

The Wednesday Word, Sept. 30, 2015: Coming Back in the Clouds

In Revelation 1:7 we read; “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

Did you know that when the Bible talks about Christ coming back in the clouds, it is a reference to His Deity?

Yes indeed, Jesus Christ is coming back! We don't know when that future event will take place, but one day Christ is going to physically, visibly and personally return to Earth. However, interesting as it may be, the subject we want to consider today is neither the timing nor even the fact of this monumental event. What we want to briefly discuss is the mention of the word 'clouds.'

In the Bible, clouds are often a signal of divine activity. They frequently announce the presence of God:

Consider this, Exodus 13:21; “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way;”

Exodus 16:10, “And it came to pass, as Aaron spoke unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. “

Exodus 34:5 declares, “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

Numbers 10:34 “And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.”

In Psalm 104:3 we read, “The Lord makes the clouds his chariot.”

Speaking of coming judgment, Jeremiah warned, Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: Jeremiah 4:13 (see also Zephaniah 1:15).

Let's fast forward to the New Testament to Matthew 26:64. Here Jesus is on trial for His life. Before Him stands Old Joe Caiaphas bedecked in the regalia of the High Priest. Old Joe is a jealous man, jealous of the adulation being given to the Young Prince of Glory. Old Joe is a threatened man. Threatened because the Lord Jesus has exposed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders with His 'woe unto you' speeches (see Matthew 23: 29-33). Old Joe Caiaphas, has been made to squirm. He is, after all, the Chief among the professional ecclesiastics who were, as Jesus had pointed out, merely white-washed tombs. As he seethes with hatred, Old Joe is determined to execute the Lord Jesus. He has brought in false witnesses to testify against the Master. Jesus, of course, could have backed down and diffused the situation. He could have changed His story...but he didn't. He boldly looked his satanic rival in the eyes saying, “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven.” COMING IN THE CLOUDS! It's no wonder Caiaphas tore his clothes. It's no wonder he cried out, “He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.”

In this dreadful scene, the High Priest of Israel rejected the Christ of Israel and consigned Him to death. Caiaphas knew that Christ, by claiming He was coming back in the clouds had put Himself on the same footing as God. No wonder they executed Him.

And, by the way, when Jesus departed Terra Firma at the ascension, how did he leave? He left in a cloud (Acts 1:9). And how will He return? He'll return with the clouds (Acts 1:11). He is our God and we are steadfastly looking for Him.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 7, 2015: Now That's Grace

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

Why do believing sinners, who have done nothing sufficient to save themselves receive the reward of righteousness — eternal life? It is because Jesus, who did no sin, received the death penalty on their behalf!

Now that's grace!

In the same way that our sin was reckoned to Christ, His righteousness was reckoned to us.

Now that's grace!

My rags for His righteousness!

Now that's grace!

Christ was treated as being something that He was not a sinner, so that we would be treated as that which we are not...righteous.

Now that's grace!

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;

Now that's grace!

So let us ask, at the cross did Christ become sinful in Himself? The answer is simple.....No! 1000 time no! If he did become sinful in Himself, then it must also follow that we become savingly righteous within ourselves. It would also mean that the salvation which saves us is not reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4), it is within us. This then leads to a confounding of Law and Gospel where the believer's holiness of life becomes the foundation and ground of His justification. But that is anti-gospel nonsense.

Our acceptance is not grounded on any quality within us, but on the worthiness and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Now that's grace!

The gospel concerns the doing, dying and rising again of the Lord Christ. It is not about our doing and dying nor indeed about anything in us or about anything we have done. We have been credited with His righteousness, not because we deserve it but because we need it.

Now that's grace!

Christ, however, was treated as though He were actually sinful in Himself and because of that, we are now treated as though we are actually righteous. His righteousness, not ours, remains our only qualification for heaven.

Now that's grace!

But, back to the cross. Someone asks, "Were the sins placed on Jesus real sins, or was this whole drama merely an act?" If it were an act, then the righteousness that is placed on us is also a fiction. However,

the good news is that the sins placed on Christ on were real and the righteousness reckoned to us is genuine. It is "even the righteousness of God," (Romans 3:22-23) and causes us to pass from death to life.

