

# Expository Files

Editors: Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley



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## Opening the Preacher's Door

### A review of the book "Behind the Preacher's Door"

#### The Front Page 17.6

*By Jon W. Quinn*

My co-editor for Expository Files has recently edited a book of which I want to share some information with you. The title is "Behind the Preacher's Door". Frankly, when I first received the book while I expected it to be helpful and informative, I thought it would also probably be depressing. Very depressing. I imagined there would be accounts of failure and loss and heart-rending episodes of extreme damage done to the cause of grace. I thought that there would be treatments of moral failures and indiscretions and ethical lapses of preachers.



Well, there is that. And there was, at times, the emotional lows that come from thinking of the messes we sometimes let Satan convince us into making. But there was also something that was a pleasant and unexpected surprise. This book is wonderfully encouraging as it lays out specific guidelines and counsel on how to overcome. Perhaps the very weakest approach to these things is to simply deny that problems exist, or at least, that problems exist for me. This book lays the problem out, tells us what harm the problem can do, then instructs us how to crush its head. It is so refreshing to see these things dealt with honestly, plainly and competently as we are encouraged by a call to higher ground.

In addition to a brief introduction as to the purpose of the book and a foreword, there are eleven chapters written by ten men followed by some final thoughts. The first chapter is "The

Preacher's Personal Devotion" and the second is "The Preacher's Daily Discipline." These two make a wonderful foundation for the rest of the book. Taking the first chapter, written by Gary Henry, as an illustration, "devotion" is defined and it is suggested that a test of our devotion "is not the soundness of our sermons" but rather the extent to which we yield ourselves to God in "the obedience of faith". If our hearts are truly the Lord's dwelling place, then there will be no conflict between the man I am in the pulpit and other public places and the man I am privately.

Additionally, this chapter suggests four factors which contribute to a "disconnect" that sometimes occurs between what a preacher is publically and what he is privately. He might have allowed preaching to degenerate into a "job". He might be caught up in the "busyness" of preaching to where he has no time for his own spiritual refreshment. Preaching might have become purely intellectual or he might be merely lazy or indifferent.

Then, the writer makes five recommendations (and this is what I think is wonderfully beneficial about this book - the recommendations given by this and the other writers). He recommends unceasing self-evaluation, accountability to others, keeping God at the center, having a daily devotional discipline and to practice doing the difficult. Let me assure you that each of these five sections are so insightful in their elaborations on each point.

Other chapters in the book deal with the preacher and his ethics, the preacher's battle with pornography, the preacher's temptation to commit adultery, the preacher's money, The preacher's relationship with difficult brethren, the preacher's role in the unity of the local church, the preacher's friends, the preacher's toys (technology's impact) and the preacher as a husband.

I recommend this book. Understand that almost all of the recommendations would find application in every disciple's life, though the applications made in the book specifically deal with the preacher and his world. This book would be of value to young preachers and older preachers alike. Frank Jamerson, who wrote the forward, put it this way. He said, "It is my conviction that two classes of preachers should read these good articles. First, those who have made some of the mistakes addressed, and second those who want to avoid making those mistakes." If you are a preacher, I hope you are in the latter class. But if you are in the former group, I do believe that this book contains wise counsel on how to make your way back from the abyss.

Available from Spiritbuilding.com – [www.spiritbuilding.com](http://www.spiritbuilding.com). Other dealers: Florida College Bookstore; Amazon.com; Barnes and Nobles.com; Books A Million online.

## **“You Thought I Was Just Like You”**

### **Psalm 50:16-21**

*By Jon W. Quinn*

There are some things in which we are like God. This is not surprising, because we are His offspring and have been created in His spiritual image (Genesis 1:26,27; Acts 17:24-29). We can think, love and make moral decisions. We have a spirit and God is spirit.

But, there are also huge differences between ourselves and God. There always have been and always will be. It is those differences that man sometimes forgets, and that leads to careless living.

The Psalmist talked about this. He wrote:

*“But to the wicked God says, “What right have you to tell of My statutes, And to take My covenant in your mouth? For you hate discipline, And you cast My words behind you.*

*When you see a thief, you are pleased with him, And you associate with adulterers. You let your mouth loose in evil, And your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you, and state the case in order before your eyes.” (Psalm 50 :16-21).*

In this passage, the Psalmist links unrighteous behavior with the mistaken concept that “God is just like we are.” This would mean that if I make excuses for my own failures, He will too. If I see the need to practice deceit or to be negligent, then God will see it the way I do and not hold me accountable. If we think that way, we are wrong.

