

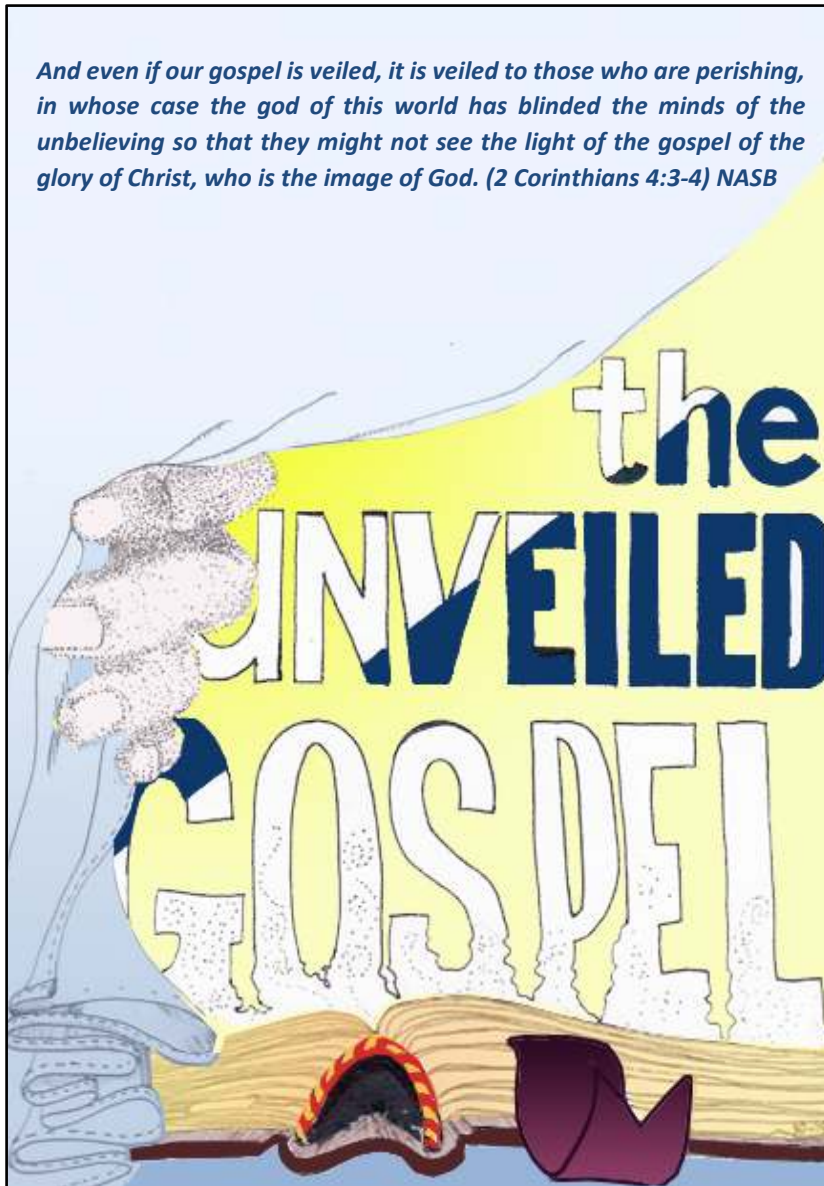
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And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4) NASB



We begin this issue with a poem by Faith Smalling entitled, *Seeking Faith*. This is followed (4:10). with Todd Truax's fifth and final article regarding *Church Membership*. We are sad to say that this will also be Todd's final article for TUG as he has taken on other responsibilities that make it impossible to continue. We will miss him and his articles. Tom Wright then has an article about *The Major Baptisms of the Bible*. This one is part four of nine. Terry Smalling then continues with his examination of 1 John 4:7 - 11 entitled, *Genuine Godly Love*. Terry Smalling again concludes this issue with *Just Sayin'*.

As always, we hope that all of the articles in this and every TUG are instructive and edifying. We would really appreciate your feedback about our articles and really like any suggestions about other topics that might interest you by sending us an e-mail at one of the addresses below. Please keep this effort in your prayers!