Now that's grace!

When sin was imputed to Jesus, His relationship with the Father was radically affected for it caused God to withdraw His presence from Him. God cannot dwell with sin. Conversely, when Christ's righteousness was imputed to us it radically affected our standing with God. It caused the Father to draw us into His presence and welcome us. It brought us into a beautiful place of fellowship with the Father for He loves to have fellowship with the righteous in Christ.

Now that's grace!

And that's the Gospel Truth!

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 14, 2015: A Delightful Insanity

Galatians 5:16; "This I say then walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Have you ever used the expression; 'I couldn't see the wood for the trees'? It means that, even though a truth is clearly evident, it goes unnoticed because of more attention being given to minor details. Galatians 5:16 is like that.

Let me explain. Countless numbers of believers are desperately trying to not walk in the flesh. They are trying not to do the things that are wrong in God's sight. They are striving and struggling. As a result, they are continually beating up on themselves in the unending search for self-improvement.

This, however, is not wisdom.

Why so?

Simply stated... it doesn't work!

Doesn't work?

No, it doesn't work.

Why not?

It doesn't work for the simple reason that we are all like the man who hadn't even thought about walking on the grass until he saw a sign which said, 'DON'T WALK ON THE GRASS.'

The truth is this if we keep telling ourselves that we are not going to do something you can bet your money that sooner or later we will probably do it. That's the nature of the beast.

To understand Galatians 5:16, (*This I say then walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*) just picture two roads going in opposite directions away from you. One of them is the Road of the Spirit, the other the Road of the Flesh. We are not instructed to stand at the entrance to the "Flesh Road" and say 'I'm not going down there, I won't go down there.' No! Not at all! If you look down

that road for too long, you'll go down it.

We are, however, to walk down the road of the Spirit. But how do we do that? Here's one suggested way. Paul encourages us to "Speak to ourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in our heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" (Ephesians 5:19-20).

We, because of what Christ has accomplished and finished for us in His doing, dying and rising again are learning to sing and make melody in our hearts unto the Lord. We are learning to give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are learning continually to look outside ourselves unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2) the author and finisher of our faith.

As we walk in the Spirit, we are learning to worry about nothing, to be prayerful for everything and be thankful for anything (Philippians 4:6). By the way, living like this doesn't mean that we shall not be assailed by the lust of the flesh, rather, it guarantees that we shall not fulfil it.

But let me warn you, if you live that way, singing and making melody in your hearts being worried about nothing, prayerful for everything and thankful for anything, people might say you are mad. But so what? It will be a madness filled with the wisdom of Heaven. It will be a delightful insanity, for in so walking you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

The Wednesday Word, Oct. 21, 2015: An Ancient King with a Modern Story

In 2 Chronicles 25, we encounter a tragic and fascinating character who declares truth to us today. His name is Amaziah, King of Judah. He is interesting, not only because he had a divided heart, but also because he was enormously challenged when it came to doing the will of God from his heart.

Amaziah wanted to go to war with God's enemies, the Edomites, but rather than trust in God's ability to give him the victory he went off and hired 100,000 extra troops from his neighbours in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

100,000 additional troops to fight the war! Sounds like a plan. The only problem with it was that, at that time, God's disfavour was resting on the godless Northern Kingdom. The Lord was not about to bless such a carnal endeavour. He did not need the assistance of 100,000 backslidden apostates.

Then again, 100,000 extra men would surely come in handy. But good ideas are bad ideas when they are not God's ideas.

By the way, the only one who continually walked in glad obedience to the Father was the Lord Jesus. This He graciously did this on our behalf. We, unlike Him, are prone to plan the future without consulting God. How foolish! Having created, redeemed us and bought us with His blood, Christ Jesus owns us. We are not our own, we are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

But back to our story..... Here he is, this fearless King, inspecting his troops, ready to march the road to glory when a "Servant of God" arrives on the scene warning him that unless he dismisses the 100 000 apostates the expedition will end in disaster.

