

Trends

Among US adults who attend church regularly, 69% say a very important reason they do so is so their children will have a moral foundation; 68% say it is to become a better person; 66% say it is for comfort in times of trouble or sorrow. Far fewer cite their family's religious traditions (37%) or a feeling of religious obligation (31%) as reasons for their steady religious attendance, while even fewer say socializing and meeting new people (19%) or pleasing their spouse or family (16%) are key reasons they attend church regularly . . . Among those who do not attend religious services, 28% say it is because they are not believers; 37% say they practice their faith in other ways; 23% say they haven't found a church or other house of worship that they like, while 18% say it is because they don't like the sermons.

—via Pew Research Center

Matthew 22:37: "Jesus said unto him, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'"

Sentence Sermons

"It's hard to think of anything that is more socially important than raising children well." —Kerry Healey

Ephesians 6:4: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

News & Notes

Pray for one another: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets a great example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

Words of Life

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You
have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



Basket Case

Ryan Thomas

In Zechariah chapter 5 we have recorded the account of the prophet Zechariah as he sees a vision of a scroll flying through the air apparently open to read. Verses one and two set the table for what follows:

"I then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. 2 And he said unto me, 'What seest thou?' And I answered, 'I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.'"

The prophet recognized the size of this roll to be identical to the dimensions of the holy place in the tabernacle as well as the porch in front of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:3). The size of the roll as stated by the prophet is significant. If the size is taken from the holy place in the tabernacle then perhaps it signifies the demand for holiness upon all who draw near to God which is most certainly a requirement (Heb. 10:22; Jas. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). So, what was written on this flying scroll? On the scroll was writing that pronounced a curse against anyone who was found guilty of stealing and swearing (v. 3). This indicates that the text on the scroll made reference to the Ten Commandments. To steal was to injure your neighbor by violating their property rights (Exod. 20:15). To swear was to dishonor God by taking His name in vain (Lev. 19:12; cf. Exod. 20:7). Neither of which was a sin to be taken lightly! In Zechariah's vision these two sins represent all of Israel's sin. God was pronouncing a curse upon all those who had committed sin as well as their household. Sin affects more than just ourselves, by the way. It can often have disastrous consequences on others round about us especially our families. Evidently the people who had returned from captivity had become lax in their morality and their relationship with God had suffered as a result. Remember, it was their violation of God's law that had caused them to go into captivity in the first place (Hos. 2:3-4; Mic. 2:2-3)! Sin is what separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2) and unless it's removed from our lives God's curse will go forth and consume our house as it did theirs (v. 4). The solution to the problem is now revealed:

"5 Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, 'Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth.' 6 And I said, 'What is it?' And he said, 'This is an ephah that goeth forth.' He said moreover, 'This is their resemblance through all the earth.' 7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. 8 And he said, 'This is wickedness.' And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of

lead upon the mouth thereof.”

Once again, as the prophet lifts up his eyes he sees a vision of a large basket or barrel large enough to contain an “ephah” (equal to approximately 38 American quarts). The contents of this basket contain a hidden, crouching, mysterious woman concealed underneath a lid with a lead weight attached to it. Enough figures to make a person’s head spin, right?! Well, the meaning of the vision, though highly symbolic, is actually quite simple. The angel identifies the meaning of these various items when he says, “*This is wickedness.*” (v. 8) Earlier prophets had used the figure of an immoral woman to signify the wickedness of Judah (Isa. 1:21) and Israel (Hos. 2:5) as well as the cities of Jerusalem and Samaria (Ezek. 23). John also uses this same figure in the book of Revelation when he saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast (Rev. 17). Similarly, in this vision, the woman inside the basket signifies all the wickedness among the people. So, what were they to do with it? Send it away! Send it back to Babylon where it belonged and where they should have left it!

“9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. 10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, ‘Whither do these bear the ephah?’ 11 And he said unto me, ‘To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.’”

