

# ROCKY MOUNT CHURCH NEWSLETTER

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## **1 Peter 3:21, A Good Conscience**

Here, we read that the salvation we enjoy is not the cleansing of our sinful nature but rather the answer of a good conscience toward God. In Acts 22, Paul said Ananias told him to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." The washing that baptism brings is upon our conscience, not our sinful nature. He also told Paul that God had chosen him to "hear the voice of His mouth"(v.14). Paul heard, believed, prayed and had a willingness to obey Jesus (Acts 9). These are all the evidence of a changed heart that can only come about in the new birth. Spiritual life must precede spiritual actions! Baptism is for the believing child of God. It sets us free from the bondage of guilt. If you believe the gospel, it is because you have already heard the voice of Jesus. You ought to be baptized! It doesn't make you more of a child of God, but you will have a special communion with Christ and the Church that you could not enjoy before. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...." Rev 1:5.

**Matt Jordan, Pastor**

## **God Showed Up**

The fourth weekend of each July, the church I pastor holds an annual meeting. A Primitive Baptist annual meeting is a series of worship services held Friday through Sunday, typically, preached by a guest minister. Other denominations hold similar meetings and call them revivals. Last week we held our annual meeting, and I would like to share a few particulars concerning Saturday night's service.

The day was hot and humid, 100 degrees. We had dinner in our dining hall, promptly at 6:00. We cleaned our dishes and put away the food, promptly at 6:50. We entered the meeting house and began singing, promptly at 7:00. But at 7:10, we lost power. That evening the demand on the power company by the community was too great and we lost electricity.

Knowing that temperatures would rapidly increase and light would fade; we ended the song service, omitted introductory comments, said a short prayer, and asked the preacher to begin. Soon, the deacons began opening windows and passing out fans (paper plates). The preacher preached and was sweating buckets. But then, a miracle happened. God showed up. From a natural standpoint, a lot of things went wrong; but God showed up - and with only 10 minutes of singing.

Ask any of our members as to the meeting's highlights and 99% will tell you about Saturday night's message. What's the lesson? Compare how much time we stand preparing for natural things with the time we spend begging for God's presence. We know what's important, but we fret over that with very little importance. Amen?

Later in the evening back at my house, the guest preacher said that for a moment he wasn't too sure how the meeting would go. I told him that I never doubted; that I was confident it would be a good service. He asked, "what made you so sure?" I told him, "the best sermons never get recorded." Miracles can be that way.

**Elder Dolph Painter, Moriah Primitive Baptist Church, August 2, 2011**

## **The Glory to Come**

*"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18.*

One characteristic of the word of God is that it does not gloss over our plight in this present world. Biblical

characters are real people with real problems. Their weaknesses, struggles, sins, afflictions, and persecutions are literally an open book before us. We can find that their struggles are much like ours, and can identify with their trials. Times may have changed, but the nature of man, and the curse of sin has continued since the time of our father Adam. One such curse is suffering.

In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul addresses the sufferings of the Lord's people. Jesus said that we shall have tribulations in this world (John 16:33). Trouble can be expected in our lives. Sometimes it manifests itself in the form of persecution from others. We can also bring tribulation into our lives because of our choices. Physical afflictions, decisions of those around us, and seemingly unexplainable circumstances oftentimes cause us sufferings too. It is not a matter of 'if' we will have troubles, but when, and to what extent they will affect us. The apostle had his own share of problems as he ministered to the Lord's people and we should expect nothing less.

However, when Paul compares the suffering of this present time, to the glory to him, there is no comparison between the two. The word 'reckon' in our above verse is an accounting term that means to take inventory. When the negatives of the sufferings that are to be in this world are weighed against the glorious awaiting God's children in Heaven, the positives far outweighs the negative. It is a blessing to know that there is a place, far better awaiting us than this present world. In light of our home in Heaven, the problems that we suffer in this world are greatly diminished. Why should we look forward to Heaven? Let us read what John wrote about Heaven. In Revelation, 7:14 – 17, Verse 16 indicates that worldly sufferings will cease to exist. There will be no hungering, thirsting or other discomforts associated with this present world. All of the discomforts associated with this live will cease in Heaven. Verse 17, comforts us, in the promise that all of our tears will be wiped away. One result of suffering in this world is sadness and depression. As Paul was preaching the gospel there were times that persecutions and despair was at such a point that he and other gospel ministers despaired even of life (2 Corinthians 1:8). Many people have battled despair on this level. You can rest assured that this will not be so in Heaven.

