

Schedule of Meeting Times: *modified until May 15 due to the pandemic.*

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM

Speaker, Robert Emerson

Study Sunday *Postponed*

Worship Sunday *Postponed*

Worship Sunday *Postponed*

Singing every 2nd Sunday evening

Study Wednesday *Postponed*

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe."

—Prov 18:10



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Servants during May:

Songleader: Stanley (3), Larry (10), David (17), Peter (24), Chandler (31)

Reading: David

Announcements: Stanley

Table: Larry, Chandler, Mike, Marty

Wednesday Lesson: Stanley

(6), Kris (13), Larry (20), Stanley (27)

Lawn Mowing (week

starting): Kris (3), Larry (10), Kris (17), Marty (24), Stanley (31)

Hays Mill church of Christ

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The Bible . Examiner

"Examine everything carefully..." —1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB

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CHEAP GRACE

By Gary Kerr

I just finished re-reading the best-selling biography, Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy, by Eric Metaxas. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran theologian who was part of a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler during the late stages of WWII. After the attempt failed, Bonhoeffer was arrested in April 1943 by the Gestapo and executed by hanging ([reportedly] with piano wire instead of rope!) on April 9, 1945, only 23 days before Germany's surrender. Just a little over two weeks later, Hitler was dead by his own hand, and the concentration camp where Bonhoeffer had been executed was liberated by units of the American infantry.

Long before his death, Bonhoeffer was widely known and respected throughout the world as

an author, and for his efforts to reform the German Lutheran church. His most influential work, first published in 1937, was a book entitled Discipleship (published in an Americanized version known as The Cost of Discipleship). It was in this book that Bonhoeffer coined the phrase that is the title of this article, "Cheap Grace." He wrote,

"Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate... Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace."

According to Bonhoeffer, "cheap grace" is an attempt to get all of the

benefits of God's grace without any of the costs involved. Where scripture sees true grace as the provision of God that makes up for our failure after we have done all we could to follow Him, Bonhoeffer argued that the carnal minded "Christians" had used it to excuse them from expending much effort at all.

In contrast to this, Bonhoeffer called on followers of Christ to live a life that demonstrated what he called "costly grace." Costly grace, Bonhoeffer believed, was a willingness to accept Christ as both Lord and Savior. He wrote, "That is, we are saved, not by anything we do, but by grace. Yet if we have truly understood and believed the gospel, it will change what we do and how we live... Costly grace changes you from the inside out. Neither law nor cheap grace can do that."

A similar debate in the religious world regarding "cheap grace" erupted in the 1980's and 1990's over what came to be called "Lordship Salvation." The issue came to the forefront when respected author and theologian John MacArthur objected to a teaching that was becoming popular in evangelical circles which he called "Carnal Christianity." He wrote about the problem in a book entitled Ashamed of the Gospel: When the Church Becomes Like the

World (first published in 1993).

Carnal Christianity is essentially the view that as long as one makes a profession of faith in Christ, he is saved (cf. Rom 10:9), even if he is not immediately (or even subsequently) obedient to the commands of Jesus and the Apostles to live a life of holiness. It is the idea that one can have Jesus as Savior, but not necessarily as Lord. People who advocate Carnal Christianity, or "free grace" as it was called, did not deny the necessity of good works (i.e., holy living), but they distinguished the call for salvation from the call to sanctification (or obedient discipleship).

Bonhoeffer battled this problem in the 1930s, MacArthur challenged it in the 1980s and 90s, and the controversy continues to rage throughout much of the denominational world today. It is a battle that we are called upon to wage from time to time in the Lord's body as well. I have become concerned lately by the growing number of Christians who are, I believe, openly advocating "cheap grace." For example:

"Being a Christian is not about obedience. It is about being in a relationship with Jesus, being like Jesus!"

"In the Old Testament God was concerned with obedience to law—

truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves,'" Jn 6:26 ESV.

They had missed the point of the feeding. It was not "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach" approach. In this case it was through his miracles that furnished additional evidence of his deity. Later in the chapter "many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him," v66. If it makes a difference as to why one comes to Jesus, then it makes a difference as to what we use to draw people in. It is through a heart filled with evidence of the deity of Jesus and his work of redemption and not a belly filled with "meat that perishes."