The vision therefore symbolizes the complete removal of wickedness from the lives of God’s people. To help illustrate, have you ever ordered food at a restaurant and wound up getting the wrong order? If so, did you accept it? Of course not! In that case, what did you do? You probably sent it back and rightfully so. Likewise, God will not accept or tolerate behavior that falls short of His holy, righteous standard. Psalm 5:4 declares, “*For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.*” Consequently, if you have sin in your life, you need to deal with it. You need to get rid of it now, send it back, do whatever you need to do and get it out of your system before it completely destroys your soul! Psalm 101:7 reads, “*He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.*” Friends, God says what He means and means what He says! Therefore, let us take these lessons to heart and let the words of the apostle sink in when he said, “*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” (2 Cor. 7:1)

Southern Baptist Convention Considers Woman President

Michael R. Baggett

I have been saying for 4 or 5 years now that the issues generating from the feminist, unisex and gender-neutral movement would soon show up in religious circles. The *Southern Baptist Church* is now in a battle between what the Bible teaches about the proper place of women and the rapid changes in what is acceptable for women in modern society.

In the beginning, God made woman for the man as a helper. She is the glory of the man. A treasure to be valued. God said that the man would “*rule over*” (govern over, practice headship) over the woman (Genesis 3:16). Later, The Holy Spirit through Isaiah would chide the men of Judah because children oppress them and women rule over them (Isaiah 3:12). God expects men to

be leaders. Several verses in the scriptures admonish men “*to be like men*” or “*show yourself a man*” (1 Kings 2:1-3; Job 38:3; Ezekiel 22:30; 1 Corinthians 15:13--KJV). When men are weak and not showing themselves as men, women often take over the leadership. I believe this is the case in our society where women are ruling over men in government on an ever growing scale. I believe this is a symptom of a bigger problem; namely, weak male leadership in the home! As the home goes so goes the country and, now, the churches had better look out. This is not just my opinion; the winds of the gender-neutral movement are blowing at our doors!

The New Testament is clear on women’s roles in the local church. The commands are given with reasons that are set in concrete; therefore, man cannot say it was just a cultural practice. For instance, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 says: “*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety*” (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Note that the woman is to learn in quietness as opposed to teaching over the man. The subjection of woman is not a cultural matter, but a matter etched in stone back in creation. Paul the apostle gives two reasons for her subordination to man: 1) Adam was formed first. 2) Eve was first to be deceived by the devil. Either reason is good enough and unchangeable. See 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 for more information on this matter of subjection of women. Note also that the man is the leader in the home and this includes spiritual leadership. This principle must not be violated—no matter how educated a woman may be! The pattern we find for women’s roles in the Bible do not have an expiration date. God has spoken His will (Hebrews 13:8).

While there is no *Baptist Church* mentioned in the New Testament or a *Southern Baptist Convention*, the direction this large convention takes will have an influence on many people. When a fire starts, it often starts in the woods or yard before it reaches your house. The fires of gender equality in all matters are burning hot. It is only a matter of time before it starts to burn in the Lord’s Church. Let us be sober and vigilant because Satan is at work already destroying the home and is working on the Church. Train children to know their place in God’s creation order and to carry out the duties of their God given roles.

Brethren sometimes throw off the suggestion to preach on matters about gender and gender roles exclaiming: “We don’t need these lessons because we don’t have these problems.” My question is: “Whatever went with an ounce of prevention?” (Philippians 3:1). The gender issues may very well be the Churches next institutionalism, which took the brotherhood by storm in the 1950’s and 1960’s. We must go back to the Bible immediately concerning these gender matters, and not fearing what men or women may say or do to us. We must not give place to gender role errors not for a moment! When the Democratic Party ever gets back in power in the White House, we may very well see the time when government mandates that churches provide equal opportunity to homosexuals and women to serve as elders, preachers and deacons. Remember I said it. I’m glad that I am not alone in what I have been harping on for 4 or 5 years. Kyle Ellison, a young, fiery preacher in Mount Olive, Alabama is addressing this issue now. I hope you will write about it and preach about it too. We must all join this battle before it becomes a forest fire which burns up the brotherhood! (1 Peter 5:7; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:4; Galatians 2:5; Jude :3).