

The **CAREY PULPIT**

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus...
I give you this charge: Preach the word
(2 Timothy 4:1-2a).*



A Ministry of the Cooper School
of Missions and Biblical Studies
William Carey College
Hattiesburg, Mississippi
Vol. 19 ● Fall 2002



Vice President of Church Relations
William Carey College
498 Tuscan Avenue
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

(601) 318-6460
dcaldwell@wmcarey.edu

Education and Church Relations 2001-02 Report William Carey College

William Carey College is dedicated to encouraging students to reach their highest potential, to providing an environment for quality academic programs, and to strengthening our relationship with Baptist churches, associations and conventions. The following report briefly highlights a few of our accomplishments during the past year.

Our students were able to mature in their leadership skills and in understanding the need to serve their communities both locally and globally. Through the Baptist Student Union programs, our students were able to receive invaluable ministry experience through opportunities in church ministry and in home and foreign missions. Over \$7,500 was raised to support mission endeavors. Students participated in Disciple Now evangelistic teams, revival teams, fine arts ministries, nursing home visitation teams, and Back Yard Bible Clubs. Mission trips were taken to remote villages in Mexico to assist with food distribution, evangelization, and health related clinics for adults. Teams of students gave up their spring breaks to serve on mission ventures in the inner city of Atlanta, Georgia, and in the state of Washington. In addition to these trips, students participated in various forms of mission service this summer, both in the continental United States and around the world (Burkina Faso, Canada, Hawaii and South Korea). It is our sincerest desire to instill within our students a zeal for service that will continue to flourish in their future places of ministry.

This past spring we witnessed the completion of the Fail-Asbury School of Nursing. This facility was the first building erected on the Hattiesburg campus since 1974. Made possible by a generous grant from the Asbury Foundation and contributions from a record number of supporting alumni and friends of the college, this new facility houses the Hattiesburg nursing faculty and provides classrooms for nursing course instruction, computer technology, and a skills lab. In addition to the completion of this building, we have begun work on remodeling the exterior of the library and developing an online catalog for our extensive text and journal holdings. By accomplishing these projects, we maintain our desire to encourage students to reach their highest potential in scholarship within a caring Christian community.

We continue to serve the needs of Mississippi Baptist ministers. Through the Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies, opportunities for completion of degrees in religion are offered. We give priority to enlisting and preparing Southern Baptist men and women who have made a public commitment to enter into full-time Christian ministry. Last year we provided over 230 Church-Related Vocation students with scholarships. In addition to the degree offerings, the college also sponsored the Twelfth annual Winter Bible Study preview that featured the book of Genesis. The Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies continued the biannual publication of the *Carey Pulpit*, a tool developed to assist ministers in their weekly sermon preparation. This periodical is sent free of charge to all pastors of Southern Baptist churches in Mississippi and in selected regions of Louisiana, Alabama and Florida.

We were privileged to host the Mississippi Baptist Convention All State Youth Choir. It was a delight to support our state Baptist constituency. We also provided housing for Cross Roads Church Camp, a group from Shelby, North Carolina. We were honored this past year to have the opportunity to attend and to address eight fall associational meetings. We also attended the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. It was a joy to take part in each of these events and to greet the alumni and supporters of William Carey College.

We are grateful to Mississippi Baptists for the support we have received. Your prayers have been cherished and your contributions to the Convention through the Cooperative Program have been a sincere blessing in our continued efforts to serve our students. Thank you for your generous commitment to William Carey College.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel P. Caldwell
Vice President of Church Relations

Table of Contents

Sermon by Jay Cook

Pastor, Toomsuba Baptist Church—Toomsuba, Mississippi

“What Does Faith in God Do?”Page 2

Sermon by Jimmy Dukes

Dean, Extension Center System and North Georgia Campus—New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