This is because God is different than man. He hates sin when man often does not. He is perfectly and absolutely righteous when men are less than perfect. He sees everything just as it is but man often sees only what he wishes to see. The Lord said, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8,9). Consider some ways in which God is different than man.

### **You Can Hide From Man, But Not From God**

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:8).

The attempt to hide from God is as old as sin. It never has been successful and never will be. God is all knowing. There is no place to hide. Jonah boarded a ship to flee from God and his responsibility, but God was already present where he was fleeing from, where he was heading and every place in between.

"Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, And art intimately acquainted with all my ways." (Psalm 139:2,3; cf. vss 1-12). Sometimes, when men hide from men, they can be successful. But no one can be successful in hiding from God.

### **You Can Deceive a Man, But Not God**

"The Lord knows the thoughts of man, That they are a mere breath." (Psalm 94:11).

We cannot cause God to believe something that is not so. One may be a good enough liar to fool most of the people most of the time, or even fool some of the people all of the time, and there might be a few who can fool all of the people all of the time, but no one can fool God even once. You simply cannot fool One who can read your heart and thoughts.

Suppose, for a moment, that a man was able to concoct a perfect lie and to repeat it so perfectly that there is not a glimmer of evidence that he is lying. No twitch, no hesitation, no failure to look you in the eye. He still could not deceive God. The Bible says that even before the first word of the lie is spoken, God already knows exactly what will be said and will know it is not true. "Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, Thou dost know it all." (Psalm 139:4).

God is never mocked. He sees all things clearly and will judge us all accordingly. Nothing will be hidden (Galatians 6:7,8; Hebrews 4:13).

### **You Can Bribe a Man, But Not God**

We have nothing of value to offer God except our sincere worship and obedience. We cannot bribe Him into accepting less than that.

To attempt to bribe God with lip service is vain. Jesus said, "This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." (Matthew 15:8,9). The Lord simply will not accept empty ritual in the place of daily love and dedication.

In Amos' day, the people had gotten quite elaborate with the trappings of ritual. The Lord responded to them, "I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24).

A man may live wickedly and occasionally do some good thing thinking this will take care of his misdeeds. While the "good deed" accomplishes some good, it does not satisfy the Lord. Only genuine repentance and conversion will do that.

## **You Can Excuse Sin, But God Will Not**

We began by looking at a passage in the Psalms when people were thinking that God looked at sin as lightly as they did (cf. Psalm 50:16-21). Today there are many who have adopted the same attitude and expect that God will judge us as righteous in spite of our sins because He really does not hate sin at all. Fornication, for example. It is so common that it ought not to be regarded as a sin any longer. If we do not regard it as such, then the Lord won't either, many think. They forget God's past judgments (2 Peter 3:3-7;9). They forget His Son dying for sins. They forget that God is not just like us.

## **John's Testimony of Jesus**

### **John 1:29-34**

*By Wayne Walker*

Several statements in the Old Testament prophesy that a forerunner would come to prepare the way for the Messiah. As we come to the New Testament, it is affirmed that these prophecies found their fulfillment in a man named John, who was born to a priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth about six months before Jesus was born. Because John was sent by God to baptize the people of Israel so that they might be ready for the coming of the Messiah, he is known as John the Baptizer or John the Baptist, and we need to consider his testimony of Jesus in John 1:29-34.

First, he identified Jesus as the Lamb of God in verse 29. "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" Under the Old Covenant law, God required lambs and other animals to be sacrificed. However, these animal sacrifices themselves did not provide forgiveness, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin" (Hebrews 10:4). Rather, the primary purpose of these offerings was to point forward to the fact that mankind would be redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Second, he said that Jesus was "Preferred before me" in verses 30-31. "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." When John said that Jesus was "Preferred before me," he meant that He "ranks higher than I." Jesus Himself later said of John, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11). John was not the Messiah, and he humbly accepted his place in God's scheme as the herald who would announce the Messiah.

