

# 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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## “WITHOUT EXCUSE”

### Part Four

by Lee Moses

God expects every accountable human being to come to a knowledge of Him and obey Him. Failure in this would be a failure of immense magnitude, as the day is coming *“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). And any human being who has failed to know and obey God will be left without excuse.

**“I was taught differently” is not an excuse.** Not everyone has been blessed with growing up in a true Christian home. Actually, the percentage of people who have is quite small. We live in a world where people teach and are taught a wide spectrum of religious and irreligious doctrines. Some are taught that the God of the Bible is the true God; others are taught that Allah is God; and others are taught that there is no God. Some are taught that Christ died for His church; others are taught that one should choose from a number of manmade denominations; and others are taught that religion should be entirely personal and private. Some are taught that one must worship in spirit and in truth; others are taught that one can worship any way not explicitly forbidden in Scripture; and others are taught that any and all efforts at worship are pleasing to God, regardless of what Scripture teaches. One could go on with the role of baptism, the necessity of works to salvation, whether one can lose his salvation, and countless other matters

that are diversely taught and learned. As a result, many are led to believe throughout their entire lives things that simply are not true.

However, regardless of what one has been taught, he can continue to learn. Saul of Tarsus had a faulty understanding: *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth”* (Acts 26:9). Saul was living out what Jesus had warned that people would do to His followers: *“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service”* (John 16:2). Operating under this faulty understanding, Saul participated in the deaths of Christians with an entirely clear conscience (Acts 7:58; 26:10; 23:1). Saul had been trained in Jerusalem *“at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers”* (22:3; cf. 5:34). He had been thoroughly indoctrinated, and was *“more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”* than were his similarly rabid Jewish contemporaries (Galatians 1:14).

Despite Saul’s longstanding family tradition, and despite his years of learning untruths lightly sprinkled with truth, he came to realize that salvation for any man, regardless of ethnicity, could only be found in Christ and His church (Ephesians 2:13-18). The Syro-Phoenician woman overcame her pagan background to acknowledge the authority and power of Jesus, and to

be among the first to express that the Gospel was *“to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:16; cf. Mark 7:24-30). Cornelius overcame his rough Roman military background and complete obliviousness to the Gospel of Christ to become the first Gentile convert to Christ (Acts 10:1-48).

Some claim, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” But not only can one continue to learn, one **must** continue to learn: *“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Colossians 1:10, emphasis LM).

**“I have limited abilities” is not an excuse.** This excuse is only occasionally given for refusing initial obedience to the Gospel, but it is very commonly given for refusing opportunities to serve the Lord. A couple will be asked to make an in-home visit, and they will respond, “We’re not very good at talking with people.” A man will be asked to extend the invitation on a Wednesday night, but begs off, explaining, “I’m not able to speak in front of people.” An entire congregation refuses to practice any level of personal evangelism, claiming they are not as good at it as their preacher is. These excuses may all contain a good degree of truth, but that does not mean that they excuse. One trying to excuse himself from opportunities to serve the Lord forgets that the Christian life is a life of service (Luke 17:7-10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 2:10; Philemon 11).

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P.O. Box 251

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Lee Moses ..... EDITOR  
 Phone ..... (870) 625-3217  
 E-Mail ..... cocfegn@centurytel.net  
 Website ..... www.fultoncountygospelnews.org  
 Brian Dixon ..... Webmaster  
 E-Mail ..... sales@halopages.net

*continued from page one*

Moses tried to excuse himself from the opportunity of a lifetime because of what he portrayed as “limited abilities.” When God called him to address the king of the mightiest nation on earth and to deliver that nation’s slaves from bondage, Moses was reluctant. Perhaps his reluctance is understandable, considering that his previous efforts on a much smaller scale had failed (Exodus 1:11-15; compare with Acts 7:24-25), and that he had spent the forty years since that failure playing shepherd boy in the wilderness of Midian. So when God calls him to go, Moses releases a barrage of excuses: “*Who am I?*” (Exo. 3:11); “*What shall I say unto [the Israelites]?*” (3:13); “[*The Israelites*] will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, the LORD hath not appeared unto thee” (4:1); and his last humdinger, “*I am not eloquent . . . I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue*” (4:10). After the Lord has consecutively and patiently refused each of Moses’ excuses, Moses in a final request

makes clear that all those excuses were just attempts to get out of serving God: “*And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send*” (4:13). In other words, “Just send someone else.”

