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THE REVIEW

Steadfastly Abounding With Our Unmovable God!

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

“What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.” The first line of this classic hymn fully puts into words the description of our annual conference this past June. What a joyful blessing from the Lord to fellowship together. Our host, Brother Allen Harris and the brethren of Hope Baptist Church in Hanover, PA, served the Lord wonderfully as they looked to every need for our gathering. We were well cared for and well fed! We truly enjoyed tremendous fellowship together. We were not only well taken care of physically, but we were treated to a spiritual feast of tremendous blessing from all of the rich teaching and preaching from God's Word. Centering on 1 Corinthians 15:58 each morning in devotions together, each preacher then expounded the truth from the entire chapter. In addition, we were blessed with tremendous practical teaching on our conference theme from our main speaker, Dr. Marty Von from Church Care Ministries in Atlanta, GA. It truly was tremendous fellowship around the Word of God.

As we consider the theme of being steadfast and unmovable from our 2022 summer conference, we are reminded from that blessed hymn of the true nature of the fellowship that we have and the foundation of that steadfast, unmovable strength. It is only to be found as we lean on the everlasting arms of our Lord. “Safe and secure from all alarms” the song promises. This is something which is considerably lacking in our world today, and I am sad to say also from many churches and Christians. There is a great cry for personal strength and assurance in this dark world, and the church must be the deliverer of the only real solution to the problem. The heroes of this world are vastly inadequate, the government seems incapable of truth and trustworthiness, and many spiritual leaders are weak and unstable, resulting moral decay in many churches. What is the answer? What is the great heart-cry of our Lord for His people, especially those whom He has placed as spiritual leaders and under-shepherds?

We are so thankful for this past year's conference and all that the Lord accomplished through it. It was a special time for all who were able to attend. I am truly sorry if you were not able to be there, but let me invite you to begin now to make plans for next summer. The dates are June 20-22, 2023. The location and further details are still being worked on, but the theme is right at the heart of this great need today. The theme is “Integrity,” and the theme verse is 1 Timothy 3:9: “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”



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As we consider the subject of personal integrity, we see several passages of Scripture which give us an idea of God's expectation in this area. His provision gives us integrity. The context of the theme verse identifies it as one of the qualifications for a deacon, but we can also clearly see that it is a spiritual quality which is essential in each of us. The writer of Hebrews considered a clean conscience of highest importance. In Heb. 13:18, he asks for prayer so that he could confidently have a good conscience to live honestly in all things. The word translated *honestly* is the Greek word *kalos*, which means *morally well*. It should be understood as the highest degree of uprightness and goodness.

One scriptural word that truly delivers this needed message is the Hebrew word *tom*, which is understood as *completeness* or *moral innocence* and is usually translated in the Old Testament as *integrity* or *upright*. It comes from the root word *taman*, which means *completeness*. It is used in Job 21:23 to describe the lifelong benefit of this moral strength: "One dieth in his full strength (*tom*), being wholly at ease and quiet." David spoke of integrity in this way in Psalm 26:1-3: "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity (*tom*): I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth." He equates his integrity with his adherence to God's truth. This strong principle is echoed seven times in the Psalms and seven times in Proverbs, as well as several other passages. Through these passages we see the necessity of strong moral character, which comes from obedience to the Word of God.

Proverbs 11:3 states: "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." In this passage we see the guiding principle of a strong moral compass, which is obedient to the Word. Interestingly, the word translated *integrity* here is the feminine form of *tom*, which conveys the same strength of integrity. It is only found four other times in the Old Testament, all in the Book of Job. Here are those instances: Job 2:3, "And the LORD said unto Satan, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although

thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause'" ; Job 2:9, "Then said his wife unto him, 'Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die'" ; Job 27:5, "God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me" ; Job 31:6, "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity."

How explicitly these verses state the necessity and value of Job's integrity. God placed the highest value and confidence in it, and Job kept it securely when all else was lost. Even the urging of his wife could not cause Job to surrender his integrity.

