



# Green Run Tidings



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Green Run Baptist Church

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## *Two Birds, One Stone*

When error comes into the church we face a set of obligations. First, we must confront the error. The world has embraced a live-and-let-live relativism that will accept any foolishness, but will not accept the wisdom of calling foolishness by its name. Too often the church follows suit. We want to get along, and so pet the wolves in our midst rather than drive them away. Our calling, as faithful soldiers of the kingdom, is to combat error in whatever form it takes. Second, we must not err when confronting the error. If we would have sound and accurate thinking in the church, we must be sound and accurate in what we denounce. We are not serving well the kingdom of God when we fight carnally, using gossip, innuendo, and aiming our fire at our allies. Consider the almost civil war during the time of Joshua. Those tribes on the eastern side of the Jordan, you'll remember, built an altar. Their brothers prepared to make war against those who would establish false worship within the land. These brothers came to understand, thankfully, that the altar wasn't built for false worship, but as a reminder of the covenantal union those on the east had with the rest of Israel. Far from an occasion for division, the altar was a monument to unity. Zeal without knowledge, in this instance, could have led to unnecessary division and senseless slaughter. (See Joshua 22 for the full story.)

We are given these stories, told of these events that we might learn from them. Consider, in our own day, the battles in some of our institutions and on the internet over the doctrines taught by N.T. Wright, as well as those doctrines that collectively go by the moniker "Federal Vision." It is certainly fair to say that the teaching of N.T. Wright has had an impact on what has come to be known as Federal Vision.

Often those who celebrate the one celebrate the other, and those who condemn the one condemn the other. Such doesn't mean, however, that the two should be conflated. We ought not, sloppily, accuse all who appreciate Wright of embracing Federal Vision, nor accuse all who appreciate Federal Vision of embracing Wright.

Far less, however, should we be accusing those who embrace neither of embracing both, which has somehow happened to me. I have been charged in the past with Wright's errors, and though I do not now, nor have I ever embraced Federal Vision theology, I have been charged with its errors too.

This difficult-to-define way of thinking hit most of our radars due to a conference held in 2002 at Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Louisiana. The hosts there, noting the concern they had raised the year before, invited four critics to come speak to those concerns. As one of those four, I took the opportunity to argue that Federal Vision's view of apostasy was, as far as I could tell, a denial, however unintentional, of the biblical doctrine of perseverance of the saints. That is a rather serious problem. One cannot deny perseverance, or affirm a system of thought that leaves little room for perseverance, and still claim to be Reformed or confessional. Neither can one claim to believe in perseverance if one affirms God predestined that some would come to saving faith and then lose that saving faith. The doctrine of perseverance has never merely affirmed that those whom God foreknew would persevere but rather affirmed that all those who trust in the finished work of Christ will persevere, will so trust until their death. In sundry venues, over the years, I have highlighted this same problem and in turn noted a long series of other problem areas within the movement. These include its sanguine approach toward Rome and Orthodoxy and the efficacy of their sacraments; Federal Vision's often muddled language on the relationship between our works, perseverance, and future justification; and, of course, their often rancorous rhetoric. (To be fair, that particular charge is rightly leveled all around. This peculiar debate has not exactly been marked by gentlemanly behavior.)

Reformed orthodoxy affirms both that people do change, and that people do stay the same. That is, we become soldiers of the King only after God changes our hearts, blessing us with the gift of faith.

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Before we are drafted into the army of the Lord we are soldiers in the army of the serpent. We are by nature children of wrath. His Spirit changes us. This supernatural work of the Spirit is, of course, irresistible. Once we have been drafted into God's army, once we have been given a heart of flesh, we can never go back. Our Captain, our King, our Lord, has promised that we shall never again serve the lord of darkness. Jesus has promised that nothing can take us from His hand. We are reminded that those who appear to leave us were ultimately never with us ([1 John 2:19](#)). One can no more defect from the Lord's army than one can be disowned after being adopted into the family of God.

When Jesus commands that we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, He leaves no room for not seeking the kingdom. Those who seek first the kingdom, by His grace and in His power, will seek always His kingdom. And praise God, He rewards all those who seek Him. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Jr.*

## *The Ultimate Party Planner*

"But, for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret Master of the Ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," can truly say to every group of Christian friends "You have not chosen one another but I have chosen you for one another." The Friendship is not a reward for our discrimination and good taste in finding one another out. It is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others. They are no greater than the beauties of a thousand other men; by Friendship God opens our eyes to them. They are, like all beauties, derived from Him through the Friendship itself, so that it is His instrument for creating as well as for revealing. At this feast it is He who has spread the board and it is He who has chosen the guests. It is He, we may dare to hope, who sometimes does, and always should, preside. Let us not reckon without our Host." ~ *C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves*

## *Five Reasons to Study Old Testament History*

Shakespeare said that history is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." The Christian view of history is quite a contrast; we believe God ordained it, organizes it, and moves it towards a meaningful, definite, and certain purpose.