Moses’ self-assessment of his abilities was far from accurate. Having been reared by Pharaoh’s daughter, he was afforded opportunities for learning and leadership far removed from other Israelites. “*And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds*” (Acts 7:22). Scripture says that Moses was “*mighty in words,*” yet he tried to portray himself as wholly incapable with them. There is a place for modesty (Proverbs 27:2); however, misrepresenting and diminishing one’s own abilities to avoid serving the Lord is dishonest and slothful.

In his excuse-making, Moses was squelching his own ability. Had the Lord not been so insistent, Moses would have remained in the desert of Midian, Israel for the time being would have remained slaves in Egypt, and no one would remember Moses’ name today. Moses, by the providence of God, had become singularly qualified for the task that lay ahead of him. Even Moses’ years as a shepherd in the wilderness would prove an asset, as he would have to shepherd **human** “sheep” another forty years in the wilderness. Moses had certainly lost much of what he had previously—the favor of Pharaoh, wealth, and influence—but things that seemed so insignificant to Moses were of great value in the service of the Lord. “*And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod*” (Exodus 4:2). This was a simple walking stick, a shepherd’s staff—yet it became “*the rod of God*” (verse 20). God would miraculously transform his and his brother Aaron’s rods into serpents to serve as a sign to Israel and to Egypt (4:3-5; 7:9-12). Aaron’s rod would change the waters of the Nile

into blood (7:20-21). Their rods would bring fearsome plagues of frogs, lice, hail mingled with fire, and an east wind bearing locusts (8:5-6, 16-17; 9:22-26; 10:12-15). Moses’ rod would part the Red Sea (14:16). Holding up Moses’ rod would provide victory over attacking Amalekites (7:9-13). God was able to do great things with what Moses brought to the table, even with the modest skills and accoutrements of shepherding. That Peter and John were “*unlearned and ignorant men*” was painfully obvious to many (Acts 4:13); but that did not stop them from spreading the Gospel throughout their city and far beyond. No matter what your background is, you have attributes that can be assets in the service of the Lord. You may have tasks that lie ahead in your Christian walk for which you are singularly qualified. Even the “one-talent servant” was expected to utilize his limited “*several ability*” in his lord’s service, and was condemned when he failed to do so (Matthew 25:14-30). The church simply cannot accomplish anything with a universal “let someone else do it” mindset.

When Moses appealed to his limited abilities as an excuse, he expressed distrust in God. Moses pled ineloquence, to which God responded, “*Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say*” (Exodus 4:11-12). Citing limited abilities as an excuse indicts the One who made man. Should we not rather with the psalmist extol God, “*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well?*” (Psalm 139:14). When we feel inadequate for the Lord’s service, we should each remind ourselves, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Philippians 4:13).

## Conclusion

The entire world stands “*without excuse*” for failing to know and obey God. Not only do our “excuses” and “justifications” fail to excuse or justify our wrongdoing and inaction, they discourage us from making the positive change we **need** to make. They discourage us from accomplishing all we are capable of accomplishing. As Benjamin Franklin quipped, “One who is good for excuses is usually good for nothing else.” The Lord has revealed His will in the Gospel; He has provided salvation in His Son Jesus Christ; and He has provided the capacity to do His will in every human being. It is high time to cease our excuses, because we have none.

## THE VALUE OF THE SOUL

### Matthew 16:21-28

by Kent Bailey

A careful study of the context of Matthew 16:21-28 gives great emphasis to God’s scheme of Redemption. Our Lord underscored the importance of His Deity. Peter confessed that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of the Living God and upon the basis of this confession, Christ promised to build His church.

From this point of time our Lord began to demonstrate to His followers that He must go into Jerusalem, suffer rejection of the masses, die on the cross to pay the sin debt of humanity, and be raised from death. Peter did not understand the truth regarding God’s eternal scheme and offered an objection to what would occur. Christ rebuked him and discussed the importance of the spiritual values of one’s life.

We are living in a commercial age in which the aspect of values is discussed freely. We appreciate

material items being reduced in so far as their sale price is concerned. In earnest we often seek to make purchases at a lower price. We need to consider that the human soul is worth far more than the entirety of the world and all of its riches. The human soul is so important and so valuable that God did not devalue it in paying the purchase price for our salvation.

