



<http://www.parbc.org>

Keystone BAPTIST

Official Paper of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches

Look to the Future

By Dr. Allen G. Harris
Hope Baptist Church, Hanover



and
thus

“And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle’s son, that was in Anathoth, weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances... For saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.” (Jer. 32:9-10, 15)

Faith in the presence of trials or difficulties is not as easy as faith in the times of ease. It is easier to trust the Lord when there is peace in the Land and the economy is strong. But that is not the time when faith has the greatest impact nor calls for the greatest strength and courage. Joshua was called of God to lead Israel into the “promised land,” but in the first chapter of Joshua, the Lord exhorts Joshua to be “strong and of good courage” three times.

Jeremiah surely does not live in a time of ease and comfort. Verse 2 of chapter 32 tells us that Babylon was besieging the city of Jerusalem. Fear was in every heart and in the very air they breathed. They did not have the army to defeat Babylon, and the walls of Jerusalem would withstand an onslaught for only so long. Then there was the fear of starvation. Food supplies would get scarce after several months and as in Solomon’s day when people even resorted to eating their babies for food.

Now was not the time to make plans for the distant future. Daily survival was the thing that filled the minds of individuals. In fact, certain possessions became expendable in order to gain money so they could afford to pay the higher costs of food. A field outside the walls of the city where the Babylonians camped was absolutely worthless if one feared that they would not live.

This is the situation that pervaded the city of Jerusalem. It was in these dire circumstances that Hanameel the son of Shallum, Jeremiah’s nephew came and asked Jeremiah to buy his families field in Anathoth. Anathoth was outside the city walls and Hanameel saw no prophet in a land that cannot benefit him now. Fear of death and fear of the troubles around him caused him to consider selling all he had so that he could survive today.

The desperation of Hanameel becomes most evident when you learn that Jeremiah was in prison in Jerusalem. Evidently, none of his other relatives would even consider buying a field that they thought they would never

Continued page 5

Inside this Issue:

How Long is Your List	Page 2
Rise Up, Shep.....	Page 2
What If We are Wrong?.....	Page 3
Churches Seeking a Pastor.....	Page 4
Upcoming Activities.....	Page 4

EDITOR
Rev. Paul J. Connor

LAYOUT & DESIGN
Anita L. Fordyce

State Representative's Comments Rev. Paul J. Connor



How Long is Your List?

Yes, we are in the “season of lists.” Some are already into making a list of gifts for Christmas. But, I’m thinking more of the list we made of all the things we were thankful

for at our Thanksgiving holiday. “Oh,” you say, “I didn’t know I was supposed to write a list.” Most people don’t, but how helpful it would be to reflect on all the goodness and faithfulness of our Great God! 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” Imagine how long our lists would be if we were truly aware of them and listing ALL the blessings of the Lord!

So, if you were to compose a list of things you’re grateful for what would you write down – just how many items would appear on your tabulations? Of course, our salvation in Christ would be at the very top of the list (if you have received Christ as your Savior). Then there is our family . . . our church . . . our country and many, many other things.

One additional thing I am thankful for is the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches (PARBC). I was thankful for this fellowship as a pastor in PA for twenty years, and I am thankful for the PARBC as I have worked with its churches for the last twenty years. In particular, I am very, very thankful for the prayers, thoughts and discussion on finances that went into the Annual Business meeting this fall at Bible Baptist Church, Shickshinny. (I was excused for that long portion of the meeting.) The decision by the fellowship to adopt the balanced budget and encourage all our churches to take special offerings for the PARBC was a tremendous step of faith to move forward. Some churches have already had a PARBC Sunday and taken an offering. A few have increased their monthly giving. I received a call from one of our smaller churches telling me that they had voted to

Continued page 6

From the Parsonage Window



RISE UP, SHEPHERDS!!

by

Anita L. Fordyce

Jonathan and his father were shepherds just like his family had been for centuries—not just ordinary shepherds but shepherds who watched over the temple lambs—“those without spot or wrinkle.” Jonathan loved being a shepherd, especially when his father reminded him that King David had also been a shepherd. He knew that he would never be a king; and neither, did he expect to meet one. But, he knew he could be a good shepherd like King David.

“Let’s count the sheep and get them settled for the night,” father reminded him on this night. Jonathan obediently nudged the lambs with the end of a six-foot staff.

“It’s beautiful this evening, May we sleep out in the open?” he asked.

The white woolly bodies followed a large ewe forming a single line to a spot where Jonathan was leading them. Several other flocks were grazing near-by so like all shepherds, he checked the notches on their ears to make sure there were no strangers among theirs. Like brands on cattle, lambs’ ears were notched with each shepherd’s mark.