However many Christians entertain a negative view of Old Testament History, of its usefulness and even of its accuracy. It is often regarded as "far away" and "distant" chronologically, geographically, socially, and theologically. "What can it do for me?" and "Why study it?" are common questions. Here are five reasons to study it and benefit from it.

### **1. OT History is True History**

Israel's neighbors expressed their beliefs through fantastic, elaborate, "out-of-this-world" myths. In contrast, Old Testament narratives about Israel describe real events in real time involving real people and a real God. The reality of Israel's faith rested on the reality of Israel's history.

Similarly, if we lose or give up the truthfulness of the Biblical record, we lose and give up the Truth. We also lose our Christian faith because it is founded not on detached philosophical speculations but on God's acts in human history.

Approaching Old Testament narratives with unshakeable confidence in their accuracy and truthfulness will build up unshakeable faith.

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## *Five Reasons to Study Old Testament History*

### **2. OT History is *Selective* History**

No matter how much they deny it, every historian has an agenda. Though often unspoken, that agenda can often be deduced by analyzing his selection, arrangement, and editing of events. Old Testament writers also had an agenda that guided the selection, arrangement, and editing of their accounts. The only difference, and it's a major difference, is that their selectivity was divinely inspired and, therefore, in no ways diminishes their truthfulness.

Therefore, when reading Old Testament history, ask yourself why the author selected these events and that particular angle on them. It will get you much closer to the message he intended to convey to his original audience.

### **3. OT History is *Relevant* History**

Old Testament preaching often faces the charge of seeming irrelevance. There are vast differences between the world of the Old Testament and the modern world. However, this "relevance gap" cannot be bridged by forgetting Old Testament history. Attempting this may make the sermon relevant but it makes the Scriptures irrelevant.

Rather, a right understanding of Old Testament history enables us to understand the original message to the original audience at the original time and place; and that having done this, the bridge to the present message is far easier and safer to construct.

### **4. OT History is *Purposeful* History**

Many history books simply relate the what, when, where, and how of each event. Not many attempt to answer the "Why?" question, and those that do usually prove laughably unreliable.

In contrast, biblical history has a clear purpose: it is a progressive revelation of the mind and heart of God for the benefit of needy sinners. God is the subject and the hero of the Bible. Therefore, when we read an Old Testament narrative, we ask three questions:

1. What does this story reveal about God?
2. How is this intended to help needy sinners?
3. What role does this story play in the larger and longer biblical story?

The last question will help prevent us reading the chapters as disconnected dots and unrelated atoms.

### **5. OT History is *Redemptive* History**

The Old Testament is redemptive history. God actively directs human history for the purpose of redeeming sinners to Himself. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Old Testament to record what would graciously reveal that redemptive purpose, and even the Redeemer Himself ([Luke 24:27](#)). The Biblical history, then, is not just facts to teach us theology. These historical facts serve to bring in God's elect. What greater motive do we need to study it than that these Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)). ~ *David Murray - Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and chairman of HeadHeartHand*

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## *The Pastor's Example of Evangelism*

In his final letter, Paul charges Timothy, his son in the faith, to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). By these words, the aged Apostle establishes the timeless standard for pastoral ministry, not only for young Timothy but for all pastors in every generation and in every place.

With Apostolic authority, this imperative command comes with binding force. All pastors must do the work of an evangelist. They must earnestly proclaim the gospel message, urging people to trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. So, where should this pastoral evangelism begin?

**First**, every pastor must preach the gospel to himself. Before any pastor can call others to repent, he must believe in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy, saying, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:16). That is, every preacher must examine his own soul first. The success of one’s evangelism is, first and foremost, dependent upon his right standing in grace.

In *The Reformed Pastor*, Puritan Richard Baxter addressed the ministers of his day, many of whom were unconverted: “See that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought in your own souls. Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others.” Simply put, pastors must embrace the very message they preach.