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A Message from the Elders of the Pikes Peak church of Christ

Thank you for your interest in this issue of “The Unveiled Gospel” (the "TUG"). The TUG is published each month under the oversight of the elders of the Pikes Peak church of Christ in Colorado Springs. If you wish to contact the elders regarding this publication, our mailing address is:

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A special thanks to *Karissa Ballard* at the Pikes Peak church of Christ for all her help!

SEEKING FAITH

by Faith Smalling

When I awake each morning
I kneel myself down in prayer
My heart was warmed by His Love,
I knew that He was there.
The more I felt His presence,
The more I needed to search.
I knew there was more to Jesus
Than I was learning in church.
I needed to feel that closeness
So I searched His Written Word.
I knew there was more to it
Than I had already heard.
I'd been told that I was Saved.
I'd confessed His Name out loud.
I had invited Him into my heart

I felt with His Blessings, endowed.
Then one day as I studied;
For I constantly searched His Word,
I found something that alarmed me -
Something that I'd never heard.
I was reading First Peter (1 Peter 3:21)
The Words leapt into my face!
There was more to my Salvation,
Than just to call on His Grace (Ephesians 2:4).
I called my closest friend
“How could this even be?!”
You cannot work your way to heaven!
His Grace is what saves me!
I took my troubled heart
Back to Scripture again
Where it says that baptism saves (1 Peter 3:21)
And washes away my sin.
I had invited Jesus
Into my heart to live
And now I was partaking
Of the Truth His Word could give!
Next morning I opened my Bible
From James is what I read, (James 2:14 - 26)
He speaks of how my faith can live
And of a faith that's dead.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP - PART 5

by Todd Truax

Scripture teaches that the church is similar to a family. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:22-26; *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the CHURCH, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the CHURCH submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the CHURCH and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.*

Paul went on to explain in Ephesians 5:31-32 that the mystery of man and woman becoming one flesh also refers to Christ and the CHURCH. *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*” 32 *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* Paul in Chapter 6:1-4 also encouraged children to obey their parents and to “*honor your father and mother*” (*this is the first commandment with a promise*), 3 “*that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.*” As children of God, we are to honor our heavenly Father by obeying His Word that it may go well with us!

The church is composed of imperfect men, women and children; therefore, the body of Christ is going to be imperfect also. Families, however, are critical to the health of the church. We must encourage and pray for our families and our churches. Families love one another; therefore we should also love the family of God. As a nuclear family we must pray for God’s family. Thom Rainer in his book *I AM A CHURCH MEMBER* provides a list of what to pray for the church. He lists...

*spiritual protection,
protection from moral failures,
for the preaching of the Word,
for their families,
for encouragement,
for physical strength,
for courage, discernment and wisdom in leadership.”*

Consider how the church would function if every family prayed for God’s family. As a church member, it is not enough to simply like your church or serve your church. You are to love your church unconditionally despite her imperfections, just as Jesus loves you unconditionally, despite your imperfections. Paul taught in Rom. 5:8 *that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* That means your love for the church should grow even though you may not agree with every decision or practice. The church is not about me and my preferences. It is a congregation of people hopefully worshiping, evangelizing, teaching and serving together in order to glorify our God who wants everyone to be saved. When the church is united, the church has great influence in the world.

Church leaders bear a heavy burden. They oversee the church which includes every member—who (by the way) are all sinners including the leaders! They oversee all of the programs and activities as well as the building and grounds. Members should make it a habit to pray for the leaders and their families regularly. In every church there will be times of discouragement and discontentment, because Satan does not rest, but we must remind ourselves that Jesus is the head of the church. It is HIS church. Jesus loves us even when we disobey, and each of us disobeys often! We must do everything in our power to maintain *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:3). When Jesus prayed to His Father in John 17, He revealed why unity is so important. In vs. 21 Jesus prayed: “*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*” If we are going to be successful in the endeavor of making disciples and building up the church, unity is paramount! So, as members, let us do everything in our power to build up the church by seeking unity in all things, so that the world may believe!

THE MAJOR BAPTISMS OF THE BIBLE

(Part Four of Nine)

by Tom Wright

Continued from last month’s article (January 2025)...