In the Bible, these servants of God show up at the most awkward of moments. Think of Samuel with his; “What meaneth the bleating of these sheep” line. And then there’s Nathan with his “Thou art the man” declaration. Watch out Jezebel and Ahab, just when you thought you got away with the theft of Nabob’s vineyard, here comes Elijah with his piercing word, straight from the Lord. Would to Heaven there were more servants of God these days who would speak to our conscience and warn us of the consequences of walking away from the will of God!

Amaziah’s response to the warning was astonishing. He asks; “But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given for the army of Israel?” He’s saying; “Look here, I’ve invested a lot of finance into this and I can’t afford to lose it.” In this, Amaziah is right up to date. He’s a 21st-century man. He is more interested in principal than principle. He seems more concerned about financial loss than obedience to the will of God.

Well, Amaziah is in a pickle, and it’s all of it his own making. He’s the author of his own dilemma. He had no business working with the godless Northern Kingdom in the first place. He began with a wrong direction, but now he’s considering staying the course. He says, “Look here, you are asking me to lose money on this deal....that can’t be God’s will.... can it?” You see once a wrong course is begun it’s not always so easy to get back to the right direction.

I love the response the man of God gives to Amaziah. He says, “The Lord is able to give thee more than this.” This sounds like the Apostle Paul “Godliness is profitable unto all things having a promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8).

So in conclusion, as gospel believers, we need to get into the habit of doing the right thing, no matter what the cost. We should never cut corners to get a financial gain. We should always be more concerned with pleasing our Saviour than in gaining some social or monetary advantage. Let’s not be like Amaziah, who when confronted with the will of God was more concerned that he was putting himself at a financial disadvantage. Remember, “God is able to give us much more than this.”

And how did it all turn out for Amaziah in the end? Exclamation! Do you want me to spoon-feed you as well (said he with a smile)? Read it for yourself in the best book ever written. You’ll enjoy drawing more insight from this Ancient King with a modern story.

Blessings in the name of Jesus whose righteousness alone qualifies us to stand before the Father.

And that’s the Gospel Truth!

The Wednesday Word, November 4, 2015: Gospel Acceptance

There is no other basis for acceptance with God other than that which God has decreed. We are "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6)...Full Stop! Period! That means our Heavenly Father is fully satisfied with the person and work of the Lord Jesus for us. He has accepted His well-beloved Son and, therefore, accepts all who are in Christ. The Believer has nothing more and nothing less to present to the Father but the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God.

Have you ever felt rejected? You say, “That’s the story of my life.” Well, the pain of that can come to end right now. If you are suffering from the ache of rejection, look to Jesus. The Father sees every

believer as being in Christ. We are in the same Christ who was nailed to the cross. Faith looks and says, 'I was crucified with Him.' Faith also sees that Christ is risen. Faith grasps that we are no longer in our sins. Faith believes that there is now therefore no damnation to those of us in Christ Jesus. Faith sees that there is no rejection from heaven in Christ.

Indeed, as we grow in grace, we learn that we are not rejected. We gain confidence and identity with the Father's verdict concerning the Son. By faith, we see that the Father's ruling concerning Christ's acceptable work is reckoned also to us. If, however, we are continually looking for some quality or righteousness within us to recommend us to God, we will continue to fail and remain in the miserable turbulence of rejection.

When all is going well, and God seems to be blessing, those not rooted in the gospel feel that God must really love and accept them. But when they are stumbling, and everything seems dry and hard, then they feel that He has withdrawn His love and acceptance. But, how can this be? There was nothing about us to commend us to God in the first place. Our acceptance with the Father will always be in Christ plus nothing. We are fully accepted in the God-Man.

Christ has purged our sin with His power. He has bought us with His blood. Not only is God for us, but we also have peace with Him (Romans 5:1). Believers are not trying to obtain peace with God. We can't obtain that which we already have. The Father has been pleased to pour His wrath on His son instead of us. Talk about being saved by grace! Not only is there no condemnation for us but we are now, in the Father's mind, in the exalted and glorified Christ.