Third, he saw the Spirit in verses 32-33. "And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.''" This event occurred at the baptism of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 3:13-17. God had apparently revealed to John that this

would happen as a sign that would enable John to know exactly who the Christ would be and so to testify of Him.

Fourth, he called Jesus the Son of God in v. 34. "I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." Based on the evidence presented to him, John identified Jesus as God's Son. Others have done the same. Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:17). And God wants us to do so also. But how can we come to know this? We didn't see the Spirit descend on Jesus as John did. We haven't listened to Jesus in person as Peter did. "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

What is the importance of John's testimony? Well, consider these questions. Why do we believe that Alexander the Great lived 2,300 years ago, was king of Macedon, and conquered the known world? Why do we believe Julius Caesar lived 2000 years ago, first ruled Gaul, and then crossed back over to Rome? Why do we believe George Washington lived 230 years ago, led the colonial army against the British, and was the first President of this nation? None of us was there, but we accept credible historical evidence. And even though none of us was present when Christ lived on earth, we have credible historical evidence about Him—from many people including John the Baptist. If believe can believe the historians' testimony about Alexander, Julius Caesar, and George Washington, why should we not accept John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus Christ?

[wswalker310@juno.com](mailto:wswalker310@juno.com)

## **One Gospel - No Turning Away!**

(Gal. 1:6-12)

Warren E. Berkley

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I saw again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. But do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I could not be a servant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ," (Gal. 1:6-12).

We like happy stories, so we would like for this to read something like: *The people in Galatia heard the good news about Jesus Christ and recognized their lost condition. They responded according to the teachings of the apostles and after being baptized, they just did great, faithfully serving the Lord until they died.*

The devil didn't let the story move in that direction. There were men in this region used by the devil to cause trouble, perverting the gospel of Christ. Paul learned of this trouble and the Holy

Spirit used him to write to them, expressing his concern, correcting the error and charging them to be obedient to God, not men.

**He begins with a warning against turning away from the Lord.** "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel." When first converted, we turn from sin to God, being able to do that because of Christ's sacrifice. Once we do that, we should carefully guard against turning back into sin, out of fellowship with God.

It's sort of like fixing the biggest problem in your existence, having your sins forgiven and being in fellowship with God . . . *then turning your back on God, and walking back into sin!* It was a marvel to the apostle Paul that people would do that. Embracing the grace of Christ, becoming a Christian . . . only to turn away or turn back. "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel." (NIV)

We should read this and take it as a warning against any movement away from God. To be able to leave sin and come to God is an opportunity of such grace - To have what you need for good moral life here, and to be ready to meet your Maker - To be able to trust in God and rely on His promises - To have the teachings of the New Testament to guide you to good character and service - To have Christians who are ready to help you serve God - **THEN, turn away from all that??** What can be said of that? "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God," (Heb. 3:12).

So the apostle Paul responds to this turning away of some by laying down this affirmation: **THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL!**

*If you depart from . . .  
If you accept a perverted version . . .  
If you do not continue to obey the truth of the gospel . . .  
**THERE IS NO OTHER!!***

In the region of Galatia, men came in and apparently persuaded some - that **the gospel Paul preached was incomplete.** The argument was made that, in order to be saved from sin - *there are requirements you must meet, that Paul didn't tell you about.* Seems clear, they were pushing Christians back into the Law of Moses and the practices of religious Judaism.

"Change agents" were advocating that the apostles of Christ didn't really have it exactly right; they didn't tell the whole story about being a child of God. They were saying, "there are actually other things necessary." Thus, they were "changing" the message (not in reality but in presentation).

Paul is responding to that, offering this very simple answer: **THERE IS NO OTHER GOSPEL.**

Think about what the gospel is. The problem we have is sin (violating God's law, offending Him and taking us away from Him and destined for hell). God has provided a remedy. In sending His Son to live and die for us (and be raised from the dead), God has acted with love and grace toward us. If we believe all this and we respond (as taught by the apostles), we

become Christians and enjoy the privilege and obligation of continuing to obey God and be His children, as we abide in Christ. That's the gospel. That's the simple message delivered by the apostles and written in the New Testament.

If we accept a "modified version" or "changed message," we have turned away from the author of the true message, the only message.