The primary reason that we ought to be looking forward to Heaven, is that our Savior will be there. Note the aforementioned verses in Revelation 7 all point towards Jesus Christ. He is the one that shed his blood to make us white and cleanse us before God (v.17). It is not the many mansions that we look forward to, but the one who ascended into Heaven to prepare a place for us. As God's elect, we have remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:28). This truth coupled with the encouragement that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ motivate and encourage us to steadfastly look to serve the Lord in the midst of problems. If you made a list of your sufferings, and compared them alongside the glory that awaits you in Heaven, the eternal blessing of God would overshadow any problems of this world. May God bless us to press forward in the strength of these promises.

**Elder Michael Green, Jr., Fort Wayne Primitive Baptist Church, Fort Wayne, IN**

#### **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**

*"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."*

This morning, certain subjects ramp up the "emotion meter" more than others. Due to the intrinsic or inherent nature of the subject matter, emotions sometimes run away from reasoning. Therefore, we hope to handle the subject matter before us as objectively as possible and not allow undue emotion to enter into the writing. Today, there are opinions a mile wide on every hand about the subject of inter-racial marriages. Some are for it. Some are against it. Some approve a little. Some approve a lot. Ask a random selection of people off the street how they feel, and you may get a dozen or so varied statements about it. However, as disciples of the Lamb, we need only be concerned with the Scriptural pattern to see how we should think and look at the subject. So, what does our source material state? How should we think?

When I was growing up, I had the providential blessing of being raised in a supremely good home. My parents attempted to bring me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. One of dad's favorite statements in his exhortations to my brother and I was, "Be sure you pick out a God-fearing woman to be your wife." He would say oftentimes that many differences of opinion could be worked out if two people were devoted to making it work, but one issue could never be resolved if the woman did not believe in God. Sometimes, I even think he secretly wanted us to find some woman of another order and help convert her. But, I digress. The point of his statement was that any other type of woman will eventually do what God warned the children of Israel about. The seven nations of Canaan that they were about to dispossess from the Promised Land were idolatrous people. They were not God-fearing. Any marriage to them would have resulted in idolatry (and occasions in the future showed this to be true).

The study verses before us are the prohibition that we should look for in opposing certain marriages. Was Israel prohibited from ever marrying someone of another nation? Previously we read from the book of Genesis that Joseph had an Egyptian wife that bare him Ephraim and Manasseh. Moses married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12), and Aaron and Miriam spoke out against it. As a result, God's judgment came upon Miriam in the form of leprosy. Ruth was a Moabitess, who Boaz eventually married in the book of Ruth, which union was blessed and honored by God to eventually bring forth King David and ultimately King Jesus. Why were these marriages so prosperous and honored by God while the seven nations of Canaan were prohibited as spouses for the Israelites?

We can only speculate about the Ethiopian woman that Moses married as well as Joseph's wife, but we can see plainly confirmed on the page that Ruth was a God-fearing woman that was honourable in all things. This pattern seems consistent with the prohibition of the Canaanites. They were not God-fearing nor honourable. God would not recognize those marriages with His blessing and favour. However, He blessed the other inter-racial unions and cursed those that cursed those unions (like He did with Miriam). The lesson to this point seems to indicate that the state of the person's attitude and heart towards God is of greater concern than the particular nationality that they hailed from.

Let us consider some failed inter-racial marriages from the Bible. In Nehemiah, we read of those that the Israelites had married after returning from the captivity in Babylon. The nations were so perverse and corrupt that the Israelites' children were speaking part Hebrew and part language of Ashdod. (Nehemiah 13) The worldliness of their upbringing was stifling and stunting Israel's spirituality, as seen quite clearly in the lives of their children. Solomon married a great number of women from various and sundry nations, and his marriages ultimately led to his latter end being worse than his beginning. Idolatry and wickedness marked his twilight rather than peace and prosperity from the God of heaven. In both of these cases, idolatry is seen prominently and flagrantly.

