

Overcoming Obstacle's to God's Mercy

Jesus told a story about a servant that owed his master 10,000 talents and could not pay back this massive sum (Mt18:21-27). The master forgave him the entire debt. What a tremendous master! Of course, the master represents God and the indebted servant describes us, sinners who can't erase one sin much less all of them. God's loving mercy overwhelms the sinner's ability to understand it. Obstacles exist for those who long for and need God's forgiveness. These hindrances endanger the grace and mercy we long for.

Sin offends God! It destroys man's relationship with the Lord. He grieves over the great chasm of sin that separates all men from him. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet.3:9). Mankind can regain their close fellowship with God but only through a special type of faith that involves genuine repentance and commitment to The Lord. Without this faith we are lost (Mk.16:15-16 and Lk.13:3-5). The saving message seems simple, and intellectually it is. However, man must be able to see himself as a sinner, hopeless and helpless, without God. Until one does he can't humbly turn to The Lord. Too many proud people try to deny or excuse their sins, only to later confess them in some general way. King Saul demonstrates this pattern perfectly. The Lord instructs Saul to fight and completely destroy the wicked Amalekites with their flocks and herds. Instead, Saul returns with Agag, Amalek's king, and the best of the animals. When confronted by Samuel

By David Hartsell

regarding his disobedience Saul first said he did obey, next he excuses his actions by blaming the people, and finally he says, "I have sinned" (1 Sam.15:19-30). One of the greatest obstacles to truly turning to God is human pride. Unless and until one can see himself as a sinner he is lost!

Sinful attitudes and activities also obstruct people from becoming true followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus lays down simple but strict requirements for discipleship. "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk.9:23). Two things can prevent us from tasting of God's mercy. The force of habit causes people to do many things without thinking them through: drinking alcohol, bad language, or inappropriate literature. Habit feels comfortable and easily can sweep us away from our Savior. Habit practiced too long becomes character. Also, pleasure can enslave people. Obviously the works of the flesh often controls one's heart and diverts them away from God's saving mercy (Rom.1:18-21). Sometimes fleshly sins involve transgressions with our heart and our mouth, these are just as condemning (Gal.5:19-21 and Eph.4:24-29).

Salvation by God's mercy is free but it places great obligations on us. To be children of God means first seeing ourselves for what we are, "sinners." Only then can we humble ourselves to allow our Lord to save us from the evil one (1 Pet.5:8).



The Auburn Beacon



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

Volume 4, Issue 11

January 13, 2012

Membership in a Local Church

By Robert F. Turner



Thoughts to Ponder

I have no shepherd.
I want and am in need.
I have no one to feed me in green pastures.
I have no rest.
I have no one to lead me to quiet waters.
I am thirsty.
I have no one to restore my anxious and despairing soul.

You became a member of the church that belongs to Christ when you were baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). The Lord added you to the number of His followers, metaphorically assembled, when you became obedient to the faith (Acts 2:36-41, 47). As a member of the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) you accepted certain obligations: to submit to His leadership revealed in His word; and to give yourself freely to the service of your Lord (Rom. 6:17-18; 1 Pet. 3:15). This is your status whether you become a member of a local church or not. But the Scriptures clearly teach you to work and worship with other brethren (Heb. 10:25). Their presence and accessibility, present both privilege and obligation to all who would be faithful to Christ.

A very few, who "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27), will be a mighty force for good. Remember the church at Smyrna, rich in God's sight (Rev. 2:8-11); and determine to do all possible to make the church where you are a member, a Christ-approved church.

their widows, "and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed" (1 Tim. 5:16). A distinction is made between a plurality of saints engaged in a spiritual work, and "the church" (Matt. 18:17). Elders are to shepherd the flock "which is among you" - they have local church obligations (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Tit. 1:5; Acts 14:23). Letters to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2:3) show clearly the distinctive nature of local churches. In becoming a member of a local church you accept obligations there also. You should not enter into

(Continued on page 2)

Sick				January Birthdays	News and Notes
Joey Stephens (Anna Stalling's Uncle)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)		
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Jeffery Miller (Friend of Walker Davis)	23 - Connor Godwin 25 - Caleb Daniels 30 - Ashley Tucker 31 - Jennifer Daniels	
Emma Hettinger (William Herd's Mother)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Roger Whatley (Daphne Whatley's son)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)		
Pat Webb (Friend of Jared Johnson)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Diane Hudson (Josh Hudson's grandmother)	Arline Harkrider (Nichole Pender's Grandmother)		
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Don Meadows (Ashley Miller's step-father)	Emily Stallings (Anna's sister)	Madi Wise (Friend of the Robert's)		
Marty Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Frances Fultz (Davis Fultz's grandmother)	Judy Nichols (Suzanne's Mother)	Ann Scaff (Hannah Morris' grandmother)		

Elders
Walker Davis (334) 703-0050
Larry Rouse (334) 734-2133

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES
Sunday
Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM
Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM
E-Mail:
larryrouse@aubeacon.com

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

(Continued from page 1)

local church membership without understanding the obligations and responsibilities that go with that relationship.