Everything was completed at Calvary! We don't have to feel that, we simply believe that! Because of the doing, dying and rising again of the Lord Jesus, it is not presumptuous to claim for ourselves the titles, Heirs of God and Joint Heirs with Jesus Christ. Because of the doing, dying and rising of Christ, rejection is dead and we are accepted.

It is in the Gospel we learn that we are accepted by God, not because of our obedience but because of the obedience another (Romans 5:19). We are accepted in spite of our performance. The great mystery is how the all holy God can possibly accept us. We are, after all, corrupted and vile sinners (Psalm 148:2; Mark 7:21-23). The gospel, however, gives us the answer---Our acceptance is in Christ alone.

“Since I can hardly therefore bear
What in myself I see;
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God to Thee.

But since my Savior stands between,
In garments dyed in blood'
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

Thus though a sinner I am safe;
He pleads before the throne,
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins His own

And that's the Gospel Truth!

Wednesday Word, Dec. 2, 2015: Gospel Forgiveness

Since the believer's sins have been punished on Christ, we can say with assurance that we are saved. Believers are simply thisforgiven sinners!

But what kinds of sins was Jesus punished for?

Was it for our big sins?

Yes!

What about our little sins?

Yes!

And, what about the sins of omission?

Yes, for those too!

We are forgiven because Christ Jesus was punished in our place and in our stead.

The gospel truth is this, believers are covered with the righteousness of Christ. We are in Christ! We are reckoned not to have done the sins we actually have done. This is beautiful, matchless grace! I hope we never get tired of hearing this good news.

The Bible teaches that there are two kinds of righteousness. The first is the righteousness by which the uninstructed and ignorant attempt to get to heaven. The Bible, however, is ruthlessly scathing in describing this kind of righteousness. It calls it "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). The second kind of righteousness is the imputed righteousness God gives us as a free gift ... the very righteousness of Christ.

Unfortunately, if we are not bathed in the gospel, we continually revert to believing that there is something we can do to get right with God. We are like the Jews of whom Paul wrote, "They are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. (Romans 10:2-4).

So consider this, by grace, the Lord chose and accepted us. We are not saved by anything we do! Salvation is by grace alone. Don't let anyone rob you of that precious truth.

As Dr. David Dykes says, "If you could burn one single calorie of effort to bring about your salvation, then you could take a tiny part of the credit and boast about your part." Excellent statement! ... But he understates the matter...in actuality, we would take all the credit! The gospel truth is this, salvation is all of God and none of us. Charles Spurgeon expressed it this way: "If there is one stitch in the celestial garment of our righteousness which we are to insert ourselves, then we are lost."

To further grasp this matter of being saved by someone else, we read in Colossians 2:14 that Christ has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

Some have reasoned that the handwriting of ordinances alludes to the custom of affixing to the cross the charges which earned the criminal the death sentence. Remember how, at our Lord's crucifixion, the charge read, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." That had been His claim. He was the King, the heavenly King, who would rule the earth. To the Jews, this was blasphemy. To the Romans, it stood for insurrection.

Others reason that by the 'handwriting of ordinances' is meant that God took the obligations of Mosaic Law and nailed them to the cross of Christ. By His saving work, the Lord Jesus exposed all systems of works salvation as being fraudulent.

Christ died as a substitute for the people of God. So beware of these grace robbers who tell you that you have something to do to earn heaven.

We are saved by grace alone...we make no contribution.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

Wednesday Word, December 9, 2015: Gospel Salvation

What a comforting truth to know that the Lord is the God of Salvation. He brings salvation. With Him is salvation. But above all else, He Himself is our salvation. The gospel truth is that salvation is not a something but a someone (Exodus 15:2; Psalm 27:1; Psalm 38:22).

Simeon confirmed this. Do you remember him? Just after the birth of Christ, we find Simeon dwelling in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit was upon him. Indeed, the Holy Spirit had revealed unto him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. One day, as he came, by the Spirit, into the Temple, Mary and Joseph were bringing the child Jesus in to fulfil the custom of the law. They met! Simeon instantly took the baby up in his arms, and blessed God, saying, 'Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to Thy word for my eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Salvation was declared by Simeon to be a personand the person was Jesus (see Luke 2:25-29).

