

Ministers:  
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley  
217.493.8905

Sunday:  
8:00 AM: WGCY  
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:  
7:00 PM: Bible Study

[gibsoncitychurchof  
Christ.com](http://gibsoncitychurchofChrist.com)

**This Past Week:**  
Worship—42  
Wednesday—13  
Contribution—\$

**For meditation:**  
**Ecclesiastes 3.1–3**  
Who determines the  
broad outline of  
human life? Read  
vv 1–8; which of  
these “times/  
seasons” of life are  
you in?

**Radio program:**  
WGCY FM, 106.3  
Sundays at 8 AM

## *Spirituality in solitude?*

The first temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 is a puzzler. I get the temptations of elevation (2nd) and exaltation (3rd), but isn't temptation lessened in isolation (1st)?

Isn't getting away from the world a good way to resist worldliness? Isn't it easier to be godly when you're “far from the madding crowd”? The monastic movement in fourth century Egypt certainly believed so. “The first Christian monks and nuns were men and women . . . who turned their backs on life and went into the desert to be alone with God and to lead lonely lives of prayer and fasting” (Morton, *Through Lands of the Bible*, 253). So powerful was the belief that the way to godliness was by cutting yourself off from the world that Egypt came to be dotted with monasteries and caves filled with hermits engaged in uninterrupted contemplation of the spiritual life.

After His baptism, Jesus did what monks do; He went to the wilderness, and the devil was there.

Cutting oneself off from others won't keep the devil away; in fact, it will play right into his hands. If you have no neighbor, how do you keep the command to love your neighbor? How do you practice pure religion by helping the fatherless and widows if you don't know any orphans or widows?

There may be times when seclusion is necessary, but when a Christian withdraws, it's always with a view to reengagement (cf. 1 Cor. 7.5). Battles won in the wilderness prepare us for battles in the world. If we can't resist the prompt to turn stones into bread in the wilderness, we'll never have the power to turn water to wine at a wedding.

kenny

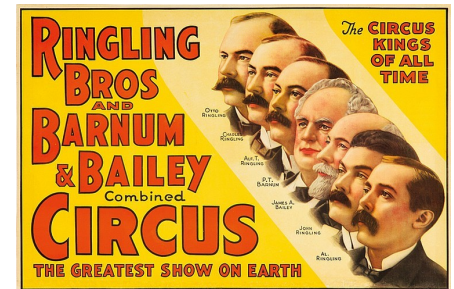
# Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL

[A favorite author of mine is Robert L. Taylor. In his book, *Center Ring*, which is a history of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, he tells a story about a roustabout—a crewman who puts the circus up and takes it down—that is too good not to pass along.]

“Workers of questionable habits sift into [the circus] now and then, as they do in any business. It was once discovered that a porter with the Ringling show, a former clergyman, enjoyed the ambiguous distinction on his native Mississippi heath of having shot one of his parishioners from the pulpit. Little had come of the incident in a legal way, since the congregation had agreed that the victim had arisen to voice a decidedly minority view of a perfectly clear passage from St. Luke, and the episode had been written off as an inaccurate piece of criticism followed by an accurate rebuttal. With Ringling's, the porter functioned brilliantly for a while and then reverted [to] pilfering. He removed the brass plumbing from several [circus] railway cars, stole a coffin from a roustabout who had saved up for it for years, and then foolishly stole John Ringling's bathtub. His sins were discovered and he was restored to the clergy.”

kenny



Sermon: James 4.1–4

Civil and cosmic war

2 March 2025

## ***Books worth reading, part 6***

### **COMMENTARIES**

It's understandable why a young preacher would use a commentary. In his preaching/teaching, he's expected to offer lessons of substance long before he's done substantial study in Scripture. So preachers turn to commentators for insight and understanding. As the years pass, reliance on commentaries should lessen and the fruits of one's own thinking and study should increase.

Here are some commentaries I've found helpful.

- **William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible Series***
- **G. Campbell Morgan's expository volumes on each Gospel and the Book of Acts**
- **Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels***
- **Warren Wiersbe's *Be* series of commentaries**
- **David Thomas, *Gospel of Matthew, Expository and Homiletical***
- **J. D. Jones, *The Gospel According to St. Mark***
- **George Reith, *Handbooks for Bible Classes and Private Students, St. John's Gospel***
- **David Thomas, *Gospel of John, Expository and Homiletical***
- **Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles***
- **John Stott on Acts, *The Spirit, The Church, and the World***
- **James Macknight on the Epistles**
- **Jim McGuiggen, *Romans***
- **James D. Bales, *Romans***
- **Jim McGuiggen, *1 Corinthians***
- **Alan Redpath on 2 Corinthians, *Blessings Out of Buffetings***
- **Ed Wharton on Galatians, *Freed for Freedom***
- **John Stott, *Ephesians***
- **Alec Motyer, *The Message of Philippians***
- **John Stott on 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Living in the End Times***
- **John Stott on 1 Timothy, Titus, *Fighting the Good Fight***
- **John Stott, *Studies in 2 Timothy***
- **James D. Bales, *Studies in Hebrews***
- **Robert J. Dean, *Hebrews: Call to Christian Commitment***
- **Alex Motyer, *The Message of James***
- **Robert Law on 1 John, *The Tests of Life***
- **Richard Rogers on Revelation, *Hallelujah Anyway***
- **David Chilton on Revelation, *The Days of Vengeance***

kenny

## ***The thorn is the grace***

Last week, I wrote on 2 Corinthians 12.7–9, stating that I've come to see the "thorn" in v 7 as the "grace" in v 9. The Gr. word used appears only here in the NT. *Skolops* didn't refer to a rose thorn but to a stake, a type of cross in which a pole was sharpened at one end and victims were impaled on it. Farrar, in *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, translates v 7 as: "there was given me a stake in the flesh" (653). If we can understand how Christ's cross symbolized divine grace, maybe that will help us understand how the "cross we bear" is also an expression of God's grace.

This past week I received a note from a dear friend who read last's week's article on the thorn. Like many, for years she has been caring for her beloved husband who has been in serious cognitive decline. Here's what she wrote.

**"I was especially affected by your article on thorns . . . I am trying to see it as a learning opportunity for myself. I have asked myself many times what all is the Lord trying to teach me or work in me. There are too many possibilities to name. Definitely more dependence on Him, selflessness, patience, humility, sacrifice, etc. I have a very long way to go. It hurts my heart. But also, this journey is teaching me gratitude for so much!! Gratitude for the years we had before the illness, for our family, for our church family who are so encouraging, for the resources we have so far to take care of \_\_\_\_\_ needs, for new mercies every morning, although undeserved, which cause me to wake the dawn with praises. And for the hope that I have that \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be with the Lord for eternity. When I can stay focused, I am a much better wife and caregiver. When I allow myself to get discouraged I am less than I should be in every aspect of life. Satan would be so happy if I would succumb to bitterness, but as you said in your article concerning such, it will destroy my soul."**

God bless all who, like Paul, have come to boast in infirmities/ take pleasures in infirmities for Christ's sake.

kenny

## ***News about us***

- Levi Nettles will speak next Sunday morning.