

**Circular Letter of the Sandy Creek Baptist Association**

**By A. Weaver**

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## CIRCULAR LETTER

DEAR BRETHREN:--When the great naval battle of Trafalgar was upon the eve of being fought, the British Admiral, addressing his fleet, remarked, that "England expected every man to do his duty." This was exacting no more than every government has a right to expect of its subjects, and no more than all good subjects or citizens of a temporal government will cheerfully render, if in doing so, it should become necessary to hazard even life itself.

We have referred to this historical incident, in order to introduce to your notice the immeasurably more important subject of our individual responsibility to our Heavenly Father, and the encouragement given in God's blessed word, as well as its oft repeated and solemn injunctions to individual and personal effort in our religious practice. The whole plan of salvation through the person of Jesus Christ as its Author, is strictly personal in its application, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, He that believeth not shall be damned"—"The soul that sinneth it shall die." And while it is unquestionably a Bible truth, that nothing less than the gift of the Son of God and his actual death upon a Cross—his obedient and passive sufferings—His triumphant resurrection and ever living intercession at the Father's right hand, could have availed for the salvation of any one single sinner; in a word, since every redeemed soul may not only claim a whole Saviour, but is actually interested in all that Christ has done and suffered as redeemer of mankind, and in all that he is yet doing as advocate and intercessor in the court of Heaven, to the full extent that he would or could be if he alone had been redeemed by Christ; is it not then "our reasonable service" that we "present ourselves both soul and body" unto him; and I not each one so redeemed, bound to devote himself to the utmost of his ability, to glorify God—to cultivate all the graces of the spirit, and to develop a perfect religious life and character to the full extent that he would or could be, if he alone was left as a witness for Christ, and all the world beside himself, were enemies to God and strangers to grace.

In that fervent and pathetic prayer offered up by our blessed Saviour, to his Father in heaven shortly before he suffered, so full an account of which is given us by the evangelist John, it is manifest that he had nothing more at heart than that his disciples should "be one with him as he was one with the Father." And this implies doubtless that they be not only of one faith; not merely that they have just and truthful views of the leading truths of God's revealed word, but more especially as he was an embodiment, and his life a visible display of the purity and moral excellence of the Divine character, so might each one of his disciples be, though a less brilliant, yet no less truthful reflection and prolongation of the love, purity, and benevolence that was transmitted through him upon the dark face of this sinful world. This is surely the sense in which Christians are intended to be the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. Nature lends her assistance to revelation in confirmation and enforcement of this wonderful truth. For instance, if we take a single drop of water from the mighty ocean and analyze it, it will be found to be composed of the same elements, and in about the same proportion with the waters of the ocean itself. And if it were possible to disengage a solitary sunbeam from the ocean of light that is flooding the universe from the great source of life, the material sun, and submit it to a like test, the result would be the same; or to make the analogy more complete, let the ray be one reflected from the moon, and still the result must ever be the

same. Such is the limited testimony of nature and revelation concerning what *all* christians ought to be. How does this agree with the facts as to what professed christians in by far too general a sense are. Is it not a sad truth, dear brethren, that the standard of religious morality, the tone of religious sentiment, and the temperature of religious zeal have all in many instances, even in whole communities, sunk too low? Is not the gulf that ought to divide the church from the world reduced, till in many instances it is scarcely perceptible? This is wrong. Christ said to his disciples, Ye are not of the world," "I have chosen you out of the world;" and the Apostle calls christians "a peculiar people" and exhorts them not to be "conformed to the world." The spirit of the world and the spirit of Christianity are as wide apart as Heaven and Hell, and as irreconcilable as light and darkness; and both Christ and his Apostles teach that friendship of the one is treason to the other "ye cannot serve God and mammon." "The friendship of the world is enmity to God." "If any man will live Godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution" is heaven's law. The christian looks for his persecutions chiefly from the world, and hence christians too often seek to conciliate the world by partial compliances with its tastes, and their unsanctified appetites but too successfully incline them to justify the course, while the world itself lends its approbation, for the world, and even Satan himself is opposed only to that religion that slays the pride of the human heart and kills in the soul the love of sin. Our country, dear brethren, is in a painful condition, and whatever may seem to have been the agencies by which these disasters are brought on us, the Bible instructs us that it is all under our heavenly Father's notice, and could not have occurred without his consent, if not his direction. It is no doubt a punishment for our sins, and it may be for the sins of the church. We have not done our duty, it may be, or this nation might not have been so wicked. We have not individually labored for personal and scriptural holiness. We have not individually, earnestly, and persistently labored for the conversion of sinners. We have not, all of us, and all christians generally through the land, been faithful representatives of Jesus Christ, his lovely character has been distorted, misrepresented and slandered by his friends; they have thereby obstructed the gospel in its progress, multiplied sinners in the land, and deferred, it may be, their salvation forever, through their unfaithfulness. Even one defaulting church member (sinner) destroys much good. The sin of Achan caused the defeat of the Isrealitish army by the men of Ai. And who, save almighty God himself, can tell the evils that have, and are resulting from causes of this kind. For aught any of us or any one else can say, the very men that have plunged our country into war and are now crimsoning this fair land in blood, might have been foremost in the ranks of Messiah's legions, leading his conquering hosts on to the conquest of the world; while many of the distinguished captains both South and North, with hearts renewed, panoplied in the armor of righteousness, might be seen among the foremost in spreading the gospel through the world. All must feel at any rate that personal religion is low. Indeed there can be no other religion, and there can be no revival or religion, in any other way than by raising the standard of personal piety. When the walls about Jerusalem were to be repaired, they were directed every man to build over against his own house; so if we would build up the church, have sinners converted, souls saved, and our God glorified, we must each for himself seek more spirituality, realizing his individual obligation, not only to reflect truly the christian character, but the whole of that character, and seek in meek submission to the providence of God for the work he deigns him to do. God has important work for every christian to do, work which no christian can

neglect without great detriment both to himself and others; and work which no other christian is expected to do, or it may be, could do. A volume could not contain the importance of individual piety, the necessity of individual effort in religious labor, or the levis of neglecting it.

May the Spirit of all grace help you, dear brethren, to give this subject due consideration.

A WEAVER.

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