

# 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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## THE PRICE OF TRUTH: ETERNAL VIGILANCE

### The Church and Eternal Vigilance

by Robert R. Taylor

It was one thing when Romanism, Protestantism, Judaism, the World Religions, the cults, the occults and the forces of infidelity warred against the blood-bought institution that Christ established in blessed, beautiful perfection on that memorable Pentecost (Acts 20:28; 2:1-47). However, it is another thing when we have to fight and fight vigorously our own brethren, the new change agents, to keep the church, the church of the Bible and not a revamped, reconstructed, restructured and remodeled institution no different from the denominationalism these change agents are carving for all who blindly follow their pernicious plans.

Jehovah is the Lord; He changes not (Malachi 3:6). Jesus Christ is the same yesterday (the eternal past), today (the eternal present) and forever (the eternal future) (Heb. 13:8). The Holy Spirit is just as unchanging as His fellow colleagues in The Timeless Trinity. The God-head established the changeless church in a world that fluctuates from season to season.

We dare not change the church in its eternal planning, Old Testament promises and prophecies, in its New Testament preparation by John, Jesus, the twelve and the seventy or its perfection from Pentecost onward (Eph. 3:10,11; Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:12-17; Isa. 2:1ff; Daniel 2:44; Micah 4:1ff; Zech. 6:12,13).

We dare not change what Christ is to the church - its builder, foundation, purchaser, head and Savior (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11; Acts 20:28; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23).

We dare not change the names He gave it such as "my church," "the church of God," "the body of Christ," "the temple of God," "churches of Christ" when several congregations are under consideration or "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 1:1,2; 12:27; 3:16,17; Rom. 16:16; Eph. 5:5).

We dare not change the descriptions He gave His people - brethren, saints, disciples, Christians or sons and daughters of God (Gal. 6:1; Rom. 1:7; Acts 6:1; Acts 11:26; 2 Cor. 6:18).

We dare not change the plan that ushers us into that kingdom - hearing, faith, repentance, confessing Christ and immersion in water for the remission of sins (Rom. 10:17; Acts 16:31; 17:30; Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 2:38).

We dare not change His second law of pardon for His erring children as per Acts 8:22; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9.

We dare not change His organization of elder and deacons and all as members - no clergy and no laity - working for His cause (Phil. 1:1; 1 Cor. 3:9; 15:58).

We dare not change His stipulations for Christian living such as in Galatians 5:22,23; Colossians 3; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:11,12; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

We dare not change His prescribed worship - to God, in spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24). We dare not change its specifics - congregational singing, prayer, teaching or preaching, communing and the contribution (Eph. 5:19; Col. 4:2; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23ff; 16:1-2).

We dare not change the fellowship boundaries He has erected - obedience to the gospel in the past and a current walk in light (Matt. 12:46-50; John 1:7).

We dare not change its mission - evangelism, edification and benevolence (Mark 16:15; Jude 20; James 1:27).

We dare not tamper with the Bible Doctrine of Final Things and the patient preparation such teaching demands. The second coming must remain intact; there is to be no tampering with the resurrection doctrine. Final judgment procedures are to be left as the Lord left them. Eternal destinies are neither to be removed or overhauled to fit modern man's aver-

sion to any punishment for his wrongs. Hell is not to become a silent spot in our theology as with a recent Pope who refused to mention it to his Roman subjects. Heaven is not to be a haven for the refuse of society regardless of what denominational preachers say at funerals. Listen to their prattle and one wonders why God ever prepared a hell for the perverse.

### Conclusion

Alexander Campbell deemed truth to be his pearl of great price. We dare not feel less love for it than that. Its price is beyond human calculation. Eternal vigilance and perpetual loyalty to it is the divine prescription the Great Physician has written and signed for all of us. Let us never go spiritually AWOL relative to truth. [From the *Ripley Beacon*, Vol. 23, No. 5, Sept. 15, 1996]

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## "WHY ME, LORD?"

by Billy Joe Gooden

How many times have you or someone you know made the statement "Why Me, Lord?" when found with a health, financial, or personal problem? "Why did this happen to me?" "What have I done to deserve this?" These are questions often asked by many during troubled times.

