

THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

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SCRIPTURE AND THE SPIRIT

by H. B. Little

Over the last few years, I have taken an interest in the histories of our old Baptist associations. In these histories, one can find a wealth of information regarding the organized efforts of the Baptist people. Particularly, I have been fascinated with the questions posed during the associational meetings. Often when a quandary arose within a church or the churches of an association, one of the churches would ask the association for advice regarding the difficulty. The association would consider and debate the matter, then provide an answer to the question. From the answer provided for a given question, one can reasonably determine the sentiment and practice of the majority of churches in the association regarding the topic being discussed. This article sets forth a question and answer from such a history and provides a brief commentary on the position taken by our Baptist forefathers. Hopefully, from this, one can get the sense of the old landmarks set by previous generations of Baptists, which ought not be removed.

The question for consideration is found in the records of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. This association was organized in 1707 and was the first founded on the American continent. The question pertains to the harmony of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, and was posed in 1761. The question is, “Whether it be entirely proper to call the Scriptures the rule, and the Spirit the guide?” After deliberation, the association very shrewdly resolved:

The Holy Scriptures we profess to be our full, sufficient, and only rule of faith and obedience, and caution all to beware of every impulse, revelation, or any other imagination whatever, inconsistent with, or contrary to, the holy Scriptures, under the pretense of being guided by the Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit, illuminates the understanding to know the mind of God, contained in the Scriptures, and may properly be called a guide. (Minutes of the Philadelphia Association, Gillette, p. 82)

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PRESENT JUDGEMENT

by M. A. Brawner

One of the most misapplied words in all of the Bible is “judgment”. Frequently this word is used in such a way as to dissuade us from using any judgment at all. This behavior has led individuals to act as if there is no need to be concerned with even judging their own selves. How often have we heard it quoted, “Judge not, that ye be not judged”? The suggestion is, unless we also want to be judged, we should avoid engaging in it. It is strange to draw such an odd conclusion. God has plainly declared and had it written that judgment is coming to us all. The judgment is set and we shall all face it. Either we will be prepared, or we will stand guilty. So then, ignoring judgment fails to make it go away. Attempting to ignore judgment is a plain failure to look to the will of God so that we can be prepared for it. Let’s then consider some scriptures relating to this important topic.

God has let us know that judgment must begin among those who make up His own house. The house of God is made up of those born again people who have yielded to the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be clear who makes up the house of God, we find it written in 1Ti 3:15, “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”. So then, the house of God is the church personally organized by the Lord Jesus Christ during His personal ministry here on earth.

God has established that judgment must begin in His church. Consider 1Pe 4:17, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” This verse makes it clear that the time for judgment to take place in the house of God is the time in which we live. This judgment is upon us. It is to take place now rather than be delayed to some time in the future. This verse goes on and declares what it means for those who fail to obey the gospel of God. If now is the time

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STUMBLING BLOCKS

by G. Dunham

“Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.” Lev 19:14. Moses under the direction of God is here presenting God's law to Israel, as they are on their journey to the promised land. In doing such, God declares that we as His children should never put a stumbling block before those that are blind. Obviously, the cruelty of such an action should never be tolerated, even when it is not intended. If they knew a blind person was prone to pass by that way, they would, in my opinion, be guilty of violating this law if they left a stumbling block out, even if the leaving of it was meant to be of benefit to someone else. The blind person could not see the danger of it and could be injured greatly, or even die, as a result of this negligence.

In Matthew 5:14, Jesus likened the condition of the unbelieving Pharisees, as well as their followers, to the state of blindness, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.” We can understand from experience the utter darkness of the lost. You hear the gospel for the first time, and suddenly fear and danger are on every hand. Whereas before you walked without fear of stumbling and falling. Then, every step begins to be halting and laborious. Fear takes hold of every action. Moreover, the Prince of Darkness quickly seizes on the opportunity and brings fear on those that are blind of dangers on every hand, with the hope of convincing them to just curl up and not move. The lost do not know which way to go, and can not know, as we find the Ethiopian Eunuch saying to Philip, in Acts 8:31 “How can I, except some man should guide me?”

This is where we should come in. 2 Cor 4:4 states, “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Jesus said in Mat 5:14 “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”

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PRESENT JUDGEMENT

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for judgment to take place among those who make up the house of God, what severe and dire consequences must be coming to those who obey not the gospel? Let's all pray that the eyes of all such might be opened before it be everlasting too late for them.