“What We Must do to Have Revival”Page 3

Sermon by Alan Hix

Director of Church Relations and Assistant Professor— Louisiana College

“Finish Strong”Page 4

Sermon by Greg Johnston

Pastor, Escatawpa Baptist Church—Escatawpa, Mississippi

“The Satisfied Life”Page 5

Sermon by Gary Permenter

President, Gary Permenter Ministries—Columbus, Mississippi

“Taming Beasts and Pulling Thorns”Page 6

Sermon by Daniel Summerlin

Pastor, University Baptist Church — Huntsville, Alabama

“What’s in a Name?”Page 7

Sermon by Bart Walker

Pastor, Parkway Baptist Church—Natchez, Mississippi

“Gifts Given to All”Page 8

Sermons by Billy Warren

Professor of New Testament and Greek and Director, Center for New Testament Textual Studies
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary—New Orleans, Louisiana

“The Time is Now”Page 9

“Keeping the Good News Good”Page 10

Sermon by Alan Woodward

Pastor, First Baptist Church — Ellisville, Mississippi

“A Burden for Fellowship”Page 11

The Carey Pulpit

WHAT DOES FAITH IN GOD DO?

Romans 3:27-31

Introduction:

There is a well-known word that we use in churches that is often misunderstood. This word is "faith." Various opinions are given as a means of understanding faith. Some equate faith with facts known about God. But simply knowing facts about God is not faith. Some equate faith with membership in a church or denomination. But simply being a member is not faith. Some equate faith with a prayer tied to a specific need. But simply praying is not faith.

What is faith? What does faith do? God led Paul to discuss this subject in Romans 3. As we review his words, let's discover what faith in God does.

I. Faith Saves (3:28, 30).

- A. The Reformation was a pivotal period in the Christian church's history. During this time, many people began to realize that Christianity was not about rituals and routines; it was about a relationship based on faith. This letter to the Romans was a major catalyst in rediscovering the truth about faith.
- B. Just as there is only one God, there is only one form of saving faith.
 1. The church's rules and regulations will not save a person. Simply knowing the Bible's rules and regulations will not save a person.
 2. It is faith in Jesus Christ that saves a person. The church and the Bible point to Him (Galatians 3:24; Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:4-5).

II. Faith Helps Us See Ourselves As We Are (3:27, 29).

- A. You are neither any better nor any worse than anyone else in the eyes of God. We are all sinners in need of God's grace. It is

only through His grace that we have the opportunity for salvation. (Romans 3:23; 6:23)

- B. There is room for boasting only in God. Remember the words of the great prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 9:23-24).
- C. When you understand and accept the truth of who you truly are, it allows you to get your eyes off of yourself and onto God. Many great men of faith came to this realization.
 1. When Isaiah saw God, he fell down and worshiped.
 2. When Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured, they fell down and worshiped.
 3. When John saw Heaven and God's glory, he fell down and worshiped.
- D. When you realize what you really are and what God is really like, you will fall down and worship Him.

III. Faith Helps Us Live Right (3:31).

- A. Faith in Jesus Christ enables you to obey Him (Matthew 5:17).
- B. To live a righteous life, the Holy Spirit must be allowed complete control.
- C. To counteract the values, attitudes and practices of the world, we must live righteously, grow in our faith and trust God for strength, direction and protection (Philippians 3:8).

Conclusion:

If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior – if you have faith, is it growing? If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, will you? It's up to you; what will you do?

WHAT WE MUST DO TO HAVE REVIVAL

2 Chronicles 7:11-16

Introduction:

Solomon built a house for God. He prayed for the manifestation of God's presence in the house. He recognized that God could not be limited to a house (6:18), but Solomon saw a need for a new era. He desired a time in which man could meet God and be forgiven. God was gracious in that he gave his promise of presence and the conditions for it.

We do not have the physical temple today, but the body is the temple, whether we are referring to the individual or the corporate body of the church. We are the meeting place. If we are to have revival, we must meet the same conditions God gave to Solomon and his people. There were five things God said the people must do.

I. We Must Be The People Of God (7:14).

- A. What is meant by the phrase "my people"? For Solomon it meant being in the covenant people. The covenant established their relationship with God. It was out of God's love for the people that He established this covenant.
- B. For us it means being in a faith relationship with Jesus. It was because of His love for us that we have the opportunity to have eternal life.
- C. It means being a part of God's family.
- D. It means being filled with God's Spirit.