How many of us ask these same questions in regard to our good health, our ability to make a living, our ability to keep the home and care for our children, as well as the ability to make our home a place of love and security? How many of our young people ask these questions in regards to being blessed with parents that love and care for them. "Why me, Lord?" What have I done to deserve such blessings in my life?"

In May of 1994 I was diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. At that time I was 55 years old. My wife and I were told that I had two to five years to live. Of course this was quite a shock. Some time later my wife

(Continued on page 2)

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*(Continued from page 1)*

asked the question: "Why did this happen to you?" I had even asked myself this question when I was first diagnosed. My immediate answer was "because I was born." You see, from the time we are born into this world we begin to die. Each day we live is one day closer to that appointment we all must keep (Heb. 9:27); unless, of course, the Lord should return first. It seems we sometimes forget that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God sin entered the world bringing with it sickness, suffering and death. We all have to deal with these things, but thanks to God, we can overcome them (1 Cor.15:57-58).

Friends, please listen to me. We live in a busy world. One that demands too much of our time. Unfortunately many of us stay so busy with the things of the world that we often forget to take time to study and meditate on the word of God and often fail to commune with God in prayer. We take too many things for granted and fail to thank God as we should.

"Why me, Lord?" Every time I ask this question I think of another blessing for which I ought to be thankful. For example, I am now 57 years old and I stand amazed that God blessed me with 55 years of almost perfect health. I have been able to run and play, participate in sports, fish, hunt, and work for the same company for 36 years. During that

time I have seen others who have not been as fortunate. They were not able to walk, run or participate in the things we take so lightly. Certainly I have no reason to complain.

Then there is my wife. We recently celebrated our 36th year together as man and wife. Of course I would like to be able to celebrate our 50th and even our 60th anniversaries. But again I am forced to ask, "Why me, Lord?" Why have I been so blessed? Why have I been fortunate enough to have a wife stand by me in bad times as well as good times, in health and in sickness. Why have I been so blessed to have a wife who believes in me. Who believes in God and His word. One who took my hand when I was diagnosed with ALS and said, "We will fight this together."

Then there is our daughter. I believe every God fearing father and mother have a desire to live long enough to see their children grow up and begin their own homes. Again I ask "Why Me, Lord?" Why did you bless me with a daughter that brought so much sunshine and joy to my life as she was growing up? One that I can still picture in my mind climbing up in a chair to reach some material in my office on "Why It Is Wrong To Dance," and then have the conviction to present that material to her classmates. Now my blessings continue to flow as I see her in her own home with a fine Christian husband who is proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"Why me, Lord?" Why have I been blessed with two wonderful grandchildren who think their "Papa" hung the moon. The pure love I see in them makes me think of the joy that will be in heaven. Now that my legs will no longer carry me about, my grandchildren have adjusted to my being in a wheelchair. Again, I thank God for the blessing of technology which allows me to have an electric wheelchair, one that will carry me outside and allow me to continue playing with my grandchildren and attend worship.

Why have I been blessed to have hundreds of Christians encouraging and praying for me and my wife as we battle this disease?

I could go on and on but hopefully enough has been said that the next time you are faced with an adverse situation and are tempted to ask the question,

"Why me, Lord?" that you stop, meditate on your overall life, and see that the real question is "Why me, Lord? Why have you blessed me so?"

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*[EDITOR'S NOTE: Brother Billy Joe Gooden died on January 18th. His funeral was held at the Church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas on January 20th. I have been to hundreds of funerals since I have been preaching, but I have never heard anyone more highly praised for their Christian character than Billy Joe Gooden. I did not know him well, but I am thankful to God for men like him who preach for congregations who cannot support an evangelist to work with them full time. May God always provide His church with men like Billy Joe, who will preach the gospel and live it in all areas of life. This article gives you an insight into Billy Joe's faith. He was thankful for all the good God did give to him and accepted by that same faith the troubles that became his burden to bear. As Job, Billy Joe did not sin nor charge God foolishly, but said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21-22). When you pray today, please pray for Billy Joe's wife Jeri, his daughter Sherrie, and all their family. And be sure to thank God for Billy Joe Gooden and ask him to bless this world with thousands more just like him. This article is taken from The Mind of Christ, Vol. 4 No. 2 July-Sept., 1996. This paper is edited by evangelist Chris Clouse, who is married to Billy Joe's daughter. We are thankful for the family's permission to reprint it.]*