Charles Spurgeon writes:

*A graceless pastor is a blind man elected to a professorship of optics, philosophizing upon light and vision, discoursing upon ... the nice shades and delicate blendings of the prismatic colours, while he himself is absolutely in the dark! He is a dumb man elevated to the chair of music; a deaf man fluent upon symphonies and harmonies! He is a mole professing to educate eaglets.*

Sadly, unconverted pastors do exist. Martin Luther was a doctor of theology and professor of Bible before he was born again. John Wesley was an overseas missionary prior to his conversion. Every pastor must be certain of his own salvation before he can powerfully preach the gospel to others.

**Second**, every pastor must preach the gospel to his family. Evangelism in the home begins with shepherding one’s own wife in her relationship with Christ. I will never forget an elder’s meeting in which one of our pastors shared that his wife had been converted the previous night. She was one of the nicest people in the church, yet, unknown to us, she was unconverted. How often is this the reality? To this end, every pastor must give attention to the spiritual state of his wife.

Similarly, he must give the same attention to his children. This evangelism should begin early and involve disciplines such as Bible readings, catechizing, and family devotions. I came to faith in Christ as a result of my father reading the Bible to me in the evenings. Moreover, home evangelism should include informal conversations, probing questions, and a consistently godly life modeled before the children.

**Third**, every pastor must preach the gospel to his flock. There must be a sober realization that not every church member is regenerate. Every pastor’s evangelistic work must center in his pulpit ministry as he regularly presents the gospel with clear, decisive appeals. He must implore his congregation to respond to the gospel and be saved. There should be a distinct urgency in his voice as he exhorts, even pleads, for his flock to be converted.

Certainly, this evangelistic thrust is not to be confused with abuses and manipulative methods. I am not contending that people raise a hand, walk an aisle, parrot a prayer, and be declared saved — all within five minutes.

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But I am insisting that our gospel preaching must be compelling. It must come with bold proclamations of the cross, warm appeals to come to Christ, and passionate persuasions that urge people to respond by faith alone. Pastors must give gospel messages that call for repentance and issue severe warnings of eternal consequences for unbelief.

**Fourth**, every pastor should evangelize the community. The strategies will differ from one man to the next, depending upon his gifts and opportunities. As a fisher of men, he must go where the fish are. He must leave dry land, sail out into deep waters, and cast his net. Pastors must venture out into the community, share the gospel, and urge people to believe upon Christ. Community outreach involves building bridges to unbelievers. This may include hosting a Bible study in an office, a restaurant, or a home. It can involve a local radio program, a newspaper editorial, or an Internet blog. It means showing acts of mercy with a gospel presentation. Whatever the strategy, making such inroads requires going where unconverted people are and unashamedly sharing Christ.

It has been rightly said that the greatest joy is knowing Christ and the second greatest is making Him known. May every pastor enter joyfully into this privileged task of doing the work of an evangelist. ~ *Dr. Steven Lawson - Christ Fellowship Baptist Church - Mobile, Alabama*

## *True Love*

God is love, and love never fails because God never fails. Love cannot be separated from God and cannot exist without Him. God's love is the foundation and definition of love, just as He is the source, fountain, sustainer, and enabler of love. God gives meaning to love, and without Him, love isn't only worthless but meaningless. Without God as its source and center, that which humans conceive of as love is impatient and unkind, envious and boastful, arrogant and rude, always insisting on its own way, irritable, resentful, rejoicing in wrongdoing and falsehood. Without God, love is nothing more than a hateful lie of Satan.

Every day we hear people talk about love as if it were some sort of impersonal force and independent energy that alone has the power to change hearts, restore homes, cure diseases, rebuild communities, and unite nations. The world is infatuated with the idea of love. Even the word itself, *love*, has degenerated into an all-encompassing, catch-all term that seems to be at the heart of a rising one-religion-politically-correct world language — a language of love that has become a religion unto itself. And although the world, the flesh, and the Devil would love to strip love of all its beauty and character in order to make it adaptable to every conceivable context and theology, such would be a futile attempt. For just as God defines God, God defines love.

