

# 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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## IF I WERE YOUNG AGAIN

By Bob Spurlin

Many give serious thought about their early lives when middle age creeps along and takes over. This is the norm as sober reflection gives time for pause and consideration. There is something about passing middle age that causes us to think about our own youth, and what changes we would like to make, if such were possible. Of course, such a mental exercise is beyond human ability to go back in time, but it challenges us to think what could have been. Undeniably, there were flaws and blemishes in our early years that we would just as soon blot out of the book of remembrance. Knowing what we know now would, no doubt, cause many to make some serious moral changes. Many today would like to go back and eliminate all bad habits and liabilities, including drinking, drugs, smoking, etc. If this writer could go back and live my life again, there would be some serious changes made that would enhance life to the fullest. What would you do if your life could be lived over again? Adults can only give reflection; teens can learn from us and hopefully implement those positive qualities (1 Tim. 4:12).

**1. IF I WERE YOUNG AGAIN I WOULD BE MORE RESPECTFUL OF PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND ADULTS IN GENERAL.** Rebellion permeates every segment of society and it effects the relationship between parents and children, which is the foundation of our society. If I were a teenager, my respect, high opinion, and esteem for my parents would be unequalled. This preacher has witnessed unparalleled disrespect and disregard for parents, teachers, and adults in general. What a difference a generation makes when mom and dad fail to give the needed instruction, or when sons and daughters fail to heed the

guiding hand of caring parents. The attitudes they have displayed have obviously spilled over into society at large. Paul gives the much needed counsel, “Children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right” (Eph. 6:1-4). The youth of today could have much richer lives if they would follow this basic rule of honoring and being respectful. There are two promises offered in connection with the command to “Honor thy Father and thy Mother.” (1) “It will be well with thee,” that is life will be enjoyable and fruitful; and (2) Your life will have long days or an extension of life. A broad statement for all.

**2. IF I WERE YOUNG AGAIN, DEVELOPING HABITS OF BIBLE STUDY & PRAYER WOULD BE A PRIORITY, WHILE ELIMINATING ALL BAD HABITS.** Habits can be good or bad. Accordingly the right way is most desirable as we journey through life. Paul stressed,

*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil. 4:8).*

Good habits are formed when we focus on positive and upright things. Mother used to tell her children, “If you play on the coal pile, the black soot will get on you.” Young people today would profit greatly from this essential truth if serious consideration were given to it. It is easy to get caught up in detrimental habits when surrounded by unsuitable circumstances such as tobacco, drug and alcohol use. Conversely, the youth of today, by giving serious attention to fruitful Bible study, and a powerful prayer life will see strong, spiritual lives. Parents can provide a positive atmosphere with home devotions and a

genuine emphasis on spiritual things, which will encourage godliness. Bible study and fervent prayer will strengthen character and add spiritual stature to all (2 Tim. 2:15, 1 Thess. 5:17).

**3. IF YOUNG AGAIN I WOULD READ MATTHEW 25 REGULARLY AND USE MY TALENTS TO DO MORE FOR MY GOD.** Jesus said, “And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: and there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30). Fear was not an admissible excuse for the one talent man and it is not acceptable for us today.

Young people should begin early in life to utilize their abilities, skills and talents to the glory of God (Eccl. 9:10, Col. 3:23). The wise man, Solomon, said, “Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1). If beginning my life over, this writer would use the time and ability granted him to be more Christ-like (1 Cor. 11:1). Taking each opportunity as presented will hasten us in service to the church, such as: Praying publicly, reading scripture, delivering lessons, and waiting on the Lord’s table will help me become more proficient in my service to God. If young, I would not allow a single opportunity to pass that would help me to increase my talents before God and brethren.

**4. IF YOUNG AGAIN, I WOULD DATE AND MARRY A CHRISTIAN.** The writer of this article can say the wisest decision he ever made, other than obeying Christ, was to meet and marry an outstanding Christian woman. Marriage, at the very best, will confront multiple problems and yet these can be insignificant when compared with a spiritually divided union. Many couples think sex appeal, physical attraction and love alone will solve all problems within the wedded unit. More than one million divorces occur annually, or 2,740 times daily judges issue the

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proclamation, "divorce granted." This divine institution at its best will be difficult, but marrying a Christian will give one a stabilizing prospect to face the future with confidence. My young friend, do yourself a favor and do not settle for anything less than a Christian mate. How can we "Seek the kingdom of God first" (Matt. 6:33), and embrace someone that will lead us in the opposite direction? Christians marrying unbelievers bring undue pressure to bear upon their marriage, and all too often divorce is the result. Paul said, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers . . ." (2 Cor. 6:14). Friend, can you imagine a greater yoke than the marriage yoke? Paul, in addition, asserted, "Have we not the right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9:5). The apostle had a right to lead about a wife which is a believer; he did not declare the "right" to lead about a wife that was an unbeliever. The clear teaching of the New Testament either by direct command, or by implication, "Christians should

marry Christians." This writer affirms unequivocally that we will all be much happier, if we marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). The four points given in this article will strengthen your life and fulfill you in every way, if followed.