II. We Must Give Up Our Pride (7:14).

- A. God said that the people must "humble themselves" before God. There was no place for pride in their relationship with God. Pride before God means self-righteousness.
- B. Humility means we pour ourselves out in unrestricted service. It means going or doing as you feel that God is leading you.

III. We Must Pray (7:14).

- A. Prayer includes praise for the blessings that God has given to you.
- B. Prayer includes confession of our sins.
- C. Prayer includes a plea.
- D. Prayer includes intercession.
- E. How much time do you spend with God in prayer? Our time of prayer is more than simply our speaking to God. It is a time for God to speak to us.

IV. We Must Seek His Face (7:14).

- A. God told Samuel that the people of Israel must "seek my face."
- B. One way we seek his face is coming before him in worship. To worship God means to adore Him, to commune with Him, and to offer self to Him. It is the highest form of expression of our relationship with Him.
- C. Worshipping God enables us to sustain our oneness with God. This happens as we change our perspective and receive instruction from God.

V. We Must Repent (7:14).

- A. God said the people must turn from their wicked ways.
- B. Several words are used to describe the breach between man and God. It is called transgression, iniquity, wickedness, offense, disobedience and lawlessness. But the word most commonly used is sin.
- C. Paul said that all people had sinned and had not measured up to what Christ intended that they should be. (Romans 3:23).
- D. We need times of repentance to remove any hindrances in our relationship with God.

Conclusion:

Hearing, forgiveness and healing of the spirit come as a result of the renewal of the relationship.

FINISH STRONG

Hebrews 12:1-3

Introduction:

Having recently passed one of the age hallmarks of life, I began thinking of the many men and women of God I have met and interacted with along my journey of ministry. In the midst of my reflection, something struck me. Not all of those I started with are still in the ministry. Several had fallen by the wayside for one reason or another. The minister today faces more demands and pressures than ever before.

We can also think of faithful church members, who, because of some tragedy or crisis, quietly disappeared from our churches. It is easy to allow other things to distract us from the call God has placed upon us. The author of Hebrews has that same idea in mind as he uses the metaphor of a race. He calls upon us to guard against those distractions that could keep us from finishing the race God has set before us. The author exhorts us to strip ourselves of anything and everything that might hinder us in running the race.

I. Don't Be Sidetracked by Sin (12:1a).

- A. The "sin" that is described here is pictured as that which "easily entangles." The verbal form means "to place itself around," which is why the NRSV translates it, "the sin that clings so closely." Here sin is pictured like a long robe that would wrap around the runner's legs and constrain his movements.
- B. Here he is talking about our pet sins, those secret habits we just can't seem to shake but no one knows about. Do you wonder why there is no power in your life? And are you frustrated over the fact that there seems to be no victories in your ministry? Has every thing you have touched crumbled to dust? Look for the secret sin.

II. Don't Be Sidetracked by Failure (12:1b).

- A. The author exhorts his readers to throw aside every "weight." This word often referred to a burdensome load. In the context of the race, it was superfluous clothes or anything that handicapped the runner.
- B. Failure is one of those burdensome loads that can handicap us in our work for the Lord. Our past failures can weigh like a millstone around our necks, keeping us from ever being productive again. The fear of failing keeps us from ever trying again.

III. Don't Be Sidetracked by Success (12:1c).

- A. The word "weight" can refer to an arrogant bearing or overconfidence. Some people are better at handling failure and success. Many prominent people have fought and struggled to succeed, only to find their lives falling apart in the middle of success.
- B. We must not let success give us a false sense of security. It is tempting to want to coast on our past accomplishments. We convince ourselves that we have it all figured out. It is just at that moment that we are most vulnerable.
- C. We should not be dependent on our talent or our record or our victories. If we are looking at ourselves, we have lost our focus. We should look to Jesus.