In the end, the one, true definition of love will, indeed, win because truth will win, and truth will win because Christ has won, and Christ has won because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. To be sure, we deserve to perish — not just today but for eternity — and we don't deserve life — neither the life we have today nor life for eternity. The wages of my rebellious sin is death. Consequently, I deserve eternal condemnation just as much as Mahatma Ghandi, Adolf Hitler, and my own children. Every man, woman, and child — no matter how good or bad we think we are — will perish without repenting from self-trust and trusting in Jesus Christ, who is the only truth, the only life, and the only way to the Father. True love means proclaiming the truth. True love means proclaiming the gospel. True love means proclaiming the love of God and the wrath of God, and the most unloving thing we could possibly do is withhold the truth from those who are perishing without Christ — the truth about God's love, holiness, justice, and grace; the truth about man's sin, death, and hell; the truth about faith, forgiveness, and an eternal life *Coram Deo*, before the face of God in heaven, where God's love will reign over us forever. ~ *Burk Parsons - Editor of Tabletalk Magazine*

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## *Southern Baptists and Salvation: It's Time to Talk*

*"What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself" (James 2:14-17).*

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Your righteous deeds illuminate the path to God by reflecting His power and grace to others. That brings Him glory and proves your faith is genuine.

Your deeds also serve as the basis of divine judgment. If you practice righteousness, you will receive eternal life; if you practice unrighteousness, you will receive "wrath and indignation" (Rom. 2:6-8). God will judge you on the basis of your deeds because what you do reveals who you really are and what you really believe. That's why any so-called faith that doesn't produce good works is dead and utterly useless!

James illustrates that point in a practical way. If someone lacks the basic necessities of life and comes to you for help, what good does it do if you simply wish him well and send him away without meeting any of his needs? It does no good at all! Your pious words are hypocritical and without substance. If you really wished him well, you would do what you can to give him what he needs! Your unwillingness to do so betrays your true feelings. Similarly, dead faith is hypocritical, shallow, and useless because it doesn't put its claims into action--indeed, it has no divine capacity to do so.

I pray that your life will always manifest true faith and that others will glorify God because of your good works.

**First**, we should pause to reflect that, thanks to the Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention, we are not debating the inerrancy of the Bible. That matter is settled among us. We are privileged to be having a debate among those who affirm the total truthfulness and authority of the Bible. Otherwise, we would surely be debating the issues that have consumed the more liberal denominations, such as same-sex marriage, the ordination of practicing homosexuals to the ministry, and feminine God-language.

It is no small matter that Southern Baptists are discussing how best to speak of God's salvation, even as we are fully engaged in the task of reaching the nations with the Gospel of Christ. I am profoundly thankful that we are not a denomination that is arguing over the Great Commission, embarrassed by missions and evangelism. We can handle this current discussion, and we should actually be grateful for it.

**Second**, all Southern Baptists should affirm that those who drafted, released, and signed their names to this document had every right to do so. Furthermore, they have every right to hold conferences, publish materials, lead institutions, gather together, and to advocate for their beliefs and concerns in every appropriate way. We should welcome their serious concern and their willingness to speak openly and convictionally. I thank them for their willingness to put words to paper and then to thrust themselves into this kind of conversation.

**Third**, having published their statement, I am certain that the signatories expect a response to it. That response should be careful and measured, and it should focus on the substance of the document, and not on an attempt to question intentions. I know almost all who have signed this statement. I know that their intention is to serve the cause of Christ.

I wholeheartedly and emphatically agree with some of the statement's most important declarations, such as when it denies "that salvation is possible outside of a faith response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ" and when it affirms that "the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His church to preach the good news of salvation to all people to the ends of the earth."

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I rejoice in its statement that “the proclamation of the Gospel is God’s means of bringing any person to salvation.” It is certainly correct in denying that any person is regenerated “apart from hearing and responding to the Gospel.”

That said, I could not sign the document. Indeed, I have very serious reservations and concerns about some of its assertions and denials. I fully understand the intention of the drafters to oppose several Calvinist renderings of doctrine, but some of the language employed in the statement goes far beyond this intention. Some portions of the statement actually go beyond Arminianism and appear to affirm semi-Pelagian understandings of sin, human nature, and the human will — understandings that virtually all Southern Baptists have denied. Clearly, some Southern Baptists do not want to identify as either Calvinists, non-Calvinists, or Arminians. That is fine by me, but these theological issues have been debated by evangelicals for centuries now, and those labels stick for a reason.

That leads me to make another qualification. I do not believe that those most problematic statements truly reflect the beliefs of many who signed this document. I know many of these men very well, and I know them to be doctrinally careful and theologically discerning. Some of these very men have served most boldly in the defense of the faith, and they have taught me much. We should be honored by the privilege of a serious theological conversation with one another, and we will all speak more carefully when we are respectfully questioned by those with whom we disagree.