**DRUG ABUSE**

by Marvin Rickett

Our nation is destroying itself with the abuse of drugs. It is more widespread than most people realize. Those destroying themselves are not only those who are deeply addicted to a drug habit, but also those who practice the "recreational use" of drugs. This includes those who "socially drink" alcoholic beverages. All of it is substance abuse. The recreational user of drugs thinks it makes him better, that it enhances his quality of life, makes him feel better, makes him sharper. All the while it is sapping his natural vitality and destroying his body and mind.

The use of drugs distorts the mind of the abuser so that he doesn't realize they are destroying him. It is highly de-

ceiving. It twists his thinking, alters his perceptions, distorts his values, and impairs his functions. It makes him extremely selfish, self-centered, self-serving: the main thing that matters is that he obtain the drugs and get the feeling from the use of the drug. The welfare of his spouse, family, and community takes a distant second place. It often causes him to be abusive of others. He runs with the sub-culture crowd who also use drugs, and he usually doesn't relate well to the normal people.

The use of drugs is a spiritual problem. It involves the individual's inward man. It involves his will. He uses drugs because he chose to use drugs, by a voluntary action of his will. He is responsible for his decision. The drugs not only destroy the mind and body, they destroy his soul in everlasting condemnation.

There are several spiritual principles which deal directly with drug abuse.

(1) In many places, the Scriptures stress soberness as a necessary characteristic of righteous men. Soberness would exclude the use of drugs. One who uses drugs, even "recreationally," is not sober. The Apostle Paul instructed the Thessalonians, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:5,6). Those who use drugs are "of the night." The Apostle Peter said, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13). One is not doing this when he allows his mind to be assaulted by drugs. Peter further warned to be sober and vigilant or the devil will get an advantage (1 Peter 5:18). The devil certainly has the advantage over those who use drugs. Paul further tells us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). Those who use drugs are not denying themselves worldly lusts, and they are not living soberly. All manner of drunkenness is condemned, whether caused by wine or by any other drug (Ephesians 5:18).

(2) Drug abuse is related to sorcery, which is roundly condemned. The Bible word sorcery comes from *pharmakos*, a Greek word which Vine's Dictionary defines as "one who uses drugs, potions,

spells, enchantments." Thayer's Lexicon defines the word as "the use or administering of drugs." The sorcerer used the drugs to allegedly enhance the well-being of sorcery's idolatrous adherents. Is that very different from the motives of the "recreational use" of drugs now? Of course, it is an illusion. Some of the passages condemning sorcery are Galatians 5:20; Revelation 21:8; and Revelation 22:15. Revelation 21:8 says sorcerers will have their part in the "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

(3) Jesus warns us to "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness" (Luke 21:34). Surfeiting is defined as "giddiness or headaches resulting from excess wine bibbing." Other drugs besides wine bring the same symptoms. This describes the reaction to drug use.

(4) The lifestyle of the drug users is described in 1 Peter 4:3, "For the time past in our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." Some of them had quit this lifestyle and had become Christians, others still ran to "the same excess of riot." Drug users today are running to the same excess of riot as the sinful Gentiles in Peter's day. Idolatry is one of the categories of sin in the passage. It is closely connected to this kind of drug lifestyle. Drug use is a form of idolatry because it involves the user depending on his chemical instead of trusting in the Lord God.

This article is not a criticism of the medicinal use of prescribed drugs. These substances are God-given for man's use in curing disease and healing illness. There is a caution given, though, of the abuse of prescription drugs. There are reports of a wide-spread abuse of prescription drugs. The principles that condemn recreational drug use also condemn the abuse of prescription drugs.

Going through life using drugs is just not the way the Lord intended for us to live! We should live life the fullest in the most natural way, trusting in the Lord to sustain us.