Conclusion:

The author calls upon us to run with perseverance or endurance. We see this same word when the author describes Jesus as "enduring" the cross, and having "endured from sinners such hostility against himself." To follow in Christ's steps is to experience opposition, pain, suffering and rejection. Running with perseverance is possible only while we are looking not to the encouraging witnesses, the other contestants, the ultimate goal or even the promised reward. It is possible only when we look to Christ.

THE SATISFIED LIFE

John 7:37-39

Introduction:

A man was never satisfied with anything his wife did. One morning she asked him what he wanted for breakfast and he replied, "An egg." She cooked him a fried egg and he complained, "I wanted it scrambled!" The next day she gave him a scrambled egg and he complained, "I wanted it fried!" So the third day she asked him, "How do you want your egg, fried or scrambled?" He said, "Fried." When she brought him the fried egg she noticed that he had a scowl on his face so she asked, "What's wrong now?" He griped, "You cooked the wrong egg!"

The lack of satisfaction is a universal problem of mankind. Satisfaction is a thirst of the unfulfilled soul. Jesus knew that real satisfaction in life was found in Him.

I. The Search for Satisfaction (7:37).

- A. Satisfaction is defined as having your needs or desires met. It means being content. Jesus knew that the needs of the worshipers at the feast had not been met. They were still searching for true spiritual satisfaction.
- B. In man's search for satisfaction there are three needs that must always be met.
 1. There is a need for significance. Our lives must have significance or else our daily routine becomes a meaningless merry-go-round of monotony.
 2. There is a need for a healthy self-esteem. Self-esteem is a necessary ingredient of confidence that enables us to function in society up to our potential.
 3. There is a need for stimulation. Every person must have something in their life that stimulates or motivates them or they will experience the dull doldrums of drudgery where life is not worth living!

- C. So if satisfaction is to be achieved, a person must have a life that is meaningful, exciting, and makes him feel good about himself.

II. The Source of Satisfaction (7:37-38).

- A. Most people look for the source of their satisfaction in one of four locations.
 1. They look for satisfaction in people. They think another person or persons will satisfy what is missing in their life.
 2. They look for satisfaction in places. However, moving to a new neighborhood, a new city, or even to another part of the country will not produce true lasting satisfaction.
 3. They look for satisfaction in possessions. But objects are meaningless without people, and meaningless objects cannot provide meaning and satisfaction for people.
 4. They look for satisfaction in participation. People participate in all sorts of activities in an attempt to fill up the emptiness and lack of satisfaction in their lives.
- B. Jesus is the only true source of satisfaction.

III. The Secret of Satisfaction (7:38-39).

- A. The secret of satisfaction is the Spirit-filled life.
- B. The Spirit-filled life is controlled by the Spirit, characterized by satisfaction, and culminates in service.

Conclusion:

Jesus can satisfy your soul, so come to Him and experience the satisfied life.

The Carey Pulpit

TAMING BEASTS AND PULLING THORNS

Colossians 3:12-14

Introduction:

Some time ago I read, "To live above with saints we love, O, that will be glory. To live below with saints we know, well, that's another story." The greatest blessings on earth are people, and the greatest challenges on earth are people.

Everybody knows someone who is a difficult person. Some of those people are as wild beasts that attack and injure you. Some of them are thorns that are more irritating than harmful. Because of Christ's commands to love each other, one of the most helpful lessons we can learn is how to deal with difficult people.

I. The Hard Reality of Problem People

- A. They are everywhere, even in the church. We will encounter difficult people often.
- B. The Bible is full of beasts and thorns. Nehemiah had Sanballat and Tobias. Joseph and David had their critical brothers. Moses had a jealous Miriam and Aaron. Job had his unsympathetic wife. Elijah ran away from Jezebel. Jesus dealt with Judas within His group and the Pharisees on the outside. Beasts and thorns will always be with us.

II. The Healing Response to Problem People

- A. Since we cannot escape problem people, we must learn how to respond to them as Christ would. Going with our initial reactions may result in damage to the difficult people as well as ourselves because what we may do is retaliate. Doing so is not a wise choice.
- B. What can you and I do with beasts and thorns that will help them and please God? Paul wrote that we should clothe ourselves in these Christ-like virtues. The term he used, "clothe," hints at the idea that just as leaving your home undressed is inappropriate, so any Christian dealing with difficult people is missing something without these characteristics.