**Fourth**, the last thing Southern Baptists need, now or ever, is the development of theological tribalism among us. We must all repent of the sin of building a tribe when we are called to serve the Kingdom of Christ. The more Calvinistic Southern Baptists, and here I include myself, are deeply theological and passionately concerned to get the Gospel right. The Calvinists I know are transforming their beliefs into an absolute renaissance of missionary commissionings and Gospel church planting. At times, however, Calvinists can be tribal and elitist, more concerned with counting points of doctrine and less concerned with pointing us all to the mission of the Gospel. Such a tribalism is inconsistent with the very beliefs we cherish. This goes to show that we, too, can be inconsistent in faith and practice. Of such tribalism we must all repent.

We should never apologize for attention to doctrine, especially when those doctrines reach the very heart of the Gospel. But tribalism, whether Calvinist or non-Calvinist, is an affront to the Gospel by which we have been saved and to the mission of the Great Commission that is entrusted to us. May God save us from dividing into tribes, even as we gladly and eagerly talk with one another about the doctrines we cherish, and especially when we discuss the doctrines on which we may disagree.

**Fifth**, we must recognize and affirm together that we have already stated where Southern Baptists stand on the great doctrines of our faith. The *Baptist Faith & Message* is our confession of faith, and it binds us all together on common ground. The BF&M does not state doctrines comprehensively, but it defines our necessary consensus. Every Southern Baptist is free to believe more than the confession affirms, but never less.

The *Baptist Faith & Message* includes majestic statements on salvation and the doctrines that we hold in common. The chairman of the committees who proposed the BF&M in 1925, 1963, and 2000 were Southern Baptist statesman-theologians who reflected and embraced the great doctrinal consensus that has marked Southern Baptists. E. Y. Mullins, Herschel H. Hobbs, and Adrian Rogers were statesmen, and their theological commitments were never tribal. The BF&M serves Southern Baptists as our confessional means of accountability and unity. Where it speaks, it speaks for us all.

This means that every single Southern Baptist should be ready to work gladly with every other Southern Baptist who stands within the *Baptist Faith & Message*. Both Calvinists and non-Calvinists have a legitimate claim to represent the “traditional” Southern Baptist understanding.

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## *Southern Baptists and Salvation: It's Time to Talk*

In truth, a look at the *Baptist Faith & Message* confirms that the Southern Baptist tradition includes both.

There is a lot for us to discuss, and plenty of time for that discussion. But that conversation must not immobilize us from standing together to reach the nations, nor lead us into tribalism. I love and respect the men who signed this new statement. I believe that they love and respect me. We have walked arm in arm for too long to abandon each other now. We need each other and, as some outsiders might say, we deserve each other.

The presence of more than one tradition and stream of doctrinal influence has been healthy for Southern Baptists. We have been strengthened by both the Charleston and Sandy Creek traditions, representing Southern Baptists who rightly prize their doctrinal understandings, but eagerly work together in the Gospel service. We should respect the need for churches, institutions, and denominational friends who represent these historic Southern Baptist traditions. We would not be who we are — or who God has called us to be — without each other. May God grant us grace to glorify Christ and edify the church as we talk about matters that mean so much to us. Let's be thankful for the conversation to which we are now called, and thankful for the brothers and sisters we are privileged to engage in this conversation.

And, above all, let us have this conversation as we devote ourselves unreservedly to do the work the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have called us to do. Let's remember this — a lost world is waiting and a rising generation of Southern Baptists is watching. ~ *Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. - President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary*

## *Should Pastors Try to be Cool?*

Many people assume that the best way to reach people is to be like them. So, if pastors want to reach cool people, they should try to be cool. But there are several problems with the idea that pastors should try to be cool:

1. **Being a cool pastor is not the power of God unto salvation—the gospel is.** If we think that the success of our evangelistic efforts depends on the image we cultivate, we show that our trust is not finally in the power of God's Word working by God's Spirit, but in our own ability to attract people to ourselves.
2. **Being connected to the culture is a double-edged sword.** Having tattoos may endear you to bikers and hipsters, but it certainly won't endear you to most Muslims.
3. **Our desire to be cool may reflect more pride than we'd like to admit.** Let's say you want to be cool. Is your desire to cultivate that image driven by a desire to save the lost or a desire for people to like you?
4. **Much pastoral ministry is profoundly un-cool.** Preaching the cross is a stumbling block and foolishness to cool people. Moreover, faithfully pleading with others to repent of their sins and be reconciled to God requires a pastor to be earnest and enthusiastic in a way that is utterly at odds with the ironic detachment that being cool requires.
5. **We must never despise "un-cool" brothers and sisters in Christ.** The more we try to be cool ourselves, the more we'll be tempted to look down on Christians who are not like us.

