

Are You Stubborn?

By Steve Klein

Crops need moisture. They need it shortly after planting so that seeds can germinate and grow, and they need it as they grow in order to produce a useable harvest.

Crops need moisture. People need crops. But only God can provide the rain. We must rely on Him to provide it. Long ago, Zechariah advised his people to "Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, grass in the field for everyone." (**Zechariah 10:1**)

In **Deuteronomy 11:13-14**, God promised the Israelites that He would send both the early and the latter rain on their crops if they would obey His commandments. He said, "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil."

Many years later, after much disobedience on the part of the Israelites, the Lord was still willing to provide this blessing for His people if they would repent and turn to Him with all their "heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (**Joel**

2:12). If they would repent they were told that they could "Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you- The former rain, and the latter rain in the first month." (**Joel 2:23**).

So then, God's willingness to provide the early and the latter rain demonstrates His patience and longsuffering with mankind. But it also teaches mankind a lesson about trusting in the Lord to provide for us, and patiently waiting for Him to do so. **James 5:7-8** says, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."

The blessings that we enjoy in Christ today are the early rain. The greater blessings of the latter rain and the fruitful harvest are yet to come. Be patient. Trust the Lord. Serve Him faithfully day by day. Grow. Be productive. The clouds that will bring that latter rain are building on the horizon. The coming of the day of the Lord is at hand.



Titus 2:11-12 (NKJV)— For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

Sick		
Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey)	Lori Holloway	Chick Wade
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Ruby Johnson (Erica Seymore's Grandmother)	Jared Nixon
Ross Folmar	Bob Simpson	Johnny Adrian (Friend of Sullivanne's)
Ed Mort (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	"Grandmama" Odessa Wyatt (Dyle's grandmother)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)
Gerald White (Christopher's and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	Joe Perry (Anna Miller's Relative)

- August Birthdays
- 7—Erin Dallas
 - 7—David Golden
 - 8—Julia Daves
 - 9—Elliot Weldon
 - 10—Sarah Tam
 - 11—Walker Davis
 - 12—Jon Coleman
 - 20—Caleb Law
 - 22—David Crawford
 - 27—Chip Freeman
 - 28—Cole Johnson
 - 28—Larry Rouse
 - 29—Blake Edwards

News and Notes

- ☑ Let's remember our expectant mothers: Laura Weldon, Nicole Pender, Joy Liu and Amanda Stephens.
- ☑ Let us continue to remember Dave Bradford in our prayers. You can send him cards and letters at: 664 Lee Rd 84, Auburn, AL 36830
- ☑ Anna Miller gave birth to Emma Elizabeth on Monday!
- ☑ Seth Buchanan and Rebekah Parks were married on Friday!
- ☑ Pam Craig (Laura's Weldon's grandmother) died on Wed. and was buried on Sat.
- ☑ Ladies classes in the homes are being planned for the coming year. Please see Yvette or Denise for feedback.
- ☑ Students will be returning next weekend for the fall semester!

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

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Elders as Shepherds

By Charles Brackett



Thought to Ponder

For the watching world, we ourselves serve proof that God is alive. We form the visible shape of what He is like.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

A shepherd is literally one who feeds. He is a pastor. In Bible times, the typical shepherd tended his own flock, or delegated the work to his children or close relatives. By virtue of ownership, he was highly motivated to the work. No sacrifice was too great for his sheep. He sheltered them when cold, searched for them when lost, and bound up their wounds when hurt. With only his dog and staff, he protected them from wolves that were always crouching just out of sight and scent. A hireling would not be so diligent. He would not watch with the same degree of love and concern as the shepherd who cared for his own or his father's possessions.

Most of the shepherd's time was spent feeding and watering the flock. He was the shepherd, the feeder. Sheep were not fed in a pen as a farmer might feed his pigs, but in open pasture. The shepherd constantly moved his charge from hillside to valley searching for better grazing and

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plenty of good water. While there were occasions when searching or binding or protecting was necessary, the shepherd's continual duty was to feed and water, feed and water. And when that duty was done, he watered and fed.

God has always looked at His people as sheep. He cares for them with the tenderness of a shepherd who gathers the lambs in his arms and gently leads those who are with young (**Isaiah 40:11**). Further, God has always

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considered those in positions of leadership over His sheep as shepherds. Overseers of the Lord's church are shepherds. Their position and their responsibility are put clearly in focus in **1 Peter 5:14** when Peter reminded elders to "shepherd the flock of God which is among you..." For those who discharge their responsibility well, Peter extended God's promise of "an unfading crown of God's glory" when the "Chief Shepherd" appears. On the other hand, God is against shepherds who "do not feed the flock" (**Ezekiel 34:8-10**). His words against negligent elders in Ezekiel's day were unmistakable. "The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost but with force and cruelty you have ruled them" (**Ezekiel 34:4**).