1. Be compassionate. Understand that every beast and every thorn is hurting on the inside. Knowing that a beast's attack or a thorn's sting is the result of hurt helps us be compassionate.
2. Be kind. Do good for those who hurt you. Showing love only to those who show love to us means that our Christianity isn't worth much. Actively look for ways to serve those who hurt you.
3. Be humble. Even though none of us want to admit it, the fact is all of us can be difficult at times. We would do well to come to grips with our own weaknesses and shortcomings before being too hard on others.
4. Be gentle. You may need to confront the beast or thorn in your life. Make sure that your approach is right. Paul's word for gentleness has an adjective form that was applied to a cool breeze or a broken colt. Another way that term is used is when applied to medicine. Too much of a drug will harm or kill you, but the right dosage makes you well.
5. Be patient. Your beast or thorn will not transform overnight. Keep working.
6. Be forgiving. Release the burning desire to get even or get ahead. Absolutely refuse to become difficult to others. Bear with them and forgive them when they injure you.
7. Be loving. Whatever comes to your mind as a display of love for your beast or thorn, act upon it. One of the most obvious ways to love the people is to pray for them.

Conclusion:

Who are the difficult people in your life? They are your beasts, your thorns. When you see them again, how will you respond? Begin to apply Paul's teaching and take steps toward healing.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

John 20:24-25

Introduction:

It is easy to get stuck with a nickname. Just ask Douglas Corrigan. On July 17, 1938, he left New York City headed for Long Beach, California in his plane. In the air he made an arc and headed over the Atlantic Ocean. Instead of California he landed in Dublin, Ireland. When he exited his plane he mumbled to officials that he had accidentally flown the wrong way. When he arrived back in America he was treated as a hero and even received a ticker-tape parade in New York City. The misadventure made him a celebrity and made him wealthy, yet for the rest of his life he was known as "Wrong Way" Corrigan. Later in life he said that he intended to do it, but he was still known as "Wrong Way" Corrigan.

It is easy to get stuck with a nickname. One man in the Bible who got stuck with a nickname was Thomas. Three times in the Gospel of John he is mentioned and could have received a positive nickname, but because of one event he was labeled a negative nickname. What could he have been called?

I. He Could Have Been Called Devoted Thomas (John 11:16).

- A. He was devoted to Christ. He was willing to die. When Jesus said that he needed to go to Bethany for Lazarus, Thomas responded, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."
- B. He was devoted to the cause. He was willing to follow no matter the cost.

II. He Could Have Been Called Deductive Thomas (John 14:1-6).

- A. He was a logical thinker. Thomas wanted to know logically what was going to happen. In John 14:1-6, Jesus told his disciples they would be with him soon. Thomas responded: "Lord we know not where you are going; how can we know the way?" Thomas wanted answers.

- B. He was a careful thinker. Jesus told the plan. However, Thomas wanted to make sure he understood. A good disciple wants to make sure that he understands what is expected of him.

III. He Is Called Doubting Thomas. (John 20:24-29)

- A. The nickname is not fair because he saw Jesus die. He saw the bleeding, bruised body of Christ walking down a main street bearing a cross. He heard the mallet coming down on the metal nails through flesh into the wood. He smelled the stench of sweat and blood on Golgotha. He watched his Savior quit breathing. He watched the soldier thrust a spear in the side of Jesus and blood and water spewing out. He watch them take down the body and examine Jesus to prove he was dead. He saw the grave with the stone. Do you blame him for not believing?
- B. The nickname is not fair because he had not seen Jesus alive. The other apostles had. They had the advantage of talking to Jesus. But Thomas wasn't there and did not have their advantages.
- C. The nickname is not fair because he did not say he would never believe. He only stated his feelings for that moment. He did have doubts, but wouldn't you?