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**Editor's Note:** The above article by Bob Spurlin is another example of the fine writing on important themes produced by this brother. This is taken from his latest book, "Dial 9-1-1: Essentials to Living Life In the 21st Century." Bob has been afflicted with Multiple Sclerosis for several years and, being bedfast and unable to use his hands, now writes with his voice as he dictates to his computer. Brother Spurlin continues to be an excellent and productive gospel preacher in every way possible for himself. You can help lift Bob's spirit, aid him financially, and bless yourself by purchasing a copy of his book, "Dial 9-1-1." The 208 page book is filled with Biblically based articles to help you live a better life. The cost is \$11.50, which includes postage and handling. You might want to buy several copies for family and friends. We do not sell the books through **FCGN**, but you can contact Bob at the address above, call him at (256) 773-0295, or reach him through the Internet at [PRECHTEACH@aol.com](mailto:PRECHTEACH@aol.com). Even if you do not buy a book, send him a card and cheer his day!

- Ted J. Clarke.

**THE CHURCH JESUS LOVES**

By Owen D. Olbricht

Does Jesus love the church? Is the church important to Him? Is there a church that Jesus loves? If there is, what church does He love? In order to answer these questions other questions should be answered.

1. What is the church? Many people use the word church to refer to a building by saying: "The church burned." "The wedding will be in the church." "The funeral was held in the church." The word **ekklesia** (literally, called out), which is translated "church," never means a physical building but

rather refers to a congregation of people. Saul persecuted the church by putting men and women in prison (Acts 8:3). These were the disciples of the Lord (Acts 9:1) who were called Christians (Acts 11:26).

2. Who built the church? Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). In later books of the New Testament we read about the church, which must mean that Jesus had built His church before these books were written (Acts 5:11; 8:3; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:13; etc.).
  3. On what did Jesus build His church? Jesus said, "On this rock, I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Peter had confessed Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus replied that on **this** He would build His church. Paul taught that Jesus is the only foundation. "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).
  4. To whom does the church belong? Jesus called it "My church" (Matt. 16:18). The church is His because He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The fact that He purchased it with His blood means: (1) It belongs to Him. (2) If it belongs to Him, we should call it His church (3) The value of the church is Jesus' blood. The price paid is the value of what is purchased. (4) In order to benefit from Jesus' blood, one must be in His church because it is what Jesus purchased with His blood. (5) Jesus will come for His church, the one He purchased. If He came for others, He would be taking what He has not purchased, that which does not belong to Him.
  5. How can we identify Jesus' church? His church is made up of those who submit to Him. "Therefore as the church is subject to Christ" (Eph. 5:24). Jesus' church responds to Him because He is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23), it's only lawgiver (James 4:12).
- These are the people He loves, His church (Eph. 5:25), because they have His commandments and keep them. "He who has My

commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).

Those who are following the traditions, doctrines, creeds, and teachings of men are not loved by Jesus. He loves those people who obey Him, which people are His church. His wrath is on, continues to remain on, those who do not obey Him (John 3:36 ASV).

6. Who will Jesus take to heaven? He will present His church to Himself, a spotless and holy church (Eph. 5:27). These are the people who have been made perfect (Heb. 12:23) by the death of Jesus (Eph. 5:25-27) and whose names are written in heaven (Heb. 12:23), in the book of life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5).

Those whose names are not in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15) but those whose names are in the book of life will get to enter the holy city, the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27).

The church does not save, but Jesus is the Savior of the church (Eph. 5:23), His body (Eph. 1:22, 23). The church is the flock (Acts 20:28) to which Jesus will give eternal life (John 10:27). It is His kingdom (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:13) which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28) that will get to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13:41-43). Also the church is His house, His family (1 Tim. 3:15), the children of which will get to inherit heaven (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; 1 Pet. 1:3,4).

7. How does one enter the body, the church? There is one body in Christ (Rom. 12:5). We enter Christ by being baptized (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), so by baptism we enter the one body (1 Cor. 12:13), the church.

### CONCLUSION

The church Jesus loves is the one He built, the one over which He is head, and is the one that obeys Him. Those not in His church are not written in heaven. If we are written in the book of life, we will get to enter the holy city, but if not, we will be cast into the lake of fire. All of us who have been

baptized with the one baptism (Eph. 4:5) are in His one church.

Are you in the church Jesus so loves that He will present it to Himself? If not, you should obey Him (Heb. 5:9) to be saved by being baptized (Mark 16:16) and in so doing become a member of His church which has the hope of eternal life in heaven.