We don't know where Simeon was born. We don't know who his parents were. We don't know what Simeon did for a living. We don't know what he looked like. We don't know if Simeon was rich or poor. We don't know what other people thought of him. But this we do know, Simeon had lived in the expectancy of seeing the Lord's Messiah. And he saw Him when he held the baby Jesus.

Simeon held Jesus in his arms and recognised what millions have come to know and that is, Jesus is God's salvation. Jesus is salvation because He is fully God and fully man. He is, therefore, the one who is uniquely equipped to save. Jesus is the revelation of the One True and Living God. All that we may know about God has been spoken and demonstrated in Christ. Christ is the truth. He is the truth about God. He is the truth about man. He is the truth about the past. All God's plans and purposes were bound up in Him. He is the truth about the future. His death and resurrection were end time events. They point to the Last Judgment and our resurrection. It is no wonder then that we are to know

nothing but Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Furthermore, Jesus was uniquely equipped to save because He was sinless. He, Himself, is our Salvation.

Imagine the best person that you've ever met or known. Imagine if they offered to pay for your sins. We'd admire them for their unusual offer. But there's just one problem God would not accept their proposal. Why not? Because that truly amazing person, with the excellent offer, is a sinner themselves.

We are all sinners. None of us are in a position to act as a substitute for someone else's sin.

Jesus, on the other hand, was sinless. He was, therefore, able to become the substitute for His people. And, because He is the infinite God, He is able to pay the penalty for the sin for us. That's why, He is our Salvation! When Simeon held Jesus in his arms and said, "... my eyes have seen your salvation," he was saying, "Here is the one, the only one. Here is the One who saves to the uttermost. Here is the one who saves when no one else can."

We talk about God's plan of salvation, but in truth, Jesus is God's man of salvation. Redemption is in Him (Romans 3:24). Only through His doing, dying and rising again is there to be discovered the free and gracious gift of eternal life.

He is our Salvation.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

The Wednesday Word, December 16, 2015: Gospel Trouble!

Someone once said that the Christian life is easy. I disagree! As far as I can see, only the easy parts are easy. The hard parts are hard, very hard.

Along with the joy and peace in believing comes trouble.

Have you ever noticed just how much trouble Jesus caused? Consider Paul. He was doing very well thank you until he was enlisted by the Nazarene. I think I can hear some of his former friends, saying, "That guy Saul really blew it! He was one of the most privileged men in Israel till he went astray following that Jesus fellow. What good did it do him? Kicked out of Synagogues, whipped and beaten, stoned and left for dead! All he got was trouble."

Jesus, Himself, was always surrounded by trouble. Even at His birth, there was trouble. Remember how the Wise Men came looking for the newborn King and all Jerusalem was 'troubled' (Matt 2:3). Now, why in the name of thunder would the birth of a baby trouble an entire city? The new King had arrived but rather than being excited or filled with rejoicing--- the citizens of Jerusalem were troubled. What a strange brew---- an entire city troubled by a baby!

But, why were they troubled? Maybe they were troubled because they knew that Herod wouldn't take this news well ...and 'if the King ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!' On the other hand, maybe they really understood that this baby was their rightful King...a King who demanded allegiance and loyalty. A King who expected all! Maybe they felt they would be better off with Herod and the

Romans. Whoever he was, this baby was trouble!

Jesus always causes trouble! He leads us to life by means of death....that's troubling, especially when we are so committed to our own plans, goals and ambitions.

Christ speaks to us in grace, looks at us in grace, thinks of us in grace and promises us gracious rest, but this grace comes wrapped in a cross that brings us to an end of our noble efforts to impress Godthat's troubling.

What a strange Saviour He really is! He comes promising peace but at the same time brings a sword (Matthew 10:34). Swords speak of trouble!