In as much as judgment is to take place in the house of God, is it any wonder that the Bible contains what judgment is to be exercised? The Bible in general, but specifically the New Testament, holds the sole rule of faith and practice for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in the New Testament that patterns for judgment within the church are found. For example, consider what is recorded in 1 Corinthians chapter five. Here we find a situation in which a member of the Church at Corinth had become involved. This chapter describes the situation and points out how the church was to handle it. When reading through the whole chapter, it becomes clear that verses 4 and 5 connect directly to the last sentence in verse 13. The church is told to "put away" that person from them. So then, here is a person who was to be removed from the membership of the church. This is plainly an example of how the Church is to exercise judgment. The Lord is the sole Head and Lawgiver of His house. When exercising His judgment, the church is simply applying what her Head and Master has taught her.

Let's pay attention to what is found in 1Co 5:11, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Please see how that this verse ends with the words "with such an one NO NOT to eat". This verse does not say, "with such an one KNOW NOT to eat". The words "no not" gives a double emphasis in the negative direction. It means that the Church is to absolutely avoid eating with such an one as described here. This establishes judgment as it relates to administering the Lord's Supper. But also notice that it goes beyond this. It helps church members find a type of a mirror by which we can consider our own self. If the church is to withhold the Lord's Supper from any who are actively living in any of the ways described in this list, then each member should realize these behaviors are always contrary to the will of God. As part of the house of God, this

judgment applies to us individually just as much as it applies to anyone else.

Let's take another look at this verse and find the following: "...if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." It would do us good to study each of these words to find their exact meaning. Many times we will allow words like "fornicator" and "drunkard" to jump out at us. However, there are other words joined with them holding just as much weight as they do. So then, if we carefully avoid "fornication" but we allow ourselves to be active "railers", we are just as guilty. Likewise, if "drunkenness" has no place in our lives but we are overcome with "covetousness", how can we consider ourselves clear of judgment? The answer is obvious. Seeing how these behaviors are clearly identified for God's judgment, shouldn't we tremble before the throne of grace as we seek forgiveness for any of these that may have crept into our lives?

By extension, we can take this list from 1 Cor 5:11 and go to Galatians chapter five to find near parallel scriptures. Specifically, in Gal 5:19-23, we find a list of behaviors referred to as "works of the flesh" and another referred to as "fruit of the spirit". Comparing the "works of the flesh" in Galatians with the list of behaviors from 1 Cor 5:11, it is apparent these are referring to the same behaviors. This means that the "works of the flesh" should be held in the same view as those behaviors for which the church should withhold the Lord's Supper. After all, Gal 5:21 clearly states that those who allow themselves to be overcome by these behaviors have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. So then, the mind of God is settled. Judgment is established regarding these things. Yet, these verses also identify godly behaviors which are "fruit of the spirit". These are to be sought after while the others are to be avoided. God help us all to be found daily applying at the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help us live our lives seeing we constantly have the need to be a fruit bearing people.

Any time such a topic as this comes up, it is needful to remind ourselves what the Lord taught regarding hypocrisy. In Matt 7:3-4, the Lord pointed out that we need to begin with our own selves when it comes to judgment. That is to say, we should start working out our own sins before fixating on the sins of others. The truth is, when we

take a good honest look at ourselves, we should be very merciful towards our brothers and sisters. As we address our own sins with the Lord, it is discovered that we live in a body that is absolutely given to sinful desires. Knowing that the judgment of God is settled and certain things are completely against the will of God, we find no way we can excuse our own behaviors that God sees as sinful. Likewise, we are moved with compassion for our brothers and sisters knowing these struggles are common among all the people of God. However, if we ignore our own sins and focus on the sins of others, this humility before God and compassion for others will be missing. May the Lord help us to keep these His teachings in mind and apply them correctly.

Knowing that judgment must begin at the house of God, those who are part of His house ought to be highly aware of the need for repentance and the forgiveness of sins. In 1st John 1:8-9, we find these linked together when we read, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Too often, the devil persuades us that our sins have exceeded the willingness of God to forgive. However, these verses from 1st John draw attention to the direct opposite. God is "faithful and just" to forgive our sins if we will confess them.

It is a major error to fail to even acknowledge that we have sinned at all. To deny our sin is to deceive ourselves. Yet, to be in a condition so as to be able to recognize sin, it is vital that we take the word of God and read what God has had documented in it regarding sin. The world tells the servants of God every day that sin is really no big deal. However, we all know better. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Woe unto them who deny these teachings of the gospel of God. Denying sin fails to make it go away, and ignoring judgment is no better. However, when judgment is exercised appropriately, it brings the followers of Jesus Christ closer to living in accordance with His will. It not only helps us pay attention to how we live in service to the Lord, but it helps us be compassionate towards our brothers and sisters who are also living through the same struggles of this life. May God help us to grasp the blessedness of this state and grant the grace to lay hold on it unto the very day He calls us home.

