

VOICE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Volume 14 Issue 9

September 2007

TESTING OUR HEARTS PUTTING THE WILL OF GOD ON DISPLAY "The Gateways of Heaven and Hell"

There are times when we need to test our hearts. You know, our sensitive level, how we feel about others and the amount of thankfulness that still exists in our emotions. That statement might seem harsh, but the world has a way of slowly changing us without us recognizing it. How can we test ourselves? Observation is the answer. We observe everyone and everything around us but rarely ourselves. Set aside a normal day to see how you handle people and events around you. Are you more or less patient, more or less friendly, more or less concerned about others, more or less aware of Christ living in you? True evaluations can help us to produce positive change in our lives. Remember, we are the reflections of Jesus on this earth.

TIDBITS ABOUT HOPE

Psalms 33:18, Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.

Lamentations 3:26, It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Psalms 146:5-6, Happy is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever.

Romans 5:2, Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

Psalms 31:24, Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.

1 Peter 1:3-4, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can

THE GATEWAY OF HEAVEN — It's time we move from the "Open Heaven" (ladders) and "House" to the "Gate" of God. This "gate" is mentioned in Genesis 28:17 when Jacob said, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" It is very important that we define "gate" correctly in verse 17. In John 10:9 AMP, we are told, "I am the Door; anyone who enters in through Me will be saved (will live). He will come in and he will go out [freely], and will find pasture." This door or gate in this scripture is the "entrance of salvation" that is made available to mankind through Jesus. The "gate" in Genesis 28:17 is not a gate or door of salvation. The meaning "gate" is a place of transition and access. In order to explain this I want to use a natural illustration: I walk through a gate and proceed into the front yard, then I enter the house. In the same way, when we talk about the Church (House of God) being a "gate" of heaven, we are referring to the place where the reality of His dominion becomes available for all of mankind. This "gate" is the place that allows His world to invade ours!

THE GATE OF HELL — Jesus talked about another "gate" in Matthew 16:18-19, ". . . on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it, and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Here we find Jesus mentioning "the gates of Hades". This certainly is not "gate of Heaven". Let's see if we can come to some understanding of Matthew 16:18-19. I once thought that it meant that "the gates of heaven will prevail against the assault of the enemy." That was my theology in my younger Christian days. Why so? Because I saw the Church as a group of people grouped together pressed against "Heaven's Gate", thus protecting that which belonged to God until He could return and take over. The truth is, Jesus gave us the exact opposite picture. He said, "The gates of hell will not prevail." Has it every occurred to Christians that as warriors we are to fight on the offensive instead of the defensive? Hear me, the evil principalities and powers that set up dominions or "gates" all over the earth will not prevail against us! Why? Because we have "joint authority" with Jesus and as His army we are ever moving to possess what Jesus has already conquered. We are His advancing winning army. Sometimes in the fray of battle it is hard to know whether we are winning or not, but rest assured, we are winning! Jesus promised that in the end, no gate of hell will stand against the House of God.

THE BIG PICTURE — Do you see the big picture yet? Where precisely are the "gates of hell" located? Please recall, in the early part of this series, I called the mind the gatekeeper of the Kingdom of God. There can be no doubt, the mind is the place of transition, and power, and is this not the definition of "gate" in Genesis 28:17? With this in mind, we must realize that the mind of man is the gate, and thus the gates of hell are set up in people's minds. This is made clear by Jesus in Matthew 16:21-23 AMP: "From that time forth Jesus began [clearly] to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders and the high priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised from death. V22, Then Peter took Him aside to speak to Him privately and began to reprove and charge Him sharply, saying, God forbid, Lord! This must never happen to You! V23, But Jesus turned away from Peter and said to him, Get behind Me, Satan! You are in My way [an offense and a hindrance and a snare to Me]; for you are minding what partakes not of the nature and quality of God, but of man." Jesus didn't say that Peter was a devil worshiper! He didn't say, "You are filled with all kinds of occult practices and deceits." He said, "Your mind is filled with the things of man" (earth's reality). Pastor Bill Johnson said it this way, "A most important thing to remember is that the devil is empowered by human agreement!" I could not agree more! Peter's mental posture was a gate from which satan was released to bring his destruction.