It behooves us to understand, when people come along and claim they can "complete the message" delivered by the apostles, they really cannot! God gave a perfect, complete message of salvation through the apostles of Christ. There is no other gospel. Don't let anyone deceive you or tell you otherwise.

While it may be pleasing to accept an ecumenical, pluralistic, generic form of Christianity, we ought to stand where Paul stood: Look at verse 10 - "...do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

When someone promotes something that may sound like the gospel, but isn't what is written in the New Testament - we ought to see that as TROUBLE!

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ."

The broad, pluralistic, ecumenical approach to Christianity is offered in our society as sweet, unifying, diplomatic, accepting and comfortable. Problem is, God didn't give us a message we can adapt, modify, change, add to! it is not our purpose to take the Bible and tamper with it, deny parts of it, or handle it to suit our tastes or the demands of popular culture. Later in this epistle, Paul says: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?" (3:1).

God says to us through His Word: Here is the truth. You have sinned and Christ is the remedy. Respond to Him by the activity of your faith, obeying the teachings given through the apostles. What could be simpler?

But the devil enables and entices and men to come along, perverting the gospel of Christ with all their changes, additions and twists and turns. Paul speaks to that - "There are some who trouble you."

But, the troublemakers do not pervert the gospel without consequence. Observe the last phrase in verse 8: "...let him be accursed."

Paul doesn't take the pluralistic approach, that any message you like can be called "the gospel of Christ." Paul doesn't say - *It's ok . . . they have their version of the gospel we have our version - NO PROBLEM.*

Paul doesn't say, *"Here's the message; but it is flexible; do with it as you please, no problem."* (Read again verses 6-9).

I believe this: Those who take God's truth lightly, those who misrepresent the teachings of Scripture, those who build human religious empires, those who turn away from Christ to another gospel **face a terrible prospect on the judgment day!**

This word "accursed" is not like a slap on the hand or something. In the NIV, it is translated, "eternally condemned." Perverting or changing the gospel is not a right, an option or a liberty - it is a sin that takes us away from God - to eternal condemnation.

I ask nobody to take my word for it. Paul wrote: "As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received let him be accursed."

Paul takes all this to a foundational truth of God:

*"...I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man."*

We must - when we read the gospel - understand this simple fact: **It is not according to man!** Men witnessed the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

Certain men were inspired by God to deliver the message and give the terms of the New Covenant. Men can hear the gospel, preach the gospel and obey the gospel.

But man did not originate the gospel. Paul did not make it up. The apostles did come up with baptism. The gospel we read and believe and obey - was in no sense an invention or product of men.

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. for I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This is foundational truth - **the gospel Paul delivered, that we have in this book, is not ours to change - it is ours to obey!**

Conclusion:

Do you see what Paul is saying, that there is no other gospel? That there is only the one revealed through the apostles?

**The gospel of Christ simply says . . .** The problem we have is sin. God provided the remedy in sending His Son to live and die for us - who was raised from the dead. Believing that, we respond, according to the instructions given by the apostles - become Christians, and continue to follow the instructions of the apostles in all that we do. **That is the gospel; that's the message.** Hear it, believe, obey it, live by it and have life with God now and eternally. Reject it, turn from it and you bring upon yourself eternal condemnation.

Other articles regarding Galatians one in previous issues of EF:

<http://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-galatians-1.htm>

<http://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-galatians-1-2.htm>

<http://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-galatians-1-6.htm>

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## **“God Is Greater Than Our Heart”**

*1 John 3:19-24*

Hal Hammonds

We are saved by grace. Ephesians 2:5 says so explicitly. There should be no question on this fact. We are saved when and if God chooses to save us. Certainly we have duties and responsibilities, both before and after our sins are forgiven. But any Christian who thinks he has somehow earned a place in God’s favor by being baptized, preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry, or any other good “work”, he has no concept of the Bible’s teaching regarding salvation.

But still, we do have duties and responsibilities. And we fall short from time to time – not because we’re “human”, as is often said; that pushes the blame off on God, since He’s the One who made us “human”, warts and all. No, we fall short because we are weak. And if we have the idea when we come to the Lord that our weakness will wash off in the waters of baptism, we are quickly informed otherwise. And consciousness of sin leads to feelings of guilt; we know we have let God down, and that we have only ourselves to blame. Thankfully we have a Savior who will continue to forgive us when we continue to repent (1 John 1:7).