Conclusion:

Jesus did not condemn Thomas for his questions. What did Jesus do? Jesus responded. What answers are you seeking from God? Let Jesus help you with your doubts. What can we do with our doubts? First, stay close to the fellowship. Even with doubts, Thomas was with the disciples. Second, look at the facts. Thomas examined the facts. Look at the facts of the resurrection.

GIFTS GIVEN TO ALL

Ephesians 4:7-12

Introduction:

Paul expressed that the Ephesians needed to lead lives worthy of the calling given to them by the Lord (4:1). We need to do the same. How do we lead lives worthy of the calling that Christ has given to us? We do this by exercising the gifts given to us by Jesus through the person and presence of the Holy Spirit. John MacArthur, Jr. once said, "When a believer does not minister his gift properly as God's steward (1 Peter 4:10), God's work suffers to that degree – because God has not called or gifted another Christian in exactly the same way or for exactly the same work. That is why no Christian is to be a spectator. Every believer is on the team and is strategic in God's plan, with his own unique skills, position, and responsibilities."

We need to exercise our gifts in the church. Let's look at how exercising our gifts can benefit the church, the body of Christ.

I. The Enabling of the Body of Christ (4:7-8).

- A. Christ distributes the gifts. Notice that a gift was given to each one.
- B. Christ directs the use of the gifts. Notice that both the gift and its use are specified. Christ, as he gives us gifts, makes us gifts to the church.
- C. Christ gives the dynamic to the gifts. It is from the power of the gift and gifts of the Holy Spirit that we do the work of the church (Acts 1:8).

II. The Equipping of the Body of Christ (4:11-12a).

- A. The apostles and the prophets form the foundation of the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:20). Their ministry is primarily associated with the word of God.
- B. The evangelists give the invitation into the body of Christ. Their ministry is primarily associated with being a witness for Christ.

C. The pastors and teachers labor toward the transformation of the body of Christ. Their ministry is primarily associated with the work of God.

D. Through these ministries there is both interest in the flock and sound instruction given to the flock. Both are vital to ensure the equipping of the body of Christ.

III. The Edifying of the Body of Christ (4:12b).

- A. The member who does not exercise his or her gift will be powerless in the work of God.
- B. The member who does not exercise his or her gift will feel purposeless in the work of God.
- C. The member who does not exercise his or her gift will be without fruit for the work of God.

Conclusion:

The disaster of the space shuttle Challenger was not caused by an overwhelming lack of commitment to the program. The disaster was caused by the failure of one small but significant part—an O-ring failure in the fuel system. That one piece was needed to make the shuttle perform as it should. The malfunction of this piece led to the disaster that is forever etched into our memories.

Is it possible that you as an individual are the O-ring of some area of ministry in the church? It may not be because of a lack of commitment to the ministry programs of the church. It could simply be that you have failed to exercise your gift, to do your part in the operation of the body at a critical moment.

THE TIME IS NOW

Mark 1:14-15

Introduction:

Sometimes we need to pray for the end of a world. Not the end of the world, but the end of a world of wasted lives. We ought to pray for the end of a world of violence, the end of a world of cruelty, the end of a world of envy, and the end of a world of hatred due to skin color, nationality or culture. We should pray for the end of a world of poverty and starvation, the end of a world of misery and despair, and the end of a world of persecution.

What is God's message to a world inundated by poverty, war, misery and despair? What was Jesus' message to his world? Is it not the same message in many ways for our world? In Mark 1:14-15 we find a summary of Jesus' message. Jesus talks about time in this text; he talks about content; and he talks about response. He says that God's time is now, for God is on the move, and a response is imperative. Let's look at these three aspects of Jesus' message that Mark mentions.

I. The Time Is Now.

- A. It was not an ideal time by any means—"After John was taken prisoner." By all worldly standards the situation was less than desirable for the launching of a world-impacting mission and message. It was a dangerous time politically, economically and religiously.
- B. But it was God's time. We would likely have advised Jesus not to go to Galilee. We might have told Jesus to wait for a better time.
- C. God's time for us is now.
 1. The time may not appear ideal. It is not a good time by human standards in many parts of the world, but it is God's time.
 2. The time is never ideal. But the present time is our time, the time that God has given us for impacting our world through faithful following of Him.