Team Responsibilities

This means you give up some independence to function collectively. There could be no effective team work if each member operated with his own judgment, with no regard for the team effort. A local church must operate with a common mind, i.e., agreement in judgment. The elders lead in forming this judgment, and as a sheep you are to follow your shepherds (**1 Thess. 5:12f**). For a more current illustration: to play football as a team, each player must act in keeping with the play called by the quarterback or coach.

As much of the work done will be via some medium of exchange (money), you are obligated to bear your share of this load. The collection on the First Day of the week is a means of pooling resources so that team work can be done. When a planned program is announced, and you help finance that program, you are doing some share of that work - pulling with the team. But your participation also means you share in the responsibility for what is done. If you cannot conscientiously support your local church program you had better change it, or join a team you believe is serving the Lord faithfully (**Rom. 14:22-23**).

Mutual Assistance

Church members sometimes seem to think their presence at service and their contribution to the treasury is the whole of their relationship to the local church. This ignores a most vital reason for collective work. **Hebrews 10:25** gives "exhorting one another" (encouraging) as the basic purpose for assembling. We must learn to think of the local church as a mutual encouragement society: brethren banded together to help one another go to heaven. In public worship we "teach and admonish" by our singing (**Col. 3:16**). We edify one another even as we pray (**1 Cor. 14:14-17**). The Lord's Supper recalls Christ's sacrifice in our behalf and we "show the Lord's death till he come" (**11:23-26**). Every member is told:

"comfort yourselves together, and edify one another. . . ." (**1 Thess. 5:11**).

And mutual assistance goes far beyond public worship. Fellow Christians enter into a pact to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (**Gal. 6:2**). This involves seeking to correct the errors of one another (v. 1). When you enter into covenant relationship with other brethren, you accept the obligation to correct and encourage others; and agree that they should correct and encourage you. You are to love your brethren, not in word only, but in deed and truth (**1 Jn. 3:16-19**). True love removes the chips from our shoulders. It suffers long and is kind, envies not, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, etc. (**see 1 Cor. 13**). These things need to be remembered when correcting, and when being corrected. If you have missed this aspect of fellowship in a local church, you are depriving others, and yourself, of help every saint needs and has a right to expect.

People Are Different

Yes they are, and joining hands in the Lord's service does not remove all differences. Occupations, hobbies, financial status, regional customs, age, and many other personal differences will dictate friendships and associations. There is no reason to expect these differences to vanish when we become members of the same local church. But if we will concentrate on what we have in common: on our love for the Lord, and desire to do His will; we will not allow personal differences to destroy our more noble purpose. We may, in fact, learn to share with one another to such an extent that our differences only expand the field of our church work. We can help one another "fill out" what is lacking in each of us, so that our differences become our balance and our strength.

A very few, who "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel" (**Phil. 1:27**), will be a mighty force for good. Remember the church at Smyrna, rich in God's sight (**Rev. 2:8-11**); and determine to do all possible to make the church where you are a member, a Christ-approved church.



No Time Like the Present

By Steve Klein

The old saying is that the past is a canceled check, and the future is a promissory note; only the present is cash on hand. The year of our Lord 2012 is in the record books. Nothing about it can be changed. The year 2013 lies before us like a clean canvas before a blind painter. Who knows how it will look when finished? The only moment of time we can do anything about is the moment we're in right now. There is no time like the present because it is the only time that we really own.

We must leave the past in the past. We can learn from our past, but we mustn't live in it. Perhaps our better days are behind us, but even so, we cannot go back. Solomon instructs, "Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?'" (**Ecclesiastes 7:10**). Or perhaps our former days are filled with regrets. Paul's were (**1 Timothy 1:13-15**). We cannot change them. We can get forgiveness if needed, and we can choose to do better today, but we cannot go back.

We must prepare for the future, but live in the present. The future is uncertain. We do not have full control of it. "You do not know what will happen tomorrow" (**James 4:14**). Tomorrow is only ours if the Lord wills (**James 4:13; Luke 12:16-20**).

The apostle Paul's approach toward both past and future is ideal. He said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which

Life has meaning when it is motivated by love. Love is the divine energizer. It brings things about. It generates the motion necessary for everything from good marital relationships, to good congregations of God's people. Actually, what is not motivated by love is of little value in the ultimate reality.

are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 3:13-14**). Paul forgot the past, reached toward the future, but lived in the present. Notice the use of the present tense in the preceding verse: "I do not count . . . one thing I do . . . forgetting . . . reaching . . . I press."

What are you doing with the present? Are you making the most of this day and doing your best to serve the Lord in this moment of time? Live in the moment. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord" (**Colossians 3:23a**). And, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (**Ecclesiastes 9:10**). And a poet wrote . . .

*Today is mine to do with what I will
Today is mine my own special cup to fill
To die a little that I might learn to live
To take from life that I might learn to give
Today is mine*

*Like most men I cursed the present to avoid
the peace of mind
And raise my thoughts beyond tomorrow
and vision there more peace of mind
But as I view this day around me I can see the
fool I've been
For today's the only garden we can tend
Today is mine*

(Editor's Note: The years were changed for current date!)