### **We see the value of the soul in the incarnation and birth of Christ.**

Upon learning that Mary was expecting a child Joseph, not knowing the importance of God’s eternal plan was minded to put her away privately and not complete the marriage agreement. The angel of the Lord indicated to Joseph that the child conceived in Mary was of God, and that he should take Mary to be his wife. The fact that the second member of the Godhead gave up the glories of Heaven, and, while maintaining the attributes of Deity also became incarnate in humanity, demonstrates the value of the soul (John 1:11-14).

### **We see the value of the soul in the parable of the lost sheep.**

In Luke 15:1-7 we note that Christ is speaking to publicans and sinners. His association was not for the purpose of approval of their life styles; it was that of presentation of truth out of concern for their souls. Here is painted a word picture of a flock of one hundred sheep. The great majority of the sheep are safe, right where they should be. One, however is lost. Note that the loving shepherd searches until he locates the lost one. Having found the lost sheep, he carries it home on his own shoulders. Upon arriving home, the announcement is made to friends: “*Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.*” While many may not care about those lost in sin, our Lord does. The soul of humanity is indeed valuable.

### **We see the value of the soul in the parable of the prodigal son.**

In Luke 15:11-24 we read about a young man so enamored with the world and the allurements of sin that he walked away from his own father. When he finally came to himself, repented of his sins, reformed his life and returned to his father; his father lovingly received him back—all because of the value of his soul. His father did not compromise; however, he was willing to forgive upon the conditions of changing his life and returning home.

### **We see the value of the soul in the rich man and Lazarus.**

In Luke 16:19-31 we note two specific individuals living in vivid contrast. One was rich while the other was poor. One was living in obedience to the word of God while the other was living in rebellion to God. Both experienced physical death bringing about the end of life on earth. The rich man went to torment while Lazarus was escorted by the angels of God to paradise. Material possessions do not guarantee one eternal riches. God’s grace is limited to our faith and obedience. One’s eternal destiny cannot be changed after his life on earth.

### **We see the value of the soul as we read of the prayer of Christ in Gethsemane.**

The prayers of Christ as uttered in Gethsemane provide clear insight into his heart and work (Matthew 26:36-46). As we note these prayers we find four noble characteristics and desires relative to value of the souls of men.

### **Christ had a heart of supplication.**

He poured out his heart unto the Father, God. Christ also had a heart of **sacrifice** knowing that such had to be accomplished. It was not his desire to undergo the terrible suffering for our sins, however he was willing to undergo such due to the value of our souls. Christ had a heart of **submission** to accomplish the Father’s plan, knowing that if redemption would be offered he had to submit unto the Father’s will to accomplish such.



*continued from page three*

Christ also had a heart of **steadfastness** in that he cried out, “*Not as I will, but as thou wilt.*”

**We see the value of the soul in the crucifixion.** The cruel beating, mocking of the Roman soldiers, the fraudulent trial, the humiliation and the false charges brought against our Lord . . . In view of his reaction to all these blasphemous actions we also note the horrible suffering on the cross that he endured (Matthew 27:26-54).

**When I think of Jesus’ love,  
And how he came from Heaven  
above,  
I’m ashamed because I know,  
That I have failed my thanks to  
show.**

**I know, I know he loves me:  
This he proved at Calvary.  
He gave his life that I might live,  
He cared that much for me.**

**We see the value of the soul at the ascension.** Not only did our Lord

rise as victor over death, hell, and the grave (Romans 1:1-4). He ascended back to the father to establish his church (the kingdom). All of this was because of the value of the soul (Hebrews 1:7-9).

**We see the value of the soul at the Judgment.** In Revelation 20:12-15 we see the divine picture of the judgment and justice of God. The final coming of Christ will be the great day of all days. In it and that which follows is the realization of God’s scheme of Redemption—the eternal purpose of God. It should be anticipated by Christians with joy and dreaded by lost individuals with realization of their eternal punishment.

One can no more estimate the value of the soul than one can adequately estimate the value of gaining the reward of Heaven and escaping the punishments of Hell. May we **never** underestimate the value of the soul.

Calhoun, GA

**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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