Gene R. Brown

PASTOR

Ephesians 4:11, “**And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.**” (KJV)

Each of the five-fold ministries brings an order to the Body of Christ.

Apostle — Sets in order that which is lacking, wanting and coming behind.

Prophet — Sets thine house in order. This can be the Church or an individual.

Evangelist — Sets relationships in order. Relationship with God and with man.

Teacher — Sets the Word of God in order.

Pastor — Maintains the order.

Pastor means to shepherd, it does not mean to lord it over; a shepherd has the direction of God for the flock. He is actually an undershepherd, with Jesus Christ being the Chief Shepherd.

A Pastor knows when to rebuke and correct and when to comfort and exhort. He is not a babysitter; if you need him he will be there for you; otherwise he will be about his Father’s work, which is mainly staying before God for the direction for the church and for the message God has for the body. He has the heartthrob of the body; he knows God’s direction and vision for the church and works toward that end.

When the other ministries have accomplished their work, it is the Pastors responsibility to deal with what they have left behind. In effect he has to clean up behind others.

When the Apostle sets the gifts and offices in order, it may well go against what some of the body think is right. The Pastor is the one who has to maintain the order set by the Apostle without destroying the local body.

When the Prophet sets the house in order, puts the person or the body in the direction God would have them going, the Pastor is the one who has to maintain the order set, he can not baby the body or let them return to their old ways.

When the Evangelist sets relationships in order, the Pastor has to maintain the right relationships. A lost person who was saved in the Evangelist’s ministry will need to maintain the fellowship with Jesus to keep from returning to his old ways. When broken relationships within the body are corrected, the Pastor is the one shepherding those corrected to keep them from returning to their old ways.

The Teacher sets the Word in order. The Pastor helps maintain this order by confirming what the Teacher has taught. The Teacher assigned to a local body will have a Pastor’s heart in dealing with the people; he and the Pastor will work together to accomplish their mission.

The New Testament church was led by the Pastor with the help of the elders, it was not a democracy. The church does not have a vote in what God wants accomplished; it is up to the Pastor to get God’s direction for the church, not the deacons or one committee or another. The Pastor is the one that will answer to God for the effectiveness of the ministry of the church. Groups that try to take, reduce, or usurp the Pastor’s authority are in rebellion against God and the way He has set up the Church.

Our focal scripture in Ephesians tells that “He (Jesus) gave . . . Pastors to the Church”. In Jeremiah, God told the Israelites that He would give them Pastors after (like) His heart. The heart as used here means “(figuratively) very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect; likewise for the center of anything.” We are given Pastors with the heart of God for our church and the local body of believers. They are to grow us to maturity by imparting knowledge and understanding.

Jeremiah 3:15, “**And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.**” (KJV)

Ezekial gives us a further explanation of what a Pastor’s duties are. Ezekial 34:1-10, “**And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherd of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! *should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus said the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.***”(KJV)

Verse two shows the Pastors are to feed the flock; the nourishment is the Word of God. They are to feed with knowledge and understanding that comes from the Word of God.

Verse four shows us the Pastors are to strengthen the diseased, heal the sick and bring back the lost; this is to be done without force and cruelty (condemnation). There are many Pastors today who will have to answer to God for the way they lorded it over the flock, using condemnation to accomplish their own goals.

Jesus gives us an example of the Pastor’s ministry in Luke with a description of His ministry. Luke 4:18-19, “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**” (KJV)

This scripture truly shows us the ministry of a Pastor, not using condemnation but love and compassion to meet the spiritual needs of the flock. Here is a comparison of the scripture in Jeremiah and the one in Luke.