Empowered thus, Jesus used His godly authority to physically liberate those oppressed by unclean spirits like He spiritually liberates those oppressed by Satan (Mark 1.21-28; Acts 10.38). Jesus and the apostles physically casting unclean spirits out of people’s bodies was maybe meant to embody how God wants: (1) the spiritual uncleanness of sin and Satan removed from people’s souls, and (2) to make room for the Holy Spirit to indwell in those obeying the gospel (Acts 2.38; 1 Corinthians 3.16; Ephesians 1.13-14). They used the Spirit’s gifts to teach this truism until the perfect came or the New Testament was written to do the teaching. In prophetic discharge, God then removed the gifts and unclean spirits from the land (Zechariah 13.2; 1 Corin. 13.8-10). The gifts ceased

as each apostle and those they laid hands on to receive a gift(s) died off (Acts 8.14-24; 19.6; 2 Tim. 1.6).

The third major type of baptism mentioned is the baptism of suffering (Mark 10.35-45; Luke 12.49-53) perfected through the overwhelming agency of Christian persecution even unto death like Jesus (John 19.28-30), Stephen (Acts 7.54-60), James (Acts 12.1-2), Paul (2 Corinthians 11.24-27; 2 Timothy 4.1-8) and Peter (John 21.15-23; 2 Peter 1.13-14). While the sufferings brought about negative physical and positive spiritual changes in their comfort levels, they experienced: (1) negative changes in their physical comfort levels by enduring the pains of persecution, and (2) positive changes in their spiritual comfort levels when the persecution pains ceased as they died going to be with God. Yet, the baptism of suffering can bring negative and positive changes to all Christians' physical and spiritual comfort levels (Matthew 10.28; 2 Timothy 3.12; 1 Peter 3.14-17).

The fourth major type of baptism mentioned is the baptism of fire (Matthew 3.11-12; Luke 3.16-17). In dictionary terms, a baptism of fire implies "an introductory or initial experience that is a severe ordeal; *specif*: a soldier's first exposure to enemy fire" (Merriam-Webster 91). In Bible terms, a baptism of fire implies a final experience involving a more severe ordeal of being eternally exposed to the unquenchable fire of hell (Mark 9.42-48). It obligates all the spiritually lost (1 Corinthians 6.9-10; Galatians 5.19-21; 2 Thessalonians 1.6-10; Revelation 21.8, 22-27; 22.15, 18-19) undergoing a spiritual change by being completely immersed or overwhelmed in the agony of eternal torment just like the rich man who mistreated Lazarus (Luke 16.19-21). As there is no emergence for anyone including Satan baptized or immersed in that fire, it is the single baptism that is this way.

GENUINE GODLY LOVE

by Terry Smalling

Many songs speak of the need for love in the world. Exactly what song writers mean varies from song to song. One of the popular songs of the recent past stated that "What the World Needs Now is Love Sweet Love" The lyrics are open to interpretation as love can have a variety of meanings. The English language uses one word to

mean many different types of love. Whereas New Testament Greek has four different words that can be translated into that one word - love.

The Apostle John wrote often about one type of love - *agape* which is the purest type of love. In 1 John love is a term used over and over. He wrote of godly love and love of brethren but exclusively used *agape* and that is true in the fourth chapter beginning in Verse 7. This is not the first occurrence of love in this letter, but from here on it becomes more common.

Once again John addresses his audience as "Beloved". Previously he addressed them as "Beloved" in 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1 where in each case using it as a term of endearment. In 4:7 John continues, "*Let's love one another*"; which is an exhortation to love because "*love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*" God is the source of love, as He loved even before creation. There was a loving fellowship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit prior to His speaking the universe into existence. John then states that everyone who loves are God's children and knows God. God's children have genuine love and are blessed with a real relationship with Him. Not only do God's children know about God, but unlike the world they know God.