But, aren't we to let our light shine so that men will be drawn to Christ by our good works? Jesus did say, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven,"

Remember in Prayer

At the time of this writing, **Tim** has been admitted to Huntsville hospital for sepsis, and **Ronda** has been permitted to assist him because he is a quadriplegic. He seems to be doing well.

Hazel Teeples is suffering from cancer, and doesn't sleep much—both she and **Barbara** can use encouragement. **Robert** is still

Mt 5:16. But is this the same as using our good works as the drawing power to bring people to Christ? Or, is it that men seeing our good works and knowing we are "God-fearing" will glorify God by recognizing his power to make us into the persons we are. It may even cause them to be more willing to consider the gospel message after seeing what it has done for us. But that is a far cry from using good works (i.e., community service) as a tool to draw lost souls to the Lord. It might draw them to a group of "good people," but it will not draw them to the Christ. Only being taught about God through the gospel will draw people to Christ.


"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me," Jn 6:44,45

recovering from a mild heart attack, and the surgical insertion of a stint.

Please don't forget **Madelene Britnell**; nor **Lois Adams, Carolyn Dennis, Tim** and **Dot Hice**, or **Polly McNatt** when you pray.

The Governor has extended the ban on non-work related meetings for another two weeks. Let us continue to keep in contact with one another!

We Find Ourselves in a Stagnant Local Church! It is stagnant because of indifference. Such a church cannot grow by the members merely saying a prayer and then waiting with arms folded for something to happen. Obviously, God expects cooperation from us.

Whether financial or familial, are we to expect that all one has to do to fix the mess is pray and everything will be fine? Absolutely not! There are consequences to our choices and responsibilities that rest upon our shoulders. God will do His part but... we must do ours! 

The Gospel of Community Service

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

The gospel of community service is not the apostolic gospel but another (cf. Gal 1:6-9). Jesus' Great Commission was not to go into the whole world and perform "community service." It was to preach the gospel to every creature. The New Testament church never met, nor was commanded to meet for the purpose of volunteering for social community service. New Testament congregations met to praise and thank God in worship and to build each other up in the faith. Members of these congregations pooled their funds into a congregational treasury to defray the expenses of corporate worship, preaching the gospel (including edifying the church), and supplying the basic needs of destitute saints with no other means of support. Like their Lord, individual Saints made it their work to "seek and save the lost." They were taught that they would have the poor with them always and as they had opportunity to do them good. It was not their

mission to go into the world to "seek and feed" the hungry, or "seek and clothe the naked." In the course of their lives as Christians they would come across such unfortunate people and would have such come to them. They were to be compassionate and supply the needs of such people as they had opportunity and ability. But this was not their mission in life as Christians. It was to seek out the lost and offer them salvation through the gospel. Yes, Jesus had compassion on the hungry and fed 5,000 and 4,000 on different occasions. But, his purpose was much deeper than using these feedings as a "drawing card" to bring people to Him. Like, his other miracles, this was done to furnish objective evidence (signs) that he was who he claimed to be—the Son of God. In fact, shortly after feeding the 5,000 (Jn 6:5-14) he made it clear that it made a difference to him as to why they came to follow him. He rebukes them:

"Jesus answered them, 'Truly,

in the New Testament it is not about 'law,' it is about grace!"

"God doesn't care what we do— He only cares about who we are!"

"God's grace will take care of (i.e., overlook) even the sins of those who are in a relationship with Jesus!"

I could multiply statements like those many times over. There are without question some brethren who are promoting the concept of "cheap grace." They desperately want Jesus to be their Savior, but they do not want to admit that He is also their Lord.

In his book, Now for Something Totally Different, written in 1978, Stuart Briscoe shared his observations about why many so-called religious people seem to have difficulty with accepting Jesus as both Savior and Lord:

"Our modern day is seeing a startling reaction against authority, an intense distaste for obedience ... This kind of thinking can result in what the writer of Judges described: 'In those days there was no King in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes,' Judges 17:6... Obedience is lacking on the family level, in the political realm, on the educational scene, even in the sports arena. And in the

church we have a similar situation. People in our churches who profess that God is God and Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, is his Son are also reacting against his authority."

Briscoe's warning from some 34 years ago is still very much needed today, and not just in the denominational world. That attitude—a desire for "cheap grace"—is becoming more prominent among us as well.

