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Hardly realized and rarely practiced is one of the key elements in all of this. Giving God our first and best will result in us receiving the best. The best husbands and wives are first and foremost godly husbands and wives (Eph. 5:22-32). The best parents are first and foremost godly parents (Eph. 6:4). The best employers and employees are first and foremost godly employers and employees (Eph. 6:5-9). When we give God our first and best in all of these areas of our lives, we will inevitably be giving our spouses, our children, our employees and employers our best because it is the simple will of God that we live righteously and godly in all of these avenues of our lives. On the other hand, when we withhold our first and best from God, but try to fulfill the role of spouse, parent and employer/employee, the blessing of God is missing in our endeavors.

The same can be said of our worship and edifying the brethren (Heb. 10:24-25). Edifying and provoking the saints to love and good works in the assembly is truly a by-product of putting God first and giving Him our best in worship. Sing your best to God and all will benefit. But when we sing to men to be heard of men, can we honestly say God is getting our first and best? Pray most fervently to God and all will benefit. But when we pray to men to be heard of men, can we say we are truly giving God our first and best? Hunger and thirst after God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and all around you will benefit!

God deserves our first and best! Did He withhold His first and His best from us when He gave us His only begotten Son? Certainly not! Couple this with the fact that we didn't deserve Jesus and you have all the reason you need to give Him your first and best in every aspect of your life! Think on these things... Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

### THE EMPTY PEW

The empty pew speaks volumes concerning ones:

1. Desire to serve God.
2. Desire to worship God.
3. Desire to learn more of God.
4. Desire to be an example to others.
5. Desire to change one's life.
6. Desire to raise one's children in the Lord.
7. Desire to be morally right in God's sight.
8. Desire to save one's own soul.
9. Desire to save the souls of others.
10. Desire to put the kingdom of God first in one's life.

Do not let the empty pew speak against you at the judgment day!  
Plan now to make sure your place is filled each time the saints meet.

### About the Hillcrest church of Christ

Evangelist: Jimmy Pettigrew

#### How to Contact Us

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#### Our Address

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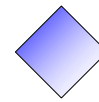


#### Schedule of Assembly

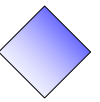
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am  
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am  
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com



# The Voice of Truth



January 2, 2011

## Baptism Saves Us! By Jimmy Pettigrew

"That aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20). Having affirmed that salvation in the days of Noah was through the water of the flood, Peter now draws a comparison with the water of baptism: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Salvation offered through water in the days of Noah is exactly parallel to salvation offered through water baptism. Baptism is the antitype of the waters of the great flood.

The water itself had no saving power in the flood, nor does it have any saving power today. The saving power for Noah was his obedience to God's Word. Today people obey the Gospel plan of salvation culminating in water baptism, and God likewise saves them through water.

Baptism is between the sinner and salvation! God has placed baptism squarely between the sinner and every spiritual blessing. "Blessed be the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). The word "all" means "of every kind." Not one spiritual blessing is to be had outside of Christ. Salvation is "in Christ" (2 Timothy 2:10); grace is "in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1); if one is in Christ "he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17); and this "newness of life" follows baptism (Romans 6:4). Baptism into Christ saves us (1 Peter 3:21; Mark 16:16). Baptism into Christ washes away one's sins (Acts 22:16). Baptism into Christ is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism into Christ makes it possible for one to go to heaven (John 3:3-5).

Since ALL spiritual blessings are IN Christ, it is evident that we do not have access to them while OUT of Christ! The only way to get into Christ is to be baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27)! If one has not been Scripturally baptized, then he is not in Christ, and he cannot receive even one spiritual blessing.

Man did not place baptism between the sinner and salvation; this is the work of God! Man cannot change it! ♦

## Serving God By Jimmy Pettigrew

How are we to serve God? We are to serve God "with a perfect heart and with a willing mind" (1 Chronicles 28:9); God deserves our service. Think of all He has done for us: He gives every good and every perfect gift (James 1:17); He gave us Christ and the cross and eternal life (John 3:16-17); He gave us a plan of salvation; All spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3); God is worthy of your service.

How are YOU serving God??? We are to serve with a perfect heart, a loyal heart! This means you are to serve Him with a heart that is attuned to His will. "Let your heart therefore be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this

day" (1 Kings 8:61). We are not to give half-hearted service; it makes my Lord sick (Revelation 3:15-16). I have seen so many so-called Christians try to hold on to God with one hand and the world with the other. Esau could not have the pottage and the birthright; we cannot have both heaven and the pleasure of sin. I want us to give God whole-hearted service, with no turning back.

Also, we are to serve Him with a willing mind. This means our service is to be voluntary, with a mind that desires only that which will please God (Acts 20:19). This

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service involves every area and all particulars of life, job, the home and vacation. It involves every human relationship. God comes before family (**Luke 14:26**). He comes

before sports and entertainment.

Are you serving God right now? Are you serving Him with a perfect heart and willing mind? •

### “A New Year” By Jarrod Jacobs

**Exodus 12:2** records the words God spoke to Moses and Aaron when He said, *“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”* These words preceded God’s command to observe the Passover feast for the first time. This feast was then commemorated by Israel each year as a memorial to the time God granted them freedom and victory over Egypt. I think of **Exodus 12** around this time of year, for we are also allowed to see “the beginning of months” when we enter the month of January. Even greater than this is the fact that those who are Christians can look back to the day when they became Christians (**Mk. 16:16; Acts 11:26**), and realize that the day they were born again, was the “beginning” for them spiritually.