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*No matter how far down or how high up you are, the hand of God can reach you.*

## THE HIGH PRICE OF HEALTH CARE

by Ted J. Clarke

People are angry, frustrated, confused. Congress cannot get its act together either way. The "fat cats" are lobbying for their special interests. The President does not seem to have the political clout to push through his reform program. Partisan politics abounds from both parties. About the only sure bet is that the high cost of health care for Americans is going to go higher and higher.

We all want to keep on living and we want a good quality life to enjoy. If we can have fairly good health we will pay whatever it takes to keep living. Modern scientists call this the instinct of self preservation. God calls it His gift of life. Most people (not all, but most) will do whatever is needed to extend their own lives, until the pain or loss of meaningful living becomes too great to endure.

We spend billions each year on health care. Exercise machines, special food, medicines, surgeries, therapies, moving to different climates, artificial body parts, transplants from the bodies of other people (sometimes animals); whatever it takes, we will spend the money or go into debt to keep living a reasonable good life.

**How much would you spend to be able to live forever in total health**

*(Continued on page 4)*

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(Continued from page 3)

and happiness? For that we would expect the cost to be high. In fact, way beyond our ability to pay or even borrow. Not all of our friends nor all the wealth of the world could buy an eternal totally healthy life for us! But God's word promises us that such is possible and is a reality just waiting for us. John 3:16 teaches that only through Jesus Christ is this possible. John 14:1-6 tells us even more about this life, and Revelation 21 & 22 provide details that to us seem impossible. **No more death! Not even sorrow, nor tears, nor pain! All of the bad things in this life will have passed away!** What is this worth to you? What would you give to be able to live forever in the absence of all of these problems, and in the presence of God and the Lamb? Would you do whatever is necessary to obtain that type of life? Are you ready to do whatever is required on your part to obtain this life?

Christ reminds us that the price of eternal life is high. It cost Him everything! It costs us no less. We too have a cross to bear (remember that the cross is an instrument of death). It costs us sacrifices in this life to gain the next (Matthew 10:38,39). If we simply try to live the best life we can on earth, we will miss eternal life. Our main goal here should not be getting all we can now, but giving ourselves up now for what is promised later - eternal life (Matthew 16:24-27). The price of eternal health care is very high, but think of the benefits and rewards! What concerns you most - present health care problems, or eternal life?

### Service and Suffering

by David Macy

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:3-5).

Service to others includes more than singing and talking, and Jesus was certainly an example in this respect. He was seated with his disciples to partake of the Passover Feast, and He arose from his place and began to wash the

feet of his followers, and wipe them with a towel. He actually laid aside his outer garment, or robe, and tied a towel around his waist like a servant, and began to perform one of a servant's most humble duties. Can't you imagine the impact this humble service had upon the disciples of our Lord. When Jesus approached Peter, this bold disciple first asked if He was going to wash his feet, and then he flatly stated that he would never wash his feet. Jesus answered that if He did not wash him, he would have no part with him, and Peter changed his tune immediately, and said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." It seems to me that the reaction of Peter would probably have been the reaction of most of us. How could we even think about allowing the Son of God to stoop low enough to bathe our dirty feet?

Jesus did not just make beautiful speeches about service, He was a servant and He performed the chores of a servant. This was a vivid example which should make all of us think and try to imitate His beautiful example a little more closely. "For even hereunto were ye called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

The example Jesus left us, which we should joyfully follow, is an example of service and suffering. We are actually called by the Gospel to a life of patient suffering! This is very difficult for many disciples of Jesus to accept, but it is inescapable when you really think about what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Jesus suffered greatly as a humble servant while He was here on earth. And now He is richly rewarded and highly exalted. We must follow in His steps and become lowly servants, and suffer patiently to receive a crown and an everlasting reward when Jesus comes again. Heavenly rewards and eternal glory cannot be obtained without some lowly service and the suffering which goes with it, but can anyone deny it is worth it many, many times over?

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### GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

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

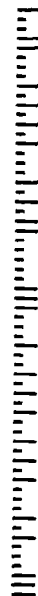
### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 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; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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