**Being like the culture can make it hard for others to see the gospel.** The more we understand the world and its definition of "cool," the less attractive we should find it. In fact, in a society that is increasingly morally and spiritually bankrupt, it may be our incongruity with the culture that serves to highlight the gospel. Rather than trying to be cool, pastors should lead their churches to cultivate a vivid otherworldliness (to borrow David Well's phrase) that points to a gospel that is genuinely different from what the world believes.

<http://www.9marks.org/answers/should-pastors-try-be-cool>

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## *The Plain Truth about the Lodge*

The Masons have been around for many centuries. Masons claim that their organization finds its roots with the builders of King Solomon's temple, but others trace its origin to the Ancient Pagan Mysteries. According to Pike's *Morals and Dogma*, Buddha was a Mason some one thousand years before Christ. The first Grand Lodge was founded in London in 1717.

Masons claim that their "fraternity" is not a religion, but over and over again we find religious elements in their practices. They have temples, alters, Bibles, prayer, lamb skins, and one must believe in a Supreme Being before joining. In *Grolier's Encyclopedia*, a Masonic member states: "If a person lives what the lodge teaches he won't have any trouble getting into Heaven." (*Grolier*, Vol. 5, "Freemasonry," pg. 68) Another Masonic writer, Albert Pike (who was also an occultist), writes: "Every Masonic Lodge is a Temple of Religion; and its teachings are instruction in religion." (*Morals and Dogma*, pg. 213) On page 68 of the *Minnesota Proceedings*, 1895, we read these interesting words: "He who approaches our alter in good faith and by the light which we bring him receives our teachings into a heart already prepared and lives a life in conformity with the principles which he here imbues, has come into an invaluable possession and need have no fear when the word shall come calling him into the hereafter but that he will be received as a living stone fit for a temple not made with hands." (See I Peter 2:4-8)

Regardless of their claims, the Masons are clearly embedded in a mystical religious system of salvation through works. Any "God" will do in this religion, because the Lodge teaches that it isn't God who saves one's soul anyhow: it's one's good works. In fact, in nations where Christianity isn't embraced, Masonic alters display the appropriate "Book of the Law" instead of the Bible. Freemasonry is definitely a religion, and a very BAD one at that.

The entry level in Masonry is The Blue Lodge, which consists of three degrees: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. One may stop at the level of Master Mason, or he can choose to enter either the Scottish Rite or the York Rite. The Scottish Rite advances by numerical degrees, the highest being the 33rd honorary degree. The York Rite advances by Chapter, Council, and Commandery degrees, with the highest level being The Order of the Knights Templar Commandery.

The Masons speak much about approaching "the light," yet their whole organization is shrouded in secretive practices and blood curdling oaths which should deter any true Christian. In clear violation of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 5:33-37), an Entered Apprentice Mason SWEARS BY GOD to: "...always hail, ever conceal, and never reveal, any of the arts, parts, or points of the hidden mysteries of Ancient Free masonry...binding myself under no less penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and my body buried in the rough sands of the sea..." Thank God this is an entry level oath, for it has no doubt turned away many God-fearing Christian men!

The deep secrets of Masonry are just as unscriptural. It is falsehood and wickedness that dwell in dark secret corners. Truth is worthy of propagation (Mat. 28:18-19). Jesus Himself said, "...I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing." (John 18:20)

In the initiation of an Entered Apprentice, the "Worshipful Master" (Mat. 23:10) asks: "In your present condition, what do you most desire?" The candidate responds: "Light." The "Master" later informs the candidate that he is "yet in darkness." Then for the Second Degree (Fellow Craft) the candidate is required to ask for "more light." According to God's word, Jesus Christ is the LIGHT (John 1:9; 8:12) and God's word is LIGHT (Psa. 119:105, 130). If you are saved, then it is an outright BLASPHEMY for you to agree that you are "yet in darkness" and to ask for "more light." Please note: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

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## *The Plain Truth about the Lodge*

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:5-7) So all Masons have DENIED Jesus Christ and have asked for another light being offered to them through Masonry. "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (II Cor. 11:14) The "God" of Masonry is not the God of the Bible! The Masonic god is the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), which is BLINDING Masons from the true God of the Bible. Now the member is ready to climb the ladder of the Lodge and encounter some of the most ungodly practices known to man.

For example, let's consider the Knights Templar initiation. The following is taken from pages 67-68 of the book, *Masonry: Beyond The Light*, by former Mason, William Schnoebelen:

"The high point of the KT initiation is when the candidate is brought before a large, triangular table covered in black velvet illuminated by candles and containing eleven silver goblets and a human skull enthroned on the Bible. (Skulls figure prominently throughout this initiation.)"