<u>Jeremiah</u>	<u>Luke</u>
Feed the Flock	Preach the Gospel, Healed the broken hearted
Bound up that which was broken	Recovery of sight to the blind
Heal the Sick	Set at liberty them that are bruised
Ruled with force and cruelty	Deliverance to the captives
	Preached the acceptable year of the Lord

THE BALL GAME

A while back I was at work and the Lord started speaking to me, as He often does. He said to me, "You are in a ball game. You are in the bottom of the ninth inning. You are standing at the plate in the batter's box with a full count—2 strikes and 3 balls. You are the winning run. There are 2 outs

and the bases are loaded. What are you going to do? You can hit a foul and stay in the game, but not go anywhere, receive a ball and walk, advance to first base but not put forth any effort, hit a single, stay in the game and bring one run in, hit a double, stay in the game and bring 2 runs in, hit a triple, stay in the game and bring 3 runs in and tie up the game, or you can hit a grand slam and bring everyone in and win the game. What is it going to be?" This made me begin to think. Oh God, this is where we are in the world today. We are getting close to the end. It seems as though the enemy is winning in this world as we look at all of the things that are happening. God is wanting us, the Church, to stand up to the plate knowing who we are in Him and hit the grand slam.

He began to speak to me of how the church is. He said, "We come to church, hear the Word and leave going on about our lives without anything changing—that is hitting a foul ball, still in the game but not going anywhere or taking anyone home to a life with God. Nothing changing, just staying in the game as is. If we get a ball and walk, that is what most people do, get on base and not try to help anyone else, just a free ride. Salvation is free but walking a Godly life requires effort and costs you time which is giving of yourself. We are to be like Jesus, helping the needy, sharing His love, and healing power, showing how real He is. Then He said, Some get to first base. They make a little change in their life and let a little bit of light shine from them and bring one run in. They spend some time praising and worshiping but when the storms come they take their eyes off of Me and look at the waves. They do not go very far and only bring one run in. They do make some changes but they are still in the outer court murmuring and complaining and seeing the way the world sees things. They are easily moved by circumstances and forget my Word. Then there are others who get to second base. They make it through some of the storms. They keep praising and get further into the court of the Lord. They make it to the brazen laver and the brazen altar. They choose to be cleansed by the Word of God and purified at the altar. Here, you will begin to become the will of your Father. You begin to see the reflection of your Lord when you look into the water, because you are beginning to die to your own ways and take on the characteristics of your Father. Here you bring two runs in but you still have some further to go into the court of the Lord. Then there is the Holy place, where you realize your righteousness in Jesus and just praise Him for all he has done in your life. The light of God is really beginning to shine from you now. People see something different but you still get moved by your feelings and emotions. There is still a part of you that is still wanting its own way. You bring three runs in but you still did not make it home. The game is tied because you stopped short. You did not make it to the Holy of Holies. Then God said to me, "I want my children to make a grand slam. I want them to bring in all the base runners and make a home run. Just come to the Holy of Holies, bask in my presence, receive my love. Here you will find the peace that surpasses all understanding. Your will is to do My will above all else, you desire to be holy as I am holy, and you want to make straight the crooked. In this place you win the game and bring everyone in with you."

Church, as I meditated this, I began to see so much. We are in the end times. We do not know how much longer we have. No one knows the hour our Master is coming so we need to be ready at all times. Not just for ourselves, but for all of the ones that are on base, and need to be brought home. Our Lord came and gave His life so that we could walk in victory. He made us to be more than conquerors, we just have to stand up to the plate knowing who we are. Remember, the Word says in James 5:14, "**Whereas ye know not what shall be on the next day. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.**" This life is short, but we have all eternity with our Lord. I want His love and light to shine through me to others so they can be in eternity with Jesus also, and have peace and love and victory here in this life. The devil thinks he is winning because he is ahead, but the winning run is up to bat and the bases are loaded. The batter is each one of us that is on God's team. He has the bases loaded. Are you going to just walk, hit a foul, single, double, triple, or will you make a grand slam and bring them all home with you and win the game? Every decision you make is a pitch that came your way. Do not strike out! LETS WIN!!! Get into the Holy of Holies and let the Light of God consume you and flow to others. Time is short. The bases are loaded. Bring them all in. John 15:12-13, "**This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**" Oh, Glory! I know I am standing at the plate and I am going to make the play. I will bring everyone I can home with me. You see, I know it is not about me, IT IS ALL ABOUT HIM! PRAISE THE LORD! HIS MERCY ENDURES FOREVER AND EVER!