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### SAVING FAITH

By Joel Morrison

*"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"* (James 2:24).

The relationship of faith and works is a matter that is gravely misunderstood by multitudes in our world today. There are those who would have man saved by faith apart from works, and others who would have man saved by works apart from faith. But the Bible teaches that faith with works, or works by faith, is the kind of faith that saves.

The problem seems to be a matter of understanding what is meant by faith and works. If by works one means works of man's own merit, whereby God owes man salvation after he has performed so many "good deeds," then certainly it is false that man can be saved by works. When one has sinned there is no amount of good that he can do to undo that wrong, nor to negate that sin before God. God alone can forgive and He does not weigh the good that one has done against the bad in order to determine one's innocence or guilt. One cannot earn nor merit salvation regardless of the good he may do in his lifetime. Salvation is a free gift of God that no amount of works can purchase (Rom. 6:23).

However, the Bible teaches that works are required of man in order that he might be saved. But the works authorized and demanded by the Bible are works, or acts, of obedience out of a heart of faith in God and His promises. When James stated that "by works a man is justified" he was speaking of those acts of obedience in doing what God has commanded. A person who merely believes in his heart, but does not

obey the will of God does not have saving faith.

James declared that faith which does not obey is a faith that cannot lead to salvation. "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*" (James 2:14 - "*can that faith save him,*" ASV). A mental acknowledgement apart from acts of obedience will profit one nothing. Faith that does not obey is a faith that will not save. It must be pointed out that James is not saying that one is not saved by faith. He is saying that one is not saved by faith **alone** - faith apart from obedience.

Abraham is used as an example of one who was justified by works. Abraham's faith led him to obey God's command to offer Isaac upon the altar. His obedience was the works by which he was justified. Would anyone dare suggest that Abraham would have been justified had he refused to obey God? When was he justified? When his faith obeyed! "*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God"* (James 2:21-23).

What kind of faith do you have? Is your faith a profitless, dead faith that will not save? Faith that saves is a faith that obeys. If your faith has not led you to obey God's commands, then you do not have saving faith. To receive forgiveness of sins one must believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2:38), confess faith in Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10), and be buried with Christ in baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-4). Obedience to these commands will result in the forgiveness of one's past sins, put him into Christ, add him to the church of Christ, and grant him membership in God's family. But faith must continue to obey God's will if one would be granted entrance into the eternal abode of the faithful (Rev. 2:10; James 2:14-17; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It can come in no other way. Read, study and meditate upon God's word in order that you might know God's will for you and then do what God has instructed in order that you might go to heaven when this life is over.

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**A HUGE THANK YOU!**

Please permit me to express a sincere and much deserved **thank you** to all of our readers who pray for us in this work and those who have a willingness to help us financially! You who do these things share in the good being done by publishing and mailing out the **Fulton County Gospel News**. Most of the churches that support this work have been doing so for a long time. Their consistent and sacrificial contributions are vital to our ability to continue and to hold this work at its present level. Because of financial restraints the elders have asked me to hold our printing to 10,000 per month. Over the last few years we had stretched that number to over 11,000. We have been dropping names of those who do not send us address changes and over the past year we have trimmed our mailing list to fewer than 11,000. It is just so difficult to say, "Sorry, we can't send you that paper." We have not had to begin doing that, and I pray we will not have to do so.

Over 99% of people who receive free publications never send anything to help the publishers continue their work. For some, they may not ever wish to do so. For others, it is just human nature. We do not think about the costs of printing and mailing a paper when it is coming to us for free. It is free because the publisher and other supporters think the paper serves a valuable purpose and they are willing to absorb the costs. But someone has to pay the costs. It costs us about \$2,500 to print, label, and mail each issue of **FCGN**. We have a good base support from congregations and only a handful of individuals who faithfully contribute on a monthly basis. However, individual donations have dropped off considerably over this

past year, while printing costs, mailing supplies and postal rates have increased (postal rates for periodicals have risen three times in the last two years).

If you cannot help us other than by your prayers to God, please do that! If you have a desire to and the ability to send some financial help, it will be appreciated and used wisely. If you cannot help or do not choose to help, please do not feel badly. We do not want to put anyone on a "guilt trip" or have you quit taking the paper because you cannot help. Just think of this as a thank you if you have helped or continue to do so; or consider it as a reminder to those who can and would help if they knew of it. We receive a good many letters each month, commending the work, asking us to add names to the mailing list, and sometimes a check or cash. We do not publish these letters because our paper is small and we want to use all the space we can for teaching. Some of you will soon be receiving a supporters' letter that has excerpts from some of our Stateside and Foreign readers. We will be happy to send a copy to anyone who requests it. Again, **THANK YOU!**

- Ted J. Clarke, editor

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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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