STUMBLING BLOCKS

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We, as the Lord's church, are instructed to be a Light unto the world that is lost and stumbling in darkness. Imagine yourself being in a room of total darkness, a blackness you could feel, then suddenly a tiny light shows forth. What joy! Would you not instantly seize upon the light that comes to you? Likewise, it is for the lost. When the Spirit of an Almighty God gives utterance to one of His, and the words come forth, it is like light in a dark place to them that are blind.

Oh but what cruelty, what viciousness of spirit would it be at that time to throw a stumbling block in the way of that one who has just perceived the light? Nay brethren, let us be careful to continue to present wholesome words that would enlighten them further. Too many times, because of traditions and expectations from our experiences, we, with honest hearts, advise lost people when seeking the Lord to do something that we believe would be beneficial. The jailor asked Paul down after midnight, in Acts 16:30 "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul did not tell him to go down to a spot on the road to Damascus. He didn't advise him to look up, cry out loud, or any other such thing. He simply said "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Now we know that the belief that he spoke of was from the heart, as we find in Romans 10. But notice please that there is no other expectation on the part of Paul when advising a heart broken sinner. One must believe, or trust, the plan that God, before the foundation of the world, has prepared. This plan is that His Son would die in our place that we might have eternal life.

Why then do we feel the need to tell sinners to go where God would have them to be? God would have them to trust him, not go somewhere. God saved Paul on the road and then said arise and go into Damascus, and it will be told you what you shall do. Eph 2:8-10 states, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is by grace that we are saved, when we put our trust in God. There are no works that are involved. One must simply believe.

I just had the privilege of witnessing God's saving power in a revival meeting where a young man realized he was lost and separated from God. The young man bowed his head at his seat, while we were having prayer, and trusted the Lord. No one knew that anything was going on, except for him and God. When he stood up later in the service and shared what had happened, it was a glorious time. This is not an isolated incident but occurs again and again. The church simply does what God tells them to do, preach the word, and God does the rest. Even when someone comes to the altar and prays, can we save them? No, it is God and Him alone.

I know that when someone is dear to us, and we see them troubled and crying out to God, we want to help them. But the truth is that most of the time there is nothing we can do but pray and encourage them to keep seeking the Lord. Telling them to try to do something that we did may inadvertently throw a stumbling block in their path, and ultimately, cause them to fall or die. God requires repentance and faith, and that is all. He does not expect them to go a certain place, or pray out loud, or look up, or look down, or any such thing. Have people been saved going to the altar? Absolutely they have, but many have gone and went away sorrowful. It is the condition of the heart and its trust in Christ that changes things. It wasn't that the woman with an issue of blood touched the hem of Christ's garment, although she did. It was that she believed if she would, she would be made whole. The action may be associated with the faith, but it is the faith that saves as Jesus told her in Luke 8:48, "...Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace."

I write this not to offend or discourage anyone from talking to the lost when they are seeking God, but in sincere hope that we will consider the things we are saying before we say them. I do not wish to hinder the leadership of the Spirit of God, but simply hope that we will be mindful to speak as the Spirit gives utterance, that we cast not up a stumbling block before the lost whereby they might fall. Rather, let us labor to cause the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ to shine brighter and brighter, that those in darkness might see the way more clearly and come to know God.

PRAYER FOR OUR NATION

by H. B. Little

This year has been one of much trouble in our country. It seems that civil and political unrest prevails in our nation. It seems that bad reports constantly dominate the news. It is no wonder, considering the prophesy regarding the last days. In 2nd Timothy 3:1, Paul writes, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." In other words, the last days will be distressing, or grievous, ones. It seems that our nation is divided and our countrymen find little common ground. This lack of love in our nation is also a sign of the times. In Matthew 24:12, the Lord Jesus foretold of the attitudes of men, near the end of time, when He said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

While we see prophesy fulfilled before our eyes, we still have an obligation to pray for our nation, our leaders, our countrymen, our servicemen, etc. Paul often urged God's people to pray for our fellowman. In 1st Timothy 2:1-2, Paul writes, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." According to this passage, the church is duty bound to pray for our nation. Our prayers are necessary to the enjoyment of a peaceful environment where we can carry out the commands to our Savior.