To each elder today the obligation of a shepherd over God's flock should be clear. And what is necessary for each to discharge his obligation is equally clear. He can do so only in his personal relationship with each member of the flock. Just as a shepherd on the hillsides of Judea searched for and cradled a single lost lamb against the ravages of a cold night, an elder of the Lord's church must be concerned for each individual member in his care.

That kind of concern is not possible without love, that sacrificial love which demands time. Not the kind of time and concern expected of a hireling but that which distinguishes a son of the owner. To be sure, much of an elder's feeding and watering will be accomplished when he has opened to the flock the good pasture and cool

streams of God's word, but some of the lambs require individual attention. There are many in the flock who are spiritually undernourished. Some are crippled by sin, and some are only a hair's breadth from falling headlong over the precipice of Satan's domain. Will the shepherd act? The one who is truly committed to the Chief Shepherd will.

God's shepherd will be ever watchful for any telltale sign that something is wrong in the life of one of the Father's little ones. He will be available to listen, and he will be a source of spiritual guidance for those who are groping. The Lord's church has never had a greater need for godly elders than it does right now. We need men who have prepared themselves to offer spiritual counseling and who are, as Paul said in **Romans 15:14**, "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish." With wise instruction and loving counsel, many members of the Lord's church today could be brought closer to the Lord. We need shepherds who will sound a loving alarm when one's faith falters, or when a marriage shows signs of weakening. We need elders who are unafraid to go after the one who strays or question the one who does not speak as the oracles of God. We need pastors who are willing to be close to the sheep -- close enough to know them, to feel their hurts and bind their wounds. Above all, we need shepherds who will see that each lamb stays on the safe path of righteousness and who will continually feed us on God's word, even those of the flock who lack interest. Without such shepherds God's lambs will seek counsel from the ungodly and will be led to stand in the path of sinners and sit in the seat of scoffers! We are the Lord's! We are His valuable sheep bought with the blood of His only begotten Son. Our shepherds must exercise due care in watching over our souls.



Change For Our Children?

By Tim Nichols

Much has been said in recent years concerning the self-proclaimed "change agents" among churches of Christ. Biblically, we have already shown that they do not have a leg to stand on and that the Bible is not one of the legs on which they are attempting to stand. My purpose, here, is not to fully deal with their ideas on the basis of the Bible, but to make some observations about the internal logic of this party's platform.

Plank #1 seems to be that the church must make drastic changes because culture is constantly changing and we must become more relevant for the sake of our children in coming generations. With the new millennium looming on the horizon, this idea seems to be especially significant to those who press it. This thinking was widespread at end of the last century but it may be even more so as we approach a year with three zeros.

Go back and read some old magazines. Popular Mechanics would be a good choice. Look at all of the predictions about how we were supposed to be living and thinking by now. They supposed that we would be living like the Jetson's, care nothing about birds, flowers, and trees, and have robots doing our every bidding. We laugh at what they thought our dress and fashion would be like. We are amused, fourteen years later, at the predictions that George Orwell made concerning 1984. The truth is that culture changes, styles change, people change, and even styles of thinking change among large populations within a culture, -- but almost never in ways that are very predictable. The "change agents" of the last century ("progressives") were quite certain that the church needed to change so that future generations would flock to it. They divided the church over it

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and started the "Christian Church." Those who failed to see their great vision for the future continued trying to simply be the church revealed in the New Testament. Contrary to the predictions of the "progressives," those who remained with simple New Testament Christianity became the fastest growing religious body in America by the middle of our current century. The "progressives" -- who felt certain that they knew what the

next generation would need and want -- experienced no such growth.

Would it not be more honest for "change agents" to simply say, "WE want to make changes now because WE want them now"? Those who project their own desires onto the next generation may feel honorable and unselfish for expressing their own wishes in this way. Unless, however, their ability to predict the future far surpasses that of all previous generations, they are likely mistaken every time they anticipate the needs and movements of future generations. Since culture continuously changes, it is not reasonable to demand changes today to satisfy our children tomorrow.

Brethren, let's stick with the old plan. If there are changes that need to be made in individual Christians and independent local churches, they need to be made in order to conform to the will of God as expressed in the Bible. No reasonable man alive denies that such flaws exist and need mending. But to try to remodel the Lord's church with human hands to prepare it for the next generation to move in is both rebellious and unreasonable. Let's never forget that "his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation" (**Luke 1:50**).