“Yes,” father said as he checked the sheep, “the night is promising to give us a spectacular view of the stars.” Normally, they would sleep in a cave or sheepfold surrounded by a stone wall where father, the eldest shepherd, would sleep in the doorway to protect the lambs from wild animals who craved mutton. He had risked his life many times for the lambs.

The starlight woven into a blue velvet sky made a campfire almost unnecessary. It was so bright they could see the road to Bethlehem below them. Travelers had crowded the road all day—both walking and riding. Even now, a man and woman were moving slowly toward the city gates. Jonathan followed their silhouettes and wondered if there would be any lodging left anywhere in town for them.

Father saw them too. “Caesar’s tax!” he shook his head, weary of the Roman rule. “When Messiah comes...”

Continued page 6

WHAT IF YOU ARE WRONG ABOUT ISLAM?

By Dr. Clay Nuttall

(Taken from Shepherd's Staff with permission)

I have before me a copy of the Quran. I am not an expert in this subject but have learned in an extensive study of hermeneutics to be able to recognize true meaning in all languages by the normal use of language rules.

This book clearly says that any Muslim who is friendly with a Jew, Christian, or other infidel is to be killed. They might pretend to be friendly, but those people are obligated to kill the infidels when the time comes, or else they themselves are to be killed. The lie about a peaceful religion will not stand, even if you are referring to those who are peaceful at the moment. The Quran clearly identifies Islam as a religion of terror. Do your own study, read it for yourself. (3:151; 8:12; 8:60; 33:26; 59:2; 59:13)

Read what happens to someone who converts to another religion or someone who will not convert to Islam. Converts are won, and they are kept - by fear, hate, violence and intimidation. Read about cruelty and torture. Read about the abuse of women, dismemberment, beheading, and horrible treatment of infidels. This is the majority of Islam, because that is the law. If you can read this and still think it is a religion of peace, you deserve what is coming to this country.

COMPARE THIS

If I witness to you about your need for salvation in Christ and you refuse it, you go on your way to face God alone in judgment. You need have no fear of me because of your rejection. If, however, you are offered the choice of conversion to Islam and you refuse, no matter who you are, you are an infidel, and that person is commanded to kill you. In Islam, the sons are sent out to commit suicide and kill as many people as they can. In Biblical Christianity, God sent His Son to die on the cross so that many sons could live.

Those who claim peace for the majority of Islam must know very little about the history of this religion. They must know very little about what Muslims are commanded to do. They must not be reading about the brutal killing of Christians every day in this world by the Muslim majority. I was told yesterday that hundreds of believers are killed every week by majority Muslims. They must not know about the burning, beheading, drowning, beating, and death published in the news on a daily basis.

To blaspheme, mock, or speak ill of the Quran will get you the death penalty. On the other hand, Islam can reject and make fun of Christianity, and that is fine. What if you are wrong about Islam? I can tell you that you are wrong if you haven't taken time to study why the majority of this religion is not peaceful. include the word "kingdom". It is used by many who seem to think it is some kind of magic wand. The truth is they have no idea what "kingdom" they are even talking about! "Similarities are not equal", and the Bible describes a number of kingdoms. The use of cute little phrases is simply nonsense. People talk about "building, growing, enhancing, or strengthening the kingdom". Which kingdom is that? God has made it clear that He alone is in charge of His kingdoms. God will build all of His kingdoms. He may use us to help in some minute action, and we may act as servants, but we are not building His kingdoms. When did God die and leave prideful man in charge?

To add insult to injury, in addition to taking credit for what God is doing, men have the gall to defend their views, ideas, opinions, and interpretations. Those human conclusions are irrelevant. There is only one true idea, the one that God has stated clearly in the Bible text before men began to insert their own ideas. Our speech definitely betrays us.

One more illustration is the use of the word "holiness". Holiness is the sovereign possession of a holy God. We have no holiness and cannot beg, borrow, or steal it. God alone is holy, and if any of His holiness is in my life, it is because God dwells within each believer. Any holiness that flows in or out of my life is totally God's working through this earthly frame; I am not the source or the owner.

For the self-centered person, this looks like a matter of splitting hairs. The truth is that this religious cancer is destroying many of the young bucks in ministry today. The younger generation is enamored with false intellect. The purveyors of error - often scholars - poison young minds by their use of words that hide real meaning. What they are reading and following is obvious because "their speech betrays them". Watch for the "buzz words" that are used in order to make one sound so much like the "in crowd". In their youth and inexperience, they fail to ask about the theology behind the verbiage. Their heads and hearts have been turned from the scriptures, where the answers really lie - turned instead to those who have hidden truth behind their terminology and speech. But that is a topic for another day...