But those ancient Wise Men saw nothing in Him to trouble them. They wanted to worship Him. They were prepared to take Him for who He was...the King and Sovereign of their existence.

We will either be troubled by Him or we will worship Him. But, even when we worship Him, we will not be free from trouble. Yet, somehow, in trouble, we learn that even in the midst of that which seems wrong and not according to the script of a good writer, He who was born in Bethlehem is really in charge. In the darkness of pain, we can come to a place where we can thank God for the grace of trouble! The truth is, our only hope is to be troubled by Jesus. We need Christ to trouble us. We need to be troubled about our self-righteousness self- sufficiency in order that we can trust in Christ's righteousness and sufficiency alone.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

Wednesday Word, December 23, 2015: Merry Christmas and Greetings to One and All

I often get criticized for not teaching people that everything to do with Christmas is pagan. Even though I neither hold a Christmas day service (unless it falls on the Lord's Day) nor have images of the baby Jesus in my home, I still am considered too liberal by those who wish me to preach against the pagan festival of Christmas.

Since there is no need to re-invent the wheel, today's Wednesday Word, concerning Christmas and paganism is from a guest writer, Pastor Daniel Parks. He says;

I sometimes hear some men say they have nothing to do with Christmas because idolatry is associated with it. I applaud any man who has nothing to do with anything associated with idolatry. Well, I would if I could find such a man! Trust me, such a man does not exist!

Every day of the week is named after a pagan god: Tuesday after Mars (through a Germanic translation into Teiwaz); Wednesday after Odin; Thursday after Thor; Friday after Frigg; Saturday after Saturn; Sunday and Monday after celestial bodies worshiped by idolaters across the earth. Certainly he who has nothing to do with any day associated with idolatry has no day!

“Every month of the year is intimately associated with idolatry. January is named after the god Janus. February is named after Februa, the ancient Roman ritual of ritual purification later personified by the god Februus. March is named after the god Mars. April was sacred to the goddess Venus. May is named after the goddess Maia. June is generally said to have been named after the goddess Juno

(hence the popularity of this month for weddings). July is named after Julius Caesar, who had a statue dedicated to him in the temple of Quirinus in 45 BC on which was written “To the Invincible God.” August is named after Caesar Augustus, who was declared to be a god by the Roman Senate upon his death in 14 AD. The fact that September, October, November, and December are not named after gods, having instead names identifying them respectively as the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth months, does not make them one whit holier. Remember that every day in those months is named after a pagan god. Also, those months have “holy days” (called holidays) designated by idolaters.

Every time you look into the heavens you see planets named after pagan gods such as Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, also Ceres, Eris, Haumea, Makemake, and Pluto. We who are gospel ministers will obey our Lord’s commission to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15) even though in so doing we will visit cities named after idolatrous gods.* Such places are no less idolatrous than Corpus Christi (meaning Body of Christ) or Saint Croix (meaning Holy Cross).

I will not castigate Paul the apostle for ministering in Athens (Acts 17:15ff), named after the goddess Athena; nor for not deserting that place when “he saw that the city was given over to idols” (v.16); nor for accompanying idolaters to the Areopagus (vv.19-32), named after the Greek god Ares. (The KJV identifies this place as “Mars’ Hill” in v.22, named after the Roman god equivalent to the Greek Ares.) I assure you that Christians are at liberty to eat meat that was sacrificed to an idol (1 Corinthians ch.8). But I exhort Christians to not use their liberty in Christ in such a way as to offend the “weak” brother (as Paul calls him in vv.7, 9, 10, 11, 12) who has scruples against such contact with idolatry. You may remind him that “we know that an idol is nothing in the world (v.4).

I assure you that you will not become unsanctified if you travel on a highway used by automobiles with idolatrous names such as Aurora, Mercury, Saturn, or Taurus. Nor if you have contact with an ocean, which in Greek mythology was personified as a Titan and ruled by the god Neptune/Poseidon. Nor if you use the King James Version of the Holy Bible, in which the Greek word for Passover in Acts 12:4 is mistranslated “Easter”, named for the Chaldean goddess Astarte, Queen of Heaven.