"This is intended to be the Last Supper. It seems but a grim mockery, though. The visual effect is more satanic than Christian, especially to one accustomed to the Table of the Lord in churches. However, the ambiance is the least of the problems."

"The candidate is asked to partake of five libations, (toasts). The **first three** libations are given, respectively, to the memory of Masonic heros King Solomon, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif. The **fourth** libation is to the memory of Simon of Cyrene, and the **fifth** is the most sinister of all."

"The candidate is never told to whom the fifth libation is drunk (it is "sealed"), and it is offered to him in a human skull!..." After the toast in this ritual, the candidate is required to take an oath which makes him the sin-bearer of his own sins and the sins of the person from whom the skull was taken. Friend, does this sound like something that a Christian man should do?!

The Lodge is no place for Christians! One Masonic publication in my file is titled "Is Masonry Worthwhile?" No, it's an enemy of Christianity, a tool of Satan, and a gross waste of valuable time.

<http://www.biblebelievers.com/jmelton/Lodge.html>

## *The One Road to Heaven: Jesus Christ*

Before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and world were formed, Jesus Christ was like the Father, very God. From the beginning He was foreordained to be the Savior of sinners. He was always the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, without whose blood there could be no remission. The same Jesus, to whom alone we may look for salvation, that same Jesus was the only hope of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and all the patriarchs; what we are privileged to see distinctly they doubtless saw indistinctly – but the Savior both we and they rest upon is one. It was Christ Jesus who was foretold in all the prophets, and foreshadowed and represented in all the law – the daily sacrifice of the lamb, the cities of refuge, the brazen serpent, all these were so many emblems to Israel of that Redeemer who was yet to come, and without whom no person could be saved. There never was but one road to heaven: Jesus Christ was the way, the truth and the life yesterday as well as today. ~ *J.C. Ryle*

# Green Run Tidings

## *Integrity Accepts God's Will*

“Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him. Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den. And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?’ Then Daniel spoke to the king, ‘O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me.’” *(Daniel 6:18-22a)*

**When circumstances seem darkest, we can see God’s hand most clearly.**

It is obvious that King Darius cared deeply for Daniel and that he had some degree of faith in Daniel’s God. Although he believed that God could deliver Daniel (v. 16), he spent a distressing and sleepless night anxiously awaiting dawn, so he could see if his belief was true. At the crack of dawn he hurried to the lions’ den and called out to Daniel. Imagine his relief to hear Daniel’s voice and to learn about how the angel had shut the lions’ mouths. Why did Darius think God would deliver Daniel? I’m sure he learned of God from Daniel himself. Surely Daniel talked about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego’s deliverance from the fiery furnace and about other marvelous things God had done for His people. The king’s response shows that Daniel’s testimony was effective and that his integrity had lent credibility to his witness.

But suppose God hadn’t delivered Daniel from the lions. Would He have failed? No! Isaiah also believed God, but he was sawn in half. Stephen believed God but was stoned to death. Paul believed God but was beheaded. Trusting God means accepting His will, whether for life or death. And for Christians, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” *(Philippians 1:21)*. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

## *Exposing Dead Faith*

*“What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself”* *(James 2:14-17)*.

Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" *(Matt. 5:16)*. Your righteous deeds illuminate the path to God by reflecting His power and grace to others. That brings Him glory and proves your faith is genuine.

Your deeds also serve as the basis of divine judgment. If you practice righteousness, you will receive eternal life; if you practice unrighteousness, you will receive "wrath and indignation" *(Rom. 2:6-8)*. God will judge you on the basis of your deeds because what you do reveals who you really are and what you really believe. That's why any so-called faith that doesn't produce good works is dead and utterly useless!

James illustrates that point in a practical way. If someone lacks the basic necessities of life and comes to you for help, what good does it do if you simply wish him well and send him away without meeting any of his needs? It does no good at all! Your pious words are hypocritical and without substance. If you really wished him well, you would do what you can to give him what he needs! Your unwillingness to do so betrays your true feelings. Similarly, dead faith is hypocritical, shallow, and useless because it doesn't put its claims into action--indeed, it has no divine capacity to do so. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur*