Upcoming Events

Youth Retreat & Talents for Christ – March 31 – April 1, 2017
 Calvary Baptist Church, Bloomsburg
 Spring Conference – April 24-25, 2017
 Hope Baptist Church, Hanover
 Fall Conference – September 11-13, 2017 TBA
 Spring Conference – April 9-10, 2018
 Fall Conference – September 17-19, 2018
 SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR DETAILS

Churches Searching for a Pastor

Bible Baptist Church, Brownsville * First Baptist Church, Corry
 Springside Baptist Church, Distant * First Baptist Church, Ebensburg
 First Baptist Church, Lock Haven
 Mountain Top Baptist Church, Mountain Top
 Chestnut Street Baptist Church, Port Allegany
 Carmel Baptist Church, Saegertown
 Calvary Baptist Church, Union City
 Waterford Baptist Church, Waterford
 Worthington Baptist Church, Worthington



Churches Calling Pastors

Faith Baptist Church, Bradford – called Pastor Gary Smith. He and his wife, Elaine, had been ministering in southwest PA



First Baptist Church, Grove City, called Pastor Andrew Frey. He and his wife, Judi, had been ministering in Alaska



Acre Lake Independent Baptist Church called Pastor Sherman Skeens. He and his wife, Nancy, had been ministering in northwestern PA

Look to the Future, Continued

see again. So Jeremiah is the last hope. Hanameel is desperate because of the fear of the present circumstances that he is willing to sell the heritage he received from his father and was responsible to pass down to the next generation. He saw no future and he saw no prospect of hope. All he could see was the Babylonian army. All he heard was fear in the hearts of people around him. And all he could think about was one option, “sell what I cannot use today even though it means there is no future prosperity or inheritance for the next generation.”

It must have seemed odd to Jeremiah that the Lord would come and tell him to buy the field from Hanameel even before Hanameel had come to offer it to him, (32:6-9). If the field is useless to Hanameel in the city, it is even more useless to the prophet in the prison in the city. But God had revealed this to Jeremiah that it was indeed the will of the LORD. So Jeremiah obeyed. He paid the price Hanameel asked for the land. He signed the deed of transfer, and Hanameel went away thinking that the old prophet was bonkers. He had pulled one over on the old coot and he now had the money needed to get the best of the food for him and his family and survive the present crisis. He must have seemed very wise in his own eyes.

Jeremiah gave all the documents of transfer and the deed to Baruch to put in a clay jar and hide it so that the evidence would be available to those who would need it in the future. Yes, you heard me right. Jeremiah was thinking of the future. This prophet looked at the very same circumstances that all the others saw and he bought the field instead of selling. They tell us that those who are the wise investors buy in times of great difficulty because they are preparing for the future when there will again be prosperity.

What made the difference? God had spoken to Jeremiah. Jeremiah was listening to God and saw the hand of God. God had told him that Hanameel would come and when he did, Jeremiah knew that God had a plan for the future. The present trials always seem very bleak. We can be overwhelmed by physical trials that cause us to stop serving. We can feel distressed by financial concerns that we do not see a way of escaping or overcoming. We may be beset with personal attacks that make it seem as though there is no one who can help and cause you to feel all alone. Whatever the trial, there is a God in heaven that has the answer and power to meet every need. It was “human” to fear the circumstances. All the citizens of Jerusalem were doing and saying the same thing. They saw the Babylonians encamped around the city and they saw only one possible way of acting and thinking. But when everyone is giving up and fearing the circumstances, that is the time when we must look up to see the eternal God and obey Him.

God had told Jeremiah that “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land,” (32:15). There may seem to be many obstacles set in our way, but the Lord is greater than them all. He is looking for men and women who will look up to Him and OBEY Him. Jeremiah just didn’t say that I believe God can do great things. He had to put his money, his hope for the future to demonstrate that faith. Obedience is the response of faith.

If there ever was a day when the church is being pressured to give up, it is today. There are many small churches that are beginning to wonder what the future holds. They do not see many visitors and they don’t come back. It is easy to pull back and just try to survive and save all we can. But pulling back does not advance the cause of Christ. Worshipping within the walls of the church building does not reach the lost who are outside. The future is outside and we must believe God who has the power to break the hardest heart. We can say we believe God can win the lost, but He has commanded us to go with the gospel to the lost and trust Him in obedience. His Word will not return void.