Jesus warned, however, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter," Mt 7:21. The New Testament uses the word for Lord (*kurios*) some 748 times, and 667 of those times it is used in reference to God or Jesus (e.g., "Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom 1:4). In contrast, the New Testament uses the word for Savior (*soter*) only 24 times. It seems clear that there should be at least as much emphasis in our teaching and practice on Jesus Christ as Lord as we place on His role as our Savior. This is not meant at all to downplay in any way the saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross. What a glorious and gracious provision God has made for His people in providing Jesus Christ as our atoning sacrifice, guaranteeing salvation and eternal life for those who believe in Him and


obey Him. Jesus Christ is most certainly our Savior. But we cannot and must not ignore the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord; and as Lord, He commands and we obey.

Remembering the title of Bonhoeffer's book, The Cost of Discipleship, look at what Jesus said to His followers about discipleship in Luke 14:25-33. Two conditions are given by Jesus in order to be His disciple. The first is to be willing to renounce your family in order to follow Jesus. The second is to be willing to die—both literally and metaphorically (“die to self”)—in order to follow Jesus. Jesus then gives two examples of “counting the cost.” The first is of a man who desires to build a tower without first counting the cost. After realizing he cannot complete it, he gives up in shame and embarrassment. The second is that of a king preparing to go to battle and making sure he can defend against the superior foe. The point Jesus is making is that discipleship has a cost.

Furthermore, discipleship requires repentance and obedience. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the message He preached was a message of repentance, Mt 4:17. The message of the Apostles after Jesus' resurrection and ascension was also one of repentance, Acts 2:38. Along with repentance comes obedience. Jesus told a crowd of listeners that salvation and

obedience go hand in hand: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say,” Lk 6:46? He then goes on to distinguish between the one who builds his house on the sand and the one who builds his house on the rock. The one who builds on the rock is the one who not only hears the words of Jesus, but does them too.

Cheap Grace seeks to hide the cost of discipleship from people. Its claim is that as long as one makes a profession of faith, he is saved. It is amazingly true that God's grace, when properly applied, covers all our sins. That is a wonderful truth! It is imperative that we understand, however, that salvation by grace through faith is so much more than the emotional “high” one gets by merely mouthing the words, “I love Jesus!” We are not saved by a simple profession of faith. We are not saved by praying the Sinner's Prayer. We are not saved by signing a card or by walking down an aisle. We are saved by a living and active faith, Jas 2:14-26. It is a faith that manifests itself in repentance, obedience and love of God and our neighbor. Salvation is not a transaction, it is a transformation. Paul says it best when he says we are a “new creature” (“creation,” ESV) in Christ, 2 Cor 5:17.

There is nothing “cheap” about grace! 

What Are We Expecting From Our Prayers?

By Roger Shouse

We pray because prayer works! James writes: “The effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much,” 5:16. If God never listened, or if God never answered our prayers “Yes,” then why pray? There would be no motive to pray. We would say, “It just doesn't do any good.” But we know better. All of us can be thankful for the numerous prayers answered in our lives. Prayer works! God is moved by the prayers of His people.

But, what are we expecting from our prayers? The simple answer would be, “We are expecting God to answer them.” Thus, we pray in faith that He will respond.

Sometimes, however, I feel that some look at prayer as the “magical fix all” to our problems. We make a mess of our marriage and then in desperation pray about our home and think God will now make it right. We mess up our health by poor eating habits and a lack of exercise and then lay in a hospital bed praying for our health to return. We

think the church will grow just because “we have prayed for that.”

It seems that in all of this, we are expecting God to right all the wrongs, fix all the mistakes, and make everything fine simply because we have prayed about it. Now, this is not questioning the power of God, but it is essential that we understand our roles and responsibilities and our need to work with Him.

We Find Ourselves in a Mess Financially! This happens because we spend instead of save. It will take more than words to right the wrongs of unwise decisions.

We Find Ourselves in a Troubled Marriage! Perhaps because of things like gossiping, nagging, dishonesty, and negativity, we have made a mess of our relationship with our spouse. A change of hearts and a renewed dedication are essential to turning that relationship around. God will not “fix it” without the cooperation of those “in it.”