

December, 2004

# Pause Ponder Profit

## Swaddling Clothes

by James A. Brown

*Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*



**L**uke tells us that when Mary gave birth to Jesus, she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes (KJV), i.e., bands of cloth (NRSV). Swaddling clothes are bands consisting of cloth tied together in bandage like strips. The prophet Ezekiel informs us that after an infant was born, the umbilical cord was cut and tied, then the baby was washed, rubbed with salt and wrapped with strips of cloth (Ezek. 16:4). This provided the baby with warmth, protection, and a sense of security.

In Job 38:9, God is described as “swaddling” the sea in thick darkness, when he created it. And in Ezekiel 16:1-7, the nation of Israel is portrayed as an unswaddled child which was abandoned by her mother until God came and cared for her.

The image of swaddling communicates two ideas. First, it reflects parental care and compassion. When Mary swaddled Jesus, she showed the care of a loving mother. Despite the harsh surroundings, such as being born in a stall for animals and having been laid in a feeding trough, Jesus was protected and warmed in his mother’s care. The same was true for Israel. God was in no way obligated to choose her—swaddle her, tenderly nurturing her and caring for her daily needs.

Second, swaddling symbolizes total dependence. A baby, unable to care for itself, will not survive unless it is cherished by another. Likewise, Israel’s survivability as a nation rested in God’s hands. But she refused to depend on God and crucified His only Begotten Son.

As God’s children we must depend upon God to love us, have compassion on us and care for us. That is, we, as His children, must have complete trust and confidence in God to swaddle us.

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## Good “Forgetters”

Jim R. Everett

When I was a senior in High School, I drove our 49 Ford coupe with its twin “Smitties” and shinny new black paint to school one day. When I had finished basketball practice after school, I walked home and left the Ford parked at school. So, I had to walk back to school to get the car. I have always been forgetful, especially, if I am focusing on something else. And, I am at an age now that I am forgotten what I forgot.

It is possible to get so absorbed in work that we forget important things like wedding anniversaries, appointments, etc. But Peter speaks of weightier matters that a Christian could forget (2 Peter 1:5-9). It is not that being purged from old sins could totally be eradicated from one’s mind but, rather, that one’s lack of spiritual, character growth was incongruous with having been cleansed from sin. The great blessing of being created anew should, sensibly, move one to build God-like character.

Putting the scriptures in our minds and hearts is so critical to proper behavior that we should study it daily (Colossians 3:16). When we saturate ourselves with God’s word, it modifies our behavior and builds us into Christ’s character. To the one who is spiritually minded, that pursuit is never drudgery but one who does not relish its taste will quickly forget what he has learned. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

Skimming through the Bible to prepare for a class lesson or prepare a “last minute” sermon might make an impression on the shallow of mind but will never accomplish much beyond that. The bible is not a work that one can study for fifteen minutes on Saturday night for thirty years and comprehend it. Learning and applying scripture

love for the law of the Lord – that kind of love causes one to mediate on it day and night (Psalms 1:2).

Some things one forgets he has not really forgotten. Peter says three times that he will not be negligent to put these brethren in remembrance of these things, though they knew them (2 Peter 1:12-15). He understood the importance of keeping some things fresh in the conscious, thinking part of man.

Permit me to put you in remembrance that, if we neglect to keep learning and using what we learn, salvation will be lost.

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## “Judged According To Works”

by David D. Bonner

There are people who teach salvation is by FAITH ONLY. They often cite Scriptures such as John 3:16, Romans 5:1, Hebrews 11:6, etc. which teach FAITH is essential to salvation, and conclude ONLY faith is essential to salvation. Not only does James 2:24 state, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” but repentance (Acts 17:30), confession of Christ (Acts 5:37, Romans 10:9-10), and baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16) are also requirements for salvation. Also, 1 John 2:3-4 states, “And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” Matthew 7:21. How can any believe faith only?

*(Continued on page 41)*

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## Evangelicalism Defined Or Not

by James A. Brown

After the selection of George W. Bush to his second term, there was a lot of commotion in the media about the impact of the evangelical and evangelicalism on the election. All the hoopla caused me to realize that most of the news personalities thought an evangelical was equal to a Christian and evangelicalism was equal to Christianity. But the New Testament nowhere makes any such connection. As a matter of fact, the terms evangelical and evangelicalism are not even found in the New Testament. So to define these terms one will have to turn to the mind of man rather than the mind of God.

The term evangelical simply refers to an individual who holds to evangelical principles or belongs to an evangelical party or church. But that doesn't really help us identify who might be an evangelical. Identifying an evangelical is only possible when we define evangelicalism. And that is easier said than done.

To help me get an understanding of evangelicalism I read about: The Evangelical Church in Germany, The Evangelical Covenant Church of America, The Evangelical Free Church of America, The Evangelical Church in America, The Evangelical United Brethren; The Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, The Evangelical Missionary Alliance, The Evangelical Theological Society, and The National Association of Evangelicals. After reading all that, I must admit that my ability to define evangelicalism was increased only by a tad. But I don't feel bad, because even those involved in evangelicalism do not know who is an evangelical. For example, on November 20, 2000 the following headline appeared in the Baptist Press, (the daily national news service of Southern

Braces For Debate Over Evangelical Identity". Also at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in 2001 their theme was "Defining Evangelicalism's Boundaries". So you see, defining "evangelicalism" is no easy task—not even for the evangelicals.

The "ism" attached to the word "evangelicalism" denotes a movement, doctrine, or system of belief. We are able to see this in such "isms" as Calvinism, Premillennialism, Pentecostalism, and etc. As a matter of fact the biggest promoters of evangelicalism are the denominational churches involved in Calvinism, Premillennialism, and Pentecostalism. So in evangelicalism there is a multitude of different movements, doctrines and beliefs. The term "evangelicalism" is like a huge umbrella that covers a diverse number of Protestant denominational groups, which even include Catholic charismatics. For example "The National Association of Evangelicals" boast of a membership composed of **fifty-two member denominations**. Along with these denominations they also have a variety of coalition partners, commissions, affiliates, independent churches, schools, and Para-church ministries.

From this, we see that the word "evangelicalism" is a very, very, broad term. If you are a member of some denominational church, you might be an evangelical and not know it. The denominational church you attend might be an evangelical church and not know it. To find out I guess you would have to ask "The Evangelical Theological Society" or "The National Association of Evangelicals."

So what is evangelicalism? Your guess is as good as mine. As Christians perhaps we should look at it as just another enemy of Christ and true Christianity. And treat it as the monster that it is—as we fight against it with the sword of The Spirit—the word of God (Eph. 6:17).

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The very FACT the Bible teaches we are judged according to our works (obedience) should forever settle the question in our minds. "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:13). "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he had done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10). The Bible does NOT teach we'll be judged only by what we BELIEVE, but also by what we DO.

OBEY the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

*As a ring of gold in a swine's snout.*

*So is a lovely woman who lacks discretion.*

—Proverbs 11:22

*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.*

*But she who causes shame is like rottenness in his bones.*

—Proverbs 12:4

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