# Green Run Tidings

## *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*

### *The Perseverance of the Saints - Chapter 17*

1. The saints are those whom God has accepted in Christ the Beloved, and effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit. To them He has given the precious faith that pertains to all His elect. The persons to whom such blessings have been imparted can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but they shall certainly persevere in grace to the end and be eternally saved, for God will never repent of having called them and made gifts to them. Consequently He continues to beget and to nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit that issue in immortality. Many storms and floods may arise and beat upon them, yet they can never be moved from the foundation and rock on which by faith they are firmly established. Even if unbelief and Satan's temptations cause them for a time to lose the sight and comfort of the light and love of God, yet the unchanging God remains their God, and He will certainly keep and save them by His power until they come to the enjoyment of their purchased possession; for they are engraven on the palms of His hands, and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity.
2. It is on no free will of their own that the saints' perseverance depends, but on the immutability of the decree of election, which in its turn depends upon the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, the efficacious merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and the saints' union with Him, the oath of God, the abiding character of the Spirit's indwelling of the saints, the divine nature of which they are partakers and, lastly, the terms of the covenant of grace. All these factors guarantee the certainty and infallibility of the saints' perseverance.
3. In various ways-the temptations of Satan and of the world, the striving of indwelling sin to get the upper hand, the neglect of the means appointed for their preservation-saints may fall into fearful sins, and may even continue in them for a time. In this way they incur God's displeasure, grieve His Holy Spirit, do injury to their graces, diminish their comforts, experience hardness of heart and accusations of conscience, hurt and scandalize others, and bring God's chastisements on themselves. Yet being saints their repentance will be renewed, and through faith they will be preserved in Christ Jesus to the end.

### *Frail Hearts Need Mighty Fortresses*

*“For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.”*

This passage, taken from Psalm 62, has been a favorite of mine since I was a young whippersnapper. It is as true today as it was then. The storms are a little fiercer, the burdens a little heavier, and the enemies a little scarier; but the rest still comes, the salvation remains, and the Fortress holds firm. The unrest and unsteadiness I experience (all too often in my opinion) comes when my confidence in God wanes. The Rock does not falter, but my faith often does. How many times would I have succumbed to the onslaught of life if faith was mine to preserve and protect.

Thankfully, the High King of Heaven does not give the precious gift of faith to His children only to allow their tender hearts to be pillaged and raped by sin, worldliness, and the Evil One. We are secure because He is sovereign. We can rest because He never grows weary. We can fight because He has conquered. ~ *Pastor Joe Bailey*



# Green Run Tidings

GREEN RUN BAPTIST CHURCH – SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

## Anniversary and Birthday Celebrations for July 2012!

### *Anniversary*

### *Birthday*

Roy and Tommie Ammons - 7/2  
 David and Jennifer Allesandro - 7/4  
 Marcial and Benita Padua - 7/9  
 Gordon and Edith Miller - 7/15  
 Clarence and Millicent Notyce - 7/15  
 Everett and Joanna Lupton - 7/17  
 Terry and Jill Nelson - 7/22  
 Matt and Vicki Ammons - 7/23

Carlene Watson - 7/2  
 Anitra Pregiato - 7/4  
 Axton Watson - 7/4  
 Laurie Boddie - 7/8  
 Ruthie Dean - 7/16

Sandra Kurtz - 7/16  
 Theresa Jones - 7/18  
 Stephanie Harris - 7/23  
 Scott Holley - 7/24  
 Jason Esquivel - 7/27

## *Planning for Eternity*

What will the future be like? What will your income be in five years? What will your health be like in three years? Will civilization be safe for your children and your grandchildren? We ask questions like these, even if only to ourselves. Businesses and ministries also plan for the future, including five- and ten-year plans.

Do you have a two hundred-year plan? Obviously, you expect that you will have died by the end of that period.

What will your death have brought you? Job asked it this way: "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14).

The Gallup Poll on Religion in America indicates that the majority of professing Christians believe in life after death. Most of those, however, reject any real idea of hell. The arguments for a heaven without a hell are based primarily not on sound biblical exegesis but on human sentiment. People simply prefer not to believe in hell. It is a subject very few can discuss dispassionately. Yet to deny the reality of hell, one must stand firmly opposed to the unambiguous teaching of Jesus.

Consider the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–26. This passage clearly indicates a great chasm between heaven and hell. It is unbridgeable. Where we are in eternity is where we will be in two hundred years. It is where we will be in two thousand years and in two million years.

The very point of this parable is that people are reluctant to heed the biblical warnings of a judgment that truly is final, with all further appeals exhausted (Luke 16:27–31). ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**



Green Run Baptist Church

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Submit information to Walt Lawrence by the second Sunday of the month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.