II. God is on the Move—"The Kingdom of God is at hand."

- A. In the first century many Jews were hoping for God to change this world. The Jews developed a messianic hope.
- B. People today are still looking for hope, for a way to see this world changed into a better place.
- C. Jesus proclaims that God is on the move to change this world. The Kingdom of God is about the active involvement of God in his creation to restore it to his original vision. God is changing the lives of people and the fabric of this world.
- D. We need to proclaim that God is on the move, and he wants to change people, families, communities and our world!

III. A Response Is Imperative—"Repent and pledge loyalty to the Good News."

- A. We cannot sit back and wait for the future to happen. We are to respond now and participate personally.
- B. The call is to repent, to change our view of the world, of reality, and of God.
- C. The call is to believe, to pledge loyalty to what God is doing in Jesus.
- D. We are to join with Jesus in God's movement in this world, and we are to call others to join their lives with God's work as well.

Conclusion:

Jesus talks about time, he talks about content, and he talks about response. Then in Mark 1:16-20, Jesus begins to call followers to join with him in the task. That mandate is still our mandate today. God's now is our now, God's action is our message and God's call to respond is our imperative. We are invited to follow our Lord and see this world changed, to see an end of wasted lives in a world of sin. God is on the move now! And the time is now to respond, and to join in following Jesus and calling others to follow him!

KEEPING THE GOOD NEWS GOOD

John 3:16-17

Introduction:

We all feel the need for love and acceptance. The message of the Gospel is that God accepts us and loves us. Is that not what John 3:16-17 states? God offers us a relationship based on love and acceptance. The Good News is that God is on our side. He is actively in love with His creation and wants to see it flourish, to see us know what it is to be loved without reference to whether we are loveable as a prerequisite. But is this the message that many understand as the Christian Gospel? What do we do when the Good News is heard as Bad News? Let's consider some misunderstandings of the Good News in light of the real Good News as proclaimed in John 3:16-17.

I. When the Good News Is Bad News: Distortions of the Gospel.

- A. A distortion of the Gospel proclaims that God has indeed come to condemn us. Many in our society understand the church's message as that of a God who hates us and is waiting with angry glee to condemn and destroy us. The Good News seems like very Bad News indeed. If life was not rough enough, now even God is against us.
- B. Another distortion of the Gospel is that we have to earn God's love. This is a misunderstanding of God's grace. A theology of trying harder and harder to please a perfectionist God results in an impossible situation. Such a gospel is a "lose-lose" proposition.
- C. For many in our world, their understanding of the Gospel has turned into a nightmare. God is against people and takes delight in making their lives miserable.
- D. But is that the Gospel? Is not that exactly what John says is not the desire of God? John 3:17 says that Jesus came to save, not condemn. God's purpose is to give life, not take away life. Our faith should not haunt us or drag us down, but rather the Gospel is a proclamation that our

God wishes to help us up, to bring out the best in us through his redeeming power. Isn't this a world waiting for some Good News that is good indeed?

II. When the Good News Is Indeed Good News (3:16-17).

- A. God loves this world. He loves you and me, yet this passage proclaims even more. God is in an active love affair with his creation, with this entire world and all of the people in it.
- B. God loves us right now as much as he is capable of loving us. That means that I can never cause God to love me more that he already does. We don't have to earn God's love in some manipulative manner or with a distorted theology. God already loves us all he can. And that is indeed good news.
- C. We can rest in the fact that God will never stop loving us. That can be the solid rock that sees us through the times of self-doubt, the times of soul-searching, the times of crisis. No matter how others treat us or think of us, God accepts and loves us.
- D. God is seeking to bring out the best in us. He came to save or heal us, not to condemn us (3:17).
- E. God has shown his love commitment to us in action, giving his only, unique, one-of-a-kind son for us. God not only loves us, he loves us to the point of acting on our behalf.