#### A “New Year” Is Significant

A new year means something to mankind. We know a New Year is significant to man when we see the numerous people shooting fireworks, firing guns, having parties, etc., when the New Year arrives. More than this, the beginning of a new year represents something important. It means we can look forward to 12 months in which to renew ourselves, better ourselves, and to grow spiritually if we apply ourselves. However, 12 more months can be wasted if we decide we will not do anything more in 2008 than we did in 2007 or 2006, etc. Similarly, the Israelites were allowed an opportunity to leave Egypt and to start a “new life” on their own and away from the shackles and sins of Egypt. Unfortunately, many of the Israelites were not happy with God’s way and wanted to go back to Egypt (**Ex. 14:12; Num. 11:4-5; Acts 7:39**; etc.). The “beginning of months” from **Exodus 12** ultimately meant nothing to them.

#### God Is Interested In Our “New Year”

God, though eternal, understands that man lives within the confines of time. This is made clear as He inspired men to write such truths as: *“...behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (**II Cor. 6:2**); and *“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (**Eph. 5:15-16**). Obviously, God is concerned with

how man, His creation, spends his time! Are we being wasteful with our time, or are we doing our best to “redeem” that time, i.e., use our time in the best way we can?

How often have we been asked by someone, “Where did the day go?” Does such an expression not show us just how fleeting life is? David prayed, *“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom”* (**Ps. 90:12**). He also said our life, even at 70 or 80 years, is *“soon cut off, and we fly away”* (**Ps. 90:10**). James said our life is *“even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”* (**Jas. 4:15**). In light of these facts, what are we going to do with 2008? We have already used up 5 days out of 2008. What have we done with them?

#### What Will We Do With This “New Year”?

Brethren, will we live 2008 for the better or for the worse? Will we spend our time this year glorifying God or self (**I Cor. 1:30-31**)? How about spending some time in this New Year mending some fences? Are there people in your life against whom you have sinned? Stop ignoring this situation, and go to them and try to work out whatever problem you have with one another. This is what Jesus taught us to do in **Matthew 18:15**. This is also what Jesus told the people when He said, *“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come offer thy gift”* (**Matt. 5:23-24**). In other words, **do not** wait for them to come to you in 2008! Go to them and work it out!

Perhaps we need to repent before God and make things “right” with Him through repentance and prayer (**Acts 8:22**). God is ready and willing to forgive us when we repent and return to Him. Will we do this, or will we waste another year away from God and out of fellowship with Him (**I Jn. 1:5-6; II Jn. 9**)? It is true that there are things which happen in the course of a year that we cannot

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control. However, there are things we can control, beginning with our attitude, our speech, and our actions (**Phil. 4:8; I Pet. 3:10; Matt. 7:21**). In other words, in 2008, change the one you CAN change — self!

Answering our question another way, we might also ask, will we spend this year looking for opportunities to bring lost people to Christ? The Bible makes it clear that Christians are taught to teach (**II Tim. 2:2**). Christ came to this world, wasting no time, but being active in looking for lost people (**Lk. 19:10**; etc.). Are we following in His footsteps (**I Pet. 2:21**)? Will we follow in the Lord’s footsteps in this New Year?

What will we do with this New Year? How about spending time in 2008 doing our best not only to save the lost, but also to keep the saved, saved! There seems to be an attitude among some that our work with others ends at simply teaching folks about faith, repentance, and baptism! Yes, people need to know this (**Mk. 16:16**), but they also need to know what is necessary to remain faithful and obedient to the God of Heaven (**Matt. 28:20; I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10**)! I find it more than coincidental that we

### Giving God Your First and Best By Jonathan L. Perz

By the end of the Old Testament, the Israelites had a problem. They ceased giving God their best and began sacrificing *“the stolen, the lame and the sick.”* Serving God had become *“a weariness”* to them. They *“sneered”* at the table of the Lord, declaring it *“contemptible.”* As a result, God cursed their blessings and shunned their sacrifices, making them contemptible before all the people (**Malachi 1:1-2:9**).

Herein lies one of the most fundamental and vital principles of Christianity, and at the same time, one of the biggest problems with Christians today. Every single worthwhile endeavor in our lives will be significantly enhanced if we will simply learn to put God first and give Him our best.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us to *“seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”* (**Matt. 6:33**). While the context here is one of worrying about the needs of this life, the principle stands—put God first and give Him your very best and He will take care of the rest.

The problem is that we are too concerned about our own things to give God our very best. Paul wrote on one

have five books of the New Testament written to tell folks what to do to be saved; and then we have twenty-two books of the New Testament written to those who have already been saved! Get the point? Obviously God is concerned about keeping the saved, saved! Are we interested in the same things God is interested in? If we were not in 2007 and previous years, why not begin a new way of thinking and living in 2008!

#### Conclusion

The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”* (**Rom. 12:1-2**). Could we think of any greater encouragement? We are the servants/slaves of God! Let us be the best we can be by living for God today and every day. Let us make 2008 a year dedicated to Him, and to doing everything by the authority of Christ (**Col. 3:17**).

Credit: The Old Paths - January 6, 2008 ♦

occasion, *“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus”* (**Phil. 2:21**). Is such a testimony of your life? Does this describe the end result of the decisions you make on a daily basis? It is far too easy to read this about someone else and affirm it. It is another thing altogether to humbly and honestly “own up” when it is stated to describe the reality of our own lives. Can we honestly say God is getting our first and best in every avenue of life?

Another problem is that we don’t trust God with our best, so He does not come first in our lives. As hard as it might be to hear, it is true. If we trusted God, we would give Him our first and best without reservation. As it stands—if we are honest—God often takes a back seat to us as we see to our needs first, then His will. This can be illustrated in our time management, our laying by in store, our assembling, our sharing of the gospel, our prayer lives, our Bible study, our recreation time, etc. While we may say we are giving God our best, our works too often belie us. If we want to honestly say we trust God with our best, we need to daily put Him first!

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