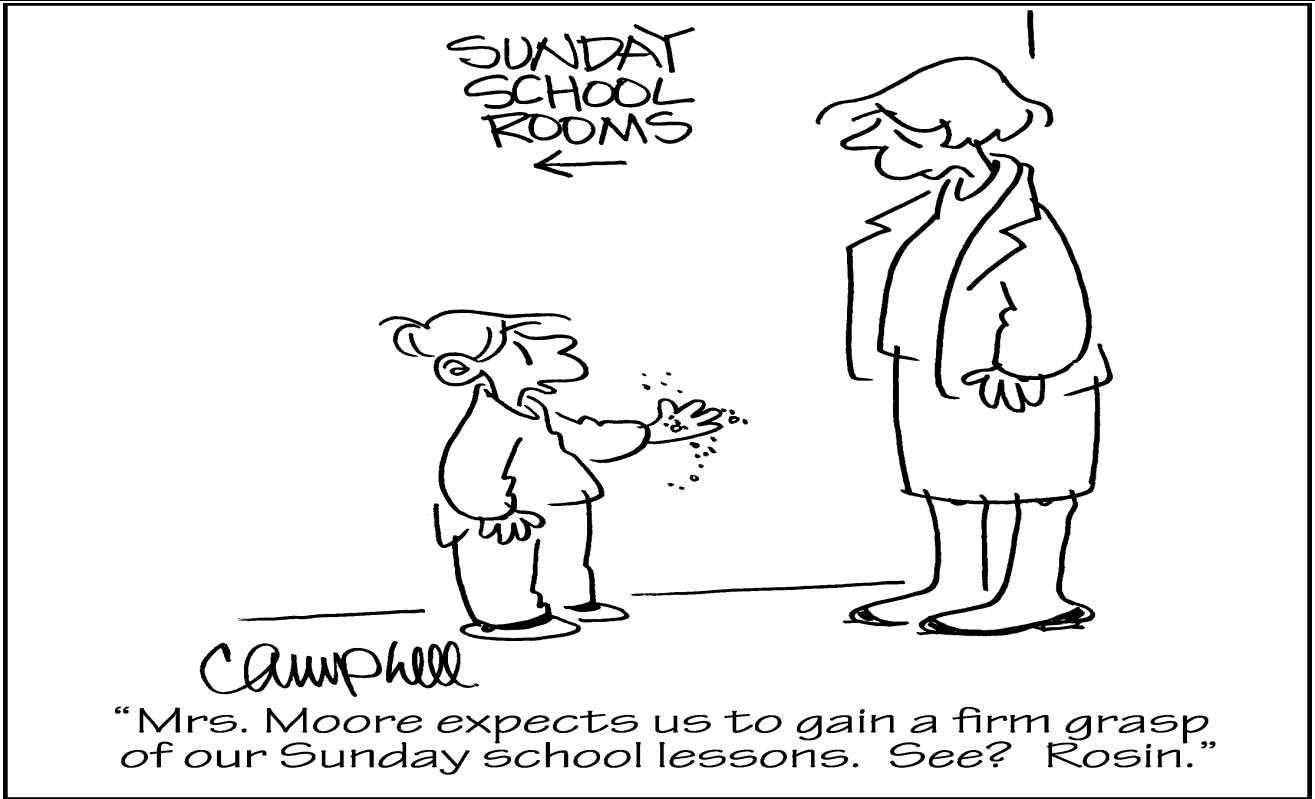
Much Love, Your Missionary Sister, Bess

PASTOR
(Cont. from Page 2)

Graham

The Pastor does not pamper and baby the flock; he grows them. Jesus was Pastor of the twelve disciples. He did not pamper and baby them, He rebuked and trained them. There is too much pampering and babying being done in churches today. There should be more teaching and training the body to grow and mature so they can take care of themselves without calling on the Pastor every time they have a headache.

The Church is a Theocracy; the Pastor is the governor over the body of Jesus Christ, Who is the Head of the Universal Church. The Pastor is the head of the church, not the deacons, the elders or the board of directors. This is the way God set up the church organization; it is His best. **The Pastor is given to the Church to maintain the order, God's order.**



CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
994 Willie Hill Road
Gilbert, La. 71336

In Remembrance of
Sept.