Conclusion:

Too many distortions and misunderstandings of the Good News have been spread. It's time for us to keep the Good News good! God is on our side and is doing all that is possible to keep us from self-destructing, from the ravages of sin, selfishness, violence, greed, and from a world without a vital, life-transforming presence of our loving God. God invites us to live in the joy of his love. And this invitation is offered to all, here and now, by the living God who came to us in Christ Jesus.

A BURDEN FOR FELLOWSHIP**"Family of God"**

Responsive Reading 699

*The Baptist Hymnal, 1991***Introduction:**

A few years ago a disturbing story was on the front page of a newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky. A church, after years of discord, engaged in a fistfight among its members. A dozen Louisville police officers were needed to end the fracas. They had a problem with fellowship!

We tend to associate fellowship with relaxation and informality, as when we greet each other during the service or stand around and talk after the service. Fellowship includes much more.

I. Fellowship Involves Concern.

- A. The Bible says early Christians "devoted" themselves to fellowship (Acts 2:42). Yet sometimes our love for each other is shallow or dishonest. Why is that?
- B. When we choose to love someone, we run the risk of being hurt. We aren't sure we want to take that risk. Changed lives, however, make the risk worthwhile.

II. Fellowship Involves Cooperation.

- A. Biblical fellowship means we admit our differences and constructively deal with them.
- B. In Galatians 2:9 we read that two groups of leaders gave each other the right hand of fellowship. Paul and Barnabas had a burden for pagans. Peter, James and John had a burden for Jews.
- C. Biblical fellowship occurs when we feel free to pursue our different passions. What is your passion?

III. Fellowship Involves Confrontation.

- A. Confrontation is probably the most ignored dimension of fellowship. We resist it because of our own sin and because we do not understand its importance.

- B. A lack of confrontation is not necessarily an act of humility. It may reveal a lack of concern or fear at how a believer will respond. We may also unwittingly say people can believe or act as they please and still be pleasing to God!
- C. Confrontation means we "speak the truth in love." In Biblical fellowship we prayerfully, humbly reach out to the wayward to restore them because we care.

IV. Fellowship Involves Celebration.

- A. The Bible tells us that early believers had "gladness and sincerity of heart" (Acts 2:46). One of the best blessings of fellowship is celebrating together with God's people.
- B. During a Special Olympics track event, every participant had Down's syndrome. They were all running closely together as they neared the finish line. Suddenly one member of the group fell. Instead of racing ahead, all of the other runners stopped. They went back and picked up their friend. Then they finished the race together. They understood something we need to understand. When one of us wins, we all win. When one of us falls, we all fall.

Conclusion:

Do we have the kind of fellowship that leads us to be concerned about each other, the kind that leads us to cooperate in spite of our different passions, the kind that leads us to humbly confront each other when we are wrong, the kind that leads us to celebrate together when we are right? We need that kind of fellowship today!

Scholarships for Church-Related Vocations Students William Carey College 2002-2003

The church-related vocations scholarship could provide up to \$5,000 per year for eligible on-campus residents. Commuting students could be eligible for up to \$3,300 per year.

In order to be eligible to receive a church-related vocations scholarship, a student must:

1. Have an ACT composite score of 17 or higher and a high school transcript.
2. Be a current and active member of a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.
3. Have made a public commitment to a church-related vocation (ministry or missions) in a church affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.
4. Have a letter from the pastor stating that a public commitment to a church-related vocation was made or a copy of a license / ordination certificate.
5. Have a pastor's nomination on the scholarship form.
6. Make application to the college and application for scholarships and grants.
7. Meet all admission requirements to the college.

Winter Bible Study Preview

Sponsored by
The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Helping Your Church Stay on Course: Studies in I Corinthians

Thursday, September 26, 2002

9:00 – 3:00

Kresge Room, Thomas Business Building
William Carey College

Led by Dr. Gene Henderson
First Baptist Church, Brandon, MS

For more information, call (800) 748-1651, ext. 295.



William Carey College Seventh Annual Minister's Golf Tournament

May, 2003

Details will be announced later.