But as our failures multiply, feelings of guilt can become feelings of inadequacy. We get angry at ourselves for our continued missteps. We get frustrated at our inability to control our passions. We begin to think we are never going to “get it right”. And our heart condemns us at that moment. It causes us to question or even doubt our salvation, to think we are not “good enough” to be in God’s service.

But then again, we were never good enough. That was the whole point. Jesus did not die on the cross to save good people; He died on the cross for sinful people. We came to Him because we realized we were inadequate on our own, that we needed help. And He offered it to us. It is really quite arrogant on our part to think that now, with our new lease on life, we can just work a little harder and finally live our lives the right way – as if we are saying to the Lord, “Thanks for the bailout, I’ll take it from here.”

God does not want us boastfully asserting our independence and sufficiency, nor does He want us wallowing in doubt and anxiety. We have to find middle ground. We need to get to the point where we appreciate God’s continual role in our salvation, as well as our continual role in seeking Him out. John writes, *“We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our*

*heart before Him, in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things"* (1 John 3:18-20). As God's truth takes more and more hold in our hearts, we appreciate more and more that we truly are saved by grace. In no way does this mean that our actions, including our sins, are inconsequential. It simply means that although it may seem like our heart is breaking over our sin guilt, there is no guilt that is too much for God to overcome. God knows the problems we face. God knows the mistakes we make in dealing with them. God knows the hurt that this causes us. And God does not want that to get in the way of our peace of mind or our hope of heaven.

If we can overcome our heart, we can more fully appreciate the role God plays in our everyday lives, working His will in us and through us. The same context continues, "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." We still find ourselves working out our own salvation "with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). But now our heart does not chip away at our confidence. We know that despite our sin, God is still there for us, listening to our prayers and answering them.

This is what "walking by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7) is all about – believing in God's saving power instead of our own. That's why God commands us to believe. (Yes, choosing to believe in Jesus is itself a work.) If we can live our lives before Him in faith, and live our lives before our neighbors in love, we show God that He has taken possession of our lives. *"And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us"* (1 John 3:24). The Spirit-inspired word gives us the encouragement we need so that we know we are doing what we can to please Him, and that He is doing what He can to help us along the way.

[www.matthewstretchurch.org](http://www.matthewstretchurch.org)

## **God is Good Topical Page**

*By Jon W. Quinn*

"For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, And His faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 100:5) In researching the doctrine of God and His characteristics, we could look at His holiness, power and love. It is important to note that all these attributes, and many more, belong to God. But none of them describe the completeness of God by themselves. God is love, but God is not only love. Any being that is only love, but not also holy, would not be God. That's the trouble with many misconceptions of God that exist today: They attribute to God only some of His attributes, denying others (i.e. love without righteous wrath... just as inaccurate as righteous wrath without love). They thus end up with a false idea of God.

We are going to consider God's goodness. As we begin, we must say that God is good, but that is not all He is! This is not a complete description of God, but merely one aspect of His nature out of many.

## **Understanding The Term "Good"**

What do we mean when we say something is "good"? Do you think you know?

One definition of good is "suitable for a function"; for example, a jeep is good for driving in mud. God is good for getting to heaven because He is as a Shepherd guiding His sheep (Psalm 100:1-5; cf. John 10:14; 27,28; 14:6)

Another definition of "good" is to be "beneficial"; for example, hot lunches are good for children; (Matthew 7:7-11; 5:44,45). God is also good in this way; He is beneficial to us.

But the word "good" has several other meanings as well. To be "good" can sometimes mean to be "valid, genuine"; If someone is "as good as gold" we mean they are worthy of our trust. God is certainly "good" in this way as well (John 14:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:19,20).

Sometimes, the word "good" means to be "sound, healthy" as in the sentence "His eyesight is good." Entropy effects all physical things; eyesight fails; but God is spirit and not subject to this. He is eternally good in this sense as well (Hebrews 1:10-12).

Then again, "good" could mean "honorable" as in "He has a a good name." God fits this definition of "good" as well. (Hebrews 6:13-14; 17-20).