As he commonly does, John follows this with an opposite statement for effect, "*The one who does not love does not know God because God is love*" (4:8). God is love, just as He is light (1:5) and He is Spirit (John 4:24). Each of these are attributes of God's nature, just as are His infinite power, omnipresence, and infinite wisdom. John's point in Verse 8 is that no one can have a relationship with God unless he or she loves and loves continually. In the following verse John states, "*By this the love of God was revealed in us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we may live through Him*" (4:9). This statement is reminiscent of John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.*" Because God loves faithful believers, we have life. So in these and other passages we see that the love of God is an active love and that our love should be the same. His love is not all permissible, and neither should ours be. Genuine godly love is in harmony with His nature.

John continues in Verse 10 saying, "*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the*

propitiation for our sins.” What a powerful demonstration of genuine Godly love. Because of His love He sent His Son to be a sacrifice as an atonement for our sins. Again John says “*Beloved*” followed by “*if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another*” (4:11). God does love us and so we have an obligation to continually love our brothers and sisters in Christ. As members of God’s family our love ought to be genuine and not simply words that we utter without significance. As we read in 3:16 - 18, “*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers and sisters. But whoever has worldly goods and sees his brother or sister in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God remain in him? Little children, let’s not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*” Telling people that we love them without showing it is not genuine godly love. We need to be there for each other as God is there for us. John continues in Verse 12 and so will we next month.

JUST SAYIN’

by Terry Smalling

With whom do we enjoy spending time? Typically, it appears to me that we choose to time with people either similar to us or complete opposites of ourselves. Of course this could mean many different things. People similar to us often mean those that enjoy doing what we enjoy doing. Football fans have much in common with other football fans. They are up on the standings and statistics, or at this time what two teams have arrived at the Super Bowl. Soon the season will be over for the teams but for the fans the off season continues to be exciting. Conversations about next year can drag out for hours.

Other people can listen to music and discuss the latest hits or golden oldies for a long time. Then there is the topic of politics that can be quite controversial even among friends. Feuds can fire up even among people that are able to carry on conversations with no problem on other subjects. It has been said, and likely continues to be said, that two topics to avoid discussing are politics and religion. I have little problem avoiding bringing up politics, but sometimes, I have been dragged into a discussion about one political party or the

other. The outcome is rarely good, but so much of our lives today depend on the government which we live under. The only thing that we should be able to agree on is what the Apostles Paul and Peter tell us to do in their inspired letters such as Romans 13:1 - 7; 1 Timothy 2:1 - 2; and 1 Peter 2:13 - 15: pray for our governing authorities and abide by the laws of the land, unless they contradict the laws of God.

However, can followers of Christ avoid discussing our faith with those of different faiths? Even if they oppose everything we believe, we have an obligation to share the Good News of Jesus with them. But we need not always do it in an argumentative way. Someone has said that no one ever got argued into accepting Christ. They have to see the faith working in our lives as Peter describes in verse twelve of the second chapter of his first epistle.

Jesus also dealt with those who opposed Him during His time upon earth. Eventually, He paid for it with His life, as was the plan since before time began. Jesus did enjoy spending time with His followers, but He had no equals. We likely enjoy fellowshiping with those of the Christian faith. I really enjoy visiting over a meal, either in our home or at a local restaurant, with other followers of Christ. Especially with those that can discuss minor differences in our beliefs without becoming furious.

Like with Jesus, there are more people today that have opposing views from us and often consider us hypocrites. Again, we must not avoid them but let them know how much we care. So often, people of the world prefer to spend their days among other people of the world. When we build relationships with them and pray for them, God just might cause them to see the Light. There is no guarantee, but the possibility exists. Some of our favorite people might end up being those we are trying to reach, but they might not want to spend an extra minute with us. It is not advisable to try and force the conversation. It just might be necessary to meet them where they are, even if they are football fanatics. As Paul taught in Romans 12, we need to be at peace with them if possible, and remember it is not always possible. Shalom! **Just Sayin’.**



THE ORIGIN OF 666

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Book Description

This identifies the true spiritual significance of the infamous number 666 (Rev. 13.18). For centuries, humanity has tried to solve its significance with little or no success. For this reason, this book is suitable for individual and/or group study, a four-week Sunday or Wednesday Bible class, or as gifts. To schedule a mini seminar on the book content, contact Tom Wright at Didymus Books.

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