I assure you that the Lord Jesus Christ was not tainted by idolatry when He said “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Mark 12:17) even though Caesars were idolized by Romans as gods. The fact of the matter at hand is that we live in an idolatrous world, for “the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1 John 5:19). We must ever obey the command to “keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). But he who would have nothing whatsoever to do with anything associated with idolatry must “go out of the world” – as Paul expressed it (1 Corinthians 5:10). That would be contrary to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed that His people at this present time not be taken “out of the world” (John 17:15). Be confident that you may be “in the world” but not “of the world”, and that many things idolatrous in name do not require the worship of the gods associated with them.

Therefore, if you are offered “Christmas” as a holiday, enjoy it. If you are offered a “Christmas” bonus, spend it. If a merchant offers a “Christmas” sale, shop. If you are offered a “Christmas” gift, accept it – and return the favor. If you receive a “Christmas” card, read it. If you are invited to a “Christmas” meal, eat. If you are offered a glass of “Christmas” eggnog, drink. If you are invited to worship an idol, refuse. And “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) – whether the day be Christmas Day or the Lord’s Day!

If others wish to abominate everything associated with Christmas (including all things cited in the preceding paragraph), let them. If others judge you harshly for associating with Christmas, let them. If

others do not feel comfortable with exercising Christian liberty regarding Christmas things, try not to offend them.

May the Lord richly bless Christmas to one and all! May He not withhold blessing us during this season simply because it is associated with idolatry!"

Daniel Parks
Minister of the Gospel
Saint Croix, US Virgin Islands

Wednesday Word, December 31, 2015: Gospel Giving

Have you ever heard of Selina Hastings? No? She was the affluent and influential Countess of Huntingdon, England. Selina referred to herself as the Lady who was saved by the letter 'M.'

Of 1 Corinthians 1:26 " For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:"

She would say;

"Blessed be God, it does not say 'any mighty,' 'any noble'; it says 'M-any mighty,' 'M-any noble.' I owe my salvation to the letter 'M.' If it had been "not any noble," where would I have been?"

She was wealthy and powerful indeed. However, instead of living a decadent lifestyle, when the Lord saved her, she began funding the ministries of gospel preachers like George Whitfield and John Beeridge. Humanly speaking, if she had not made the financial investment, men like Whitefield would have been unable to perform their fruitful ministries. God has always used people to invest financially in ministries for the furtherance of the gospel.

But enough of Selina Hastings. What about the women who financially supported Christ's ministry? Yes, you read me correctly! There were people who funded Christ's ministry. Indeed, our Lord's ministry was financed by the free will gifts and contributions of people to whom he had ministered.

At the beginning of chapter 8 of Luke's gospel we read:

"Soon afterward Jesus went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."

It was faithful women who supplied for the financial needs of Jesus and his disciples. As givers, they were a crucial part of His ministry.

Ministry costs money. This principle is so obvious it seems almost silly to state, but many people don't appear to realise that. We, however, thank God for each of you who have made our ministry possible through your giving and prayers.

2015 has been a year of tests and opportunities. Here in Europe opposition to God's Word is at boiling point. Perhaps, however, the invasion of radical Muslims will bring us back to the cross.

In 2016, we will be re-launching the Gospel Truth Radio Broadcast. This is a tremendous tool for reaching the lost and establishing the saints.

We will also be developing an Internet channel for short and direct gospel messages.

We will continue evangelising in Ireland and establishing the saints here.

With God's provision, in 2016, we will also journey to Nepal to work with the Nepalese Indigenous Church Movement. A Gospel Conference for 300 pastors is being arranged for me to speak to later in the year.

Of course, we remain committed to our pastors in India and to our orphanage in Karnataka.

By God's grace, we will also continue to produce The Wednesday Word and carry on writing Christ centred books.

All of this cost money. The only way we can do any of these things is through support from partners. If you would like to be a part of this please see the links below.

Again, we thank all of you who have given and prayed for us.

Happy New Year!

Go to:

[Top of page](#)
[Wednesday Word Index by year](#)
[HOME](#)