Sometimes, "good" means "enjoyable, happy" as in living the good life." God provides His people with joy and gladness, so He is good in this respect as well (Revelation 21:3,4; Philippians 3:1; 4:4)

You probably didn't think of all these definitions when earlier asked what the term 'good' means. Well, do not relax yet because we're not finished. Occasionally, the word "good" is defined as "complying with a set of rules" such as it does in the statement "Her manners are good." Of course, God is the One who wrote the rulebook (Isaiah 55:8-11).

Also, 'good' might mean to be "skilled" as in a being a good singer. Detailed design in creation tells us much of God's skills (Genesis 1:31; Psalm 139:14; Romans 1:20).

Sometimes, "good" means "a considerable amount, degree." We might talk of a good amount of energy being spent. The Scriptures talk of God having a good amount of mercy (1 Peter 1:2-4).

The term "good" might refer to moral goodness; to be "morally sound" as in "He is a good person." God is good in this way as well, absolutely (1 John 1:5).

## **God Is The Standard Of All That Is Good**

When the Scriptures describe what is good, God is held up before us as the standard (Psalm 25:8, Nahum 1:7). This is important for mortal men and women to understand: God determines what is good and what is not. We don't. Sometimes, men sit in judgment on God and His actions. Some have accused God of all kinds of evil, suggesting some of His past actions may have been too harsh or that His words about what will take place at the final judgment and

in hell are evil. They are forgetting that their determinations are not the standard, but God's decree is.

God's works are good. Step by step, as God created the world, He examined it and declared it to be good. (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21). He then surveyed the whole of creation, and said it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31).

This creation is part of the way God reveals Himself to us, and we are told to look at it and learn something of God (Romans 1:19,20). All that God does is good. The Psalmist said, "Thou art good and doest good; Teach me Thy statutes." (Psalm 119:68).

God's gifts are good, (some of our gifts are not good, or are good in some ways but not others. I suppose a gift of chocolates are like that; good in some ways but not others. But God gives good things.

God's gifts express his beneficence, love and mercy toward His creation. They are for the good of God's creatures, (James 1:17). He does good to all men (Acts 14:17); and He especially gives good gifts to His children (Ephesians 1:3). God guarantees that for the Christian, "all things work together for good" and that even chastening is for our good (Hebrews 12:10). It is good when our faith is tested (James 1:2-4,12). The many promises and restrictions are all for our good, because God is good. They are designed to get us out of this mess we have made for ourselves.

God's commands are good, (many of our manmade laws are not good. It is not a good law to permit the killing of the unborn). God's laws are a reflection of His holy nature. They are holy laws. His commandments are a revelation of His moral perfection. Our God-given goal is to become like God, (Matthew 5:48) and His laws are given for that very purpose, (John 10:10, Hebrews 5:8,9; 1 John 5:3)

One of the greatest compliments a man can receive is that someone would say, "He is a good man" One soup company described its product for years with the slogan "Mmm Mmm Good!" Well, I can tell you "God is good" He set the standard by which we measure goodness. No one truly knows goodness until they know God.

## **Plan of Salvation By Jon W. Quinn**

### Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the

heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38).

## Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer: "O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

## Final Page

### **You Haven't Stop Pressing Have You? Warren E. Berkley**

The apostle Paul is highly regarded by Bible students. We admire his conversion to the Lord, his courage in preaching the gospel, his willingness to face hardship, his love for people and passionate love for the Lord. Paul's example helps us see what it means to be a Christian.

While we might look to him as a fully developed, "all together," perfect Christian - he would make no such claim. 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 are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus," (Phil. 3:13-14).*

Not a single read of Expository Files on earth has arrived at perfection, nor a single writer. None can make the claim to have arrived.

So our challenge is to determine what we can do better. Mediocrity is distasteful to people with good and honest hearts. To fall into a rut and never grow would create shame before God; not to mention judgment. What are you doing now that is right, that you can do better. There is not just one answer that fits all.

**The answers will vary from individual to individual.** Some may need to be better Bible readers and students. Others may need to take the knowledge they have, and determine to share it with others. Some of us need to get more involved with helping people, encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are young men who can prepare themselves better for

future service. There are wives and mothers and young ladies who can learn how to teach children and become good caregivers.

Now, you haven't stopped pressing have you?