Governmental pressures seem to squeeze the church and put fear into the hearts of believers as if God cannot change things. Our God was able to exalt Daniel even when the other princes conspired against him and it looked like the lions were going to have a feast and the wicked princes a party.

Buy a field when there is no food and no way to get to the field? Trust God when it seems hard to win someone to Christ? Trust God when finances are tight and take the need to Him? These are not just things that we do when things are tight, these are things of faith that we do because our God is the ALL POWERFUL GOD OF CREATION.

I challenge you to put faith to work through your witness. Put faith to work in your giving. Put faith to work in your prayers. Put faith to work in your obedience to the work and will of God.

take on a significant monthly support for the PARBC. That news thrilled my soul.

I do trust that in this holiday season – taking time to gather as family and friends to give thanks to God and then all the special preparation to celebrate the coming of the Son of God to be born of a virgin in a lowly manger in Bethlehem, that we will not lose sight of the marvelous privilege and gift of salvation. That wonderful gift allows us to be with our Lord for all of eternity. That salvation gives us a bond with the Lord and each other. That bond gives us the opportunity to fellowship and work together as churches for the cause of Christ.

We have seen an increase in challenges, difficulties and persecution of Christians and their churches here in America in recent times. If our Lord tarries there will be, no doubt, even a greater need to stand together for Christ. The churches of the PARBC must lock arms as we encourage and support one another. If we don't do it now, we will not do it then. Please continue to pray and consider helping support the ministry of the PARBC. Just a small monthly gesture of support could be used of the Lord as other sister churches join in keeping this ministry focused and vital in serving the churches of the PARBC. *"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." 1 Thessalonians 1: 2*



"What?" Jonathan asked. "What will happen when He comes?" Father was listening to the sound of a lamb bleating in the distance. He realized that he was hearing someone else's lamb. He knew every lamb's voice.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young," father quoted Isaiah. His every answer referenced the sheep. Jonathan's young boy heart wanted his father to say that the Messiah would be a warrior, a soldier, a mighty king like King David.

But before he could ask anything else, his eyes saw a light in the sky. Jonathan shielded his eyes; the light was growing brighter and brighter. He heard a voice coming from the blinding light now more brilliant than the sun. Terrified, he struggled to get to his feet but fell to his knees.

"And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid."

"Father!" he cried out. Almost before the word escaped his lips, *"...the angel said unto them. Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."*

The earth was speechless. As suddenly as they came, the angels were gone. Pinpoints of starlight took their place. Trembling, Jonathan looked around. The other shepherds ran toward father as if he would know what to do. They fell on the ground in front of him. As always, father remained calm. His face was still turned toward the heavens. He looked down at them and then toward Bethlehem. Jonathan had never seen his face like this. It almost, yes, it glowed. He raised his staff and shouted, "Rise up, shepherds... 'let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.'" Not a lamb, ewe or ram moved. The shepherds knew their animals would be safe.

A star, more brilliant than the others, was now fixed over Bethlehem. It lit the way as father led them down the winding path to the tiny town. Breathlessly, he sang out, "Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

Once inside the city gates, Jonathan's faith questioned how the infant King could be here? How would they find Him? The angel said they would find Him in a manger. Surely, he meant a palace, but there were no palaces in Bethlehem—there weren't even any fine homes. When they asked around if they anyone knew where the King was, no one knew who or what they were talking about. Jonathan was still in shock and just obediently and wordlessly followed father.

"The angel said he would be in a manger," a shepherds said. "I know of one place that has a stable—the Inn!" Father motioned for him to lead the way.

"The stable is around the back." He didn't even check with the inn keeper.

"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."

Jonathan followed the others into a dark, musty, animal-smelling cave. He gasped! A tiny baby was in the manger! Standing over him was a man and woman who, for a fleeting second, looked familiar.

The couple stood back so the shepherds could see the baby. Jonathan slipped in closer. Father and the others told the man and woman that they knew who the infant was.

For Jonathan, time stood still until finally father put his hand on his shoulder and said they must leave. Jonathan begged for one more moment. He was captivated by this baby Who was the King Who father called, "The Good Shepherd."

Everything he had ever heard about the coming Messiah dawned upon Jonathan's mind and became fixed in his heart. He ran after the other shepherds and like them he told everyone the good news. They had seen the King! He looked back over his shoulder toward the manger. Somehow, he knew he would see Him again.

"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."



*May the Lord Bless each and
every one of you
In this Chrístms Season as we
Celebrate our Savior's birth
and
Our best wishes in this coming
New Year!*

Paul & Judy Connor