So, how should we approach the situation today? What are our prohibitions today? Biblically speaking, I believe dad's faithful and trusty old saying, "Make sure she's God-fearing" stacks up pretty well with Scripture. If the prospective spouse hails from a culture and upbringing that is quite idolatrous and shows no indication of desiring anything else, then do not consider such as a good choice for husband/wife. However, if someone is honourable, God-fearing and truly wants to make things work, then consider such a one a possible choice for a spouse.

To be fair, we cannot discount the fact that there are differences of cultures across different ethnic groups. Just on a food and clothing level, certain ethnic groups prefer certain types of foods and wear certain styles of clothing. As a tame example, I would probably have had a hard time marrying a Scottish lass if she expected me to wear a kilt all the time. Though our skin tones are the same, there is a cultural difference there that would have taken extra effort to agree upon before entering into marriage. There are many examples of cultural differences besides food and clothing, but these should suffice to make the point. If I were asked by an inter-racial couple to perform their ceremony, one thing I would definitely encourage them to consider is that they will have extra hurdles to work through than other couples would. Every couple is going to have hurdles to work through, but

differing cultures adds another layer to the cake to sort out when trying to make a marriage work. However, if they understood that and were willing, devoted, and committed to making it work anyway, I would have no problem performing their ceremony.

Beyond the cultural aspect, how else should we consider this today? Should we stand for the idea? Against it? Indifferent? I recall many years ago that I had a discussion with a minister who vehemently opposed the idea of inter-racial marriage - rather he only opposed one type of inter-racial marriage. At the time, my son was less than a year old and crawling around on the floor. When I tried to show him the Biblical pattern to observe, he pointed to my son and asked, "You mean to tell me that you would be ok if your son came home one day with a black girl?" My answer floored him. "I would rather he come home with a black girl who is respectful, God-fearing, and loves him in a lifelong and committed way, rather than him come home with a trashy, disrespectful, and God-hating white girl." Considering marriage and all of its inherent difficulties (two people living as one), why would one consider choosing someone fraught with problems just because the race or skin tone is the same?

Another thing that should be considered is simply this, inter-racial marriage is something that we can only legitimately say is acceptable for all races or unacceptable for all races. Mixing and mingling the idea that this race is ok and that one is not is the height of hypocrisy. God's prohibition of those seven nations was due to their idolatrous ways. Any other nation that acted similarly was to be treated likewise in the subject realm of the discussion of marriage. Since the cultural differences exist between various races - even if the skin hue does not - the extra marital hurdles will have to be navigated in all cases. Therefore, all cases of all different races need to be treated consistently. The race is of less importance and value as the quality of the character of the individuals looking to wed.

Doubtless, we have all seen failed marriages between like races as well as differing races. We have seen successful marriages between like races as well as differing races. As previously shown, the Bible is replete with examples of all. Similarly we have seen marriages fail when people were of differing faiths (denominations) as well as failed marriages of the same faith (same denominational order). Rich and poor people have married to varying results. Young and old have wed to mixed conclusions. Each scenario, whether race, finances, age, or order, presents its own set of unique pitfalls and landmines to navigate around. The point is not whether people find someone else with the same exact background. The point is whether someone is willing to stay committed and devoted to their spouse through thick and thin, no matter what comes, as their vows require that they do. Therefore, it goes back to character, integrity, and being committed which can only stem from being God-fearing.

As long as time shall remain, there will always be a variance of opinion on this subject. Some will go to their grave disagreeing with me, while others will perhaps agree with these sentiments. If I ever hear a compelling, reasoned, and - above all else - Biblical argument to change my views, I hope that I would do so. However, no matter how high the emotion meter may rise or fall due to a certain subject, we must always strive as Christ's disciples to seek to know His mind upon the matter rather than follow "my druthers." May we diligently devote our lives to seeking His counsel from His pages of Scripture and through prayer for daily guidance. One thing His word plainly declares is that marriage is unto death. May our endeavors in life keep this bedrock principle firmly in view and seek to honour the marriage regardless of any natural circumstances, whether race or otherwise.

**In Hope, Bro Philip Conley**