christ in Southaven, Mississippi. The book consists of 579 pages and 35 different lessons from the major prophets in the Old Testament: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

In addition to a special lesson on the major lessons from each one of the prophets, there is a section dealing with nine different prophecies of Christ in these books, including Christ's virgin birth and Isaiah 53. Following this are fourteen lessons discussing various aspects of the prophets such as: false prophets, courageous preaching of the prophets, God's anger and mercy in the prophets, women in the major prophets and others. The book closes with a section of three special studies from the prophets dealing with the captivity of Israel and Judah, the false doctrine of premillennialism, and another false doctrine dealing with the ten lost tribes of Israel.

Some names of some of the outstanding speakers and writers from the lectures and book are Garland Elkins, Dave Miller, Winfred Clark, Maxie Boren, Glenn Colley, Wendell Winkler, Thomas Eaves, Earl Edwards, Tom Holland, Dub McClish, Robert R. Taylor, Jr., and Curtis A. Cates. Others perhaps not so well known also did a fantastic job of presenting their topics.

Study of the prophets is largely a neglected area and this book will be a cherished addition to your study books on the Bible. The church where you attend will be a stronger group if you teach or preach on the themes presented in this book on the major prophets. Perhaps you would like to buy a volume for your preacher or elders. The cost of the book is \$15.00, plus postage, and you may order it from Southaven Church of Christ, P.O. Box 128, Southaven, MS 38671. [Note: Please do not order the book from FCGN. We only review them and recommend them.] -Ed.



**CONTRIBUTIONS**

**CHURCHES**

Lowell Church of Christ .....	\$50.00
Springdale, Ar.	
Jeff Church of Christ, Thayer, Mo. ....	25.00
Church of Christ, Bakersfield, Mo. ....	25.00
Pilot Church of Christ .....	40.00
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Moody Church of Christ, Moody, Mo. ....	25.00
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Church of Christ, Garfield, Ar. ....	35.00

**INDIVIDUALS**

M/M Hayden Estes, Ash Flat, Ar. ....	\$25.00
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M/M Walter Johnson, Harrison, Ar. ....	20.00

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- Ted J. Clarke, ed.

**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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