Our prayers are not only important for the enjoyment of religious liberty, but also for the salvation of our countrymen. Paul continues on the benefits of prayer in 1st Timothy 2:3, "For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." If we are not careful, we can be discouraged by our environment and forget that our commission to spread the gospel and further the kingdom of God is "unto the end of the world." Let us be mindful that the all-knowing Son of God gave us our commission and that He surely saw the events of the year 2017 before He made the world. Instead of being discouraged by our "perilous times", let us double our efforts as God's people. Included in these efforts ought to be sincere and intense prayer. We should remember the words of encouragement in James 5:16, "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

SCRIPTURE AND THE SPIRIT

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One can ascertain a few doctrinal positions held by the 18th century Baptists of New England from the above resolution. First, they believed the Holy Bible to be the inspired word of God. Second, they believed the Holy Bible to be the only rule of practice in the churches. Third, they believed that all inclinations, opinions and whims, even those claiming direction of the Holy Spirit, ought to be tried by the Bible. Fourth, they believed that the Holy Spirit would only direct in harmony with the teachings of the Holy Bible.

These four positions are consistent with the principles found in the New Testament. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God...". In other words, the Holy Bible is God breathed. The words recorded in the Old and New Testaments are as true as if God had spoken them directly to us, as He did to Israel at Mount Sinai. Paul taught the canonized Bible to be the word of God.

Paul writes further in the passage regarding scripture, "...it is profitable for doctrine... instruction in righteousness." He asserts the Holy Bible is useful for doctrine (teaching, the substance of what should be taught) and instruction in righteousness (education or training in the right way). Paul taught the Holy Bible is the source of doctrine and practice for the evangelical church.

John writes in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." In other words, many opinions and false doctrines prevail in the world. Also, many falsely claim leadership of the Spirit of God. As such, the apostle taught these different opinions and spirits ought to be tried. How are they to be tried? They are to be tried by the Holy Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus, during His earthly ministry, taught on the harmony of scripture and the Spirit. John records the words of Christ in John 16:13, "...when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself...", and again in John 14:26, "he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The Lord clearly taught the harmony of the Holy Bible and the Holy Spirit stating the Spirit should not speak of Himself but should bring to remembrance the words of Christ.

The biblical principles set forth by the Philadelphia Association pertaining to the relationship of scripture and the Spirit were far reaching and long-lasting. These landmark doctrines later found their way into the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* contained in John Newton Brown's *A Baptist Church Manual*, 1853. In this confession, the first article states:

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction: that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

Here the New Hampshire Baptist Convention, unmistakably asserts the Holy Bible to be the word of God, the "perfect" rule of practice, the foremost authority by which "all" actions, systems of doctrine and beliefs should be judged, and the standard for Christian communion. This statement regarding the Scriptures was used verbatim in both J. M. Pendleton's *Baptist Church Manual* (1867) and *Glover's Church Manual* (1983).

For two hundred fifty years, the Baptists on this continent have understood the Holy Bible to be inspired scripture. These churches have held the Bible to be their sole rule of faith and practice. They have believed the Scriptures to be the standard by which all opinions, even those claiming divine leadership, ought to be tried. They have contended the Holy Bible and the leadership of the Holy Spirit always agree. The Old-Time Baptists ought to maintain and practice according to these vital principles today.

CORRESPONDENCE

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LET US DO GOOD

by H. B. Little

Often when we see the natural disasters which strike our world, we are driven to our knees in prayer for those impacted. This summer we have seen the western part of the United States ravaged by wildfires and the southeastern region devastated by more than one hurricane. While we ought to pray earnestly for those affected, let us remember the words of James 2:15-16, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" This verse calls to our attention the need for good works. While prayer accomplishes much, what if God intends our actions to be the means by which He will deliver the afflicted? According to this passage, benevolent works are required by the Holy Bible.

Let us consider the works of the New Testament church. The Church at Jerusalem, in Acts 6, made a concerted effort to support the needs of the destitute widows dwelling in Judea. This work was evidently a service provided by the church, for at the direction of the apostles the church ordained seven men to oversee the collection of the things needed and its distribution to the poor.

The waiting of tables in Acts 6 is not the only example in the Bible of benevolent works performed in church capacity. Another example can be found in Acts 11:28-30 where Luke writes:

And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Luke here records an account of a famine in Palestine which affected some of the brethren of the region. He also records the organized relief efforts of the disciples, who collected goods and sent them in the hands of the missionaries Barnabas and Saul.

Let us pray for those affected by the natural disasters in the West and Southeast. Also, let our churches look for opportunities to do good unto the afflicted by supporting the relief efforts, contributing cheerfully of our possessions, knowing that God loves a cheerful giver.