Perhaps the most amazing use of this word in Scripture is the plural form of *tom*. This is translated as Thummim and is only found in the context of the high priest and his breastplate. Along with the Urim, it is one of the two stones used to communicate the will of the LORD. The word means *perfections* or *complete truth* and is only associated with the LORD. He is the embodiment of the plurality of integrity, and it is only in Him that true integrity may be found and lived.

Do we sincerely value our integrity with God and before the world as Job did? There is a great lack of integrity in the world. God's people must be the example of upright integrity. Through the absolute and complete truth of Scripture, we can see the standard of integrity that God desires for us. As the high priest with the Urim and Thummim, we can through His word understand His "lights" and "perfections" and live a life of integrity by His standard. Only then will we have occasion to fulfill God's desire for us revealed in 1 Pet. 3:15-16: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."

I trust you are looking forward to next year's conference as much as I am. Until then, may we all continue to be "steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" as we hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." May God bless you, and may God bless the IBFNA.

2022 IBFNA Conference Resolutions

Theme: “Be Steadfast, Unmovable, Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord”

Whereas we have been “saved by the power of God” (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:29) and made “a new creature, old things are passed away... all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17); and

Whereas because of God’s power working in our lives, we have been commanded to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10) and to “put on the whole armor of God that [we] may be able to stand. . . in the evil day and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:11, 13); and

Whereas standing fast is clearly defined by the Apostle Paul in our theme verse as being steadfast and unmovable; and

Whereas steadfastness is reinforced in us as we “look unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2), keeping our eyes fixed on our risen Savior, enabling us to “abide” in Him (John 15:7) and not be “double-minded” (James 1:8); and

Whereas God’s Word exhorts us to “not forsake the assembling of ourselves together” in the local church as the manner of many is today, that in so doing we exhort one another (Hebrews 10:25) to “be steadfast” and “unmovable” (I Corinthians 15:58);

Be it, therefore, resolved that we, the members of the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America, meeting at Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA, June 21–23, 2022, will strive to obey our Lord’s command to us in our conference theme verse (I Corinthians 15:58).

We further resolve to be steadfast for the Lord and not be moved or be “tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14), nor be spoiled “through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after

Christ” (Colossians 2:8). We also are resolved to strive to abound in the work of the Lord in evangelism, edification of believers, and to faithfully preach the Word, because we “know that [our] labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58), and we will “not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). We encourage others of like precious faith to join us as steadfast, unmovable servants of the Lord.

A Biblical Response to “Pride Month”

Whereas Scripture declares God’s abhorrence of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5); and

Whereas the world has largely disregarded Biblical values regarding sexual sin and God’s moral instruction for society; and

Whereas in the name of tolerance and inclusion, the world has publicly promoted sexual immorality as being acceptable and good; and

Whereas our society has heavily promoted the immoral and unbiblical agenda of the LGBTQIA+ movement in a blatant attempt to legitimize and normalize that which goes against God’s natural order, labeling any disagreement with their warped view as intolerant and hateful; and

Whereas Christianity has always held a distinct sexual ethic, especially in the days of the early church in Roman culture, having values from which our faith calls for a higher purpose for human sexuality than merely living according to one’s desired pleasures; and

Whereas homosexuality is a sin which God condemns, and unless we cherish God’s design for human sexual intimacy, we will be guilty of corrupting biblical marriage between a man and a woman, dishonoring the body, and nullifying His procreative purpose of mankind (Genesis 1:26-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5, 21ff).

Be it, therefore, resolved that we, the members of the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North

America, meeting at Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA, June 21–23, 2022, will strive, as American culture becomes ever more secular, to strengthen our belief in the truthfulness and necessity of the gospel and the Scriptures. We will be steadfast and unmovable as we trust the scriptural teaching on sexuality.

Be it further resolved that we will cherish the gift of heterosexual intimacy in marriage and reject all deviation, and we will strive to be steadfast in our biblical stand, not condoning the public agenda of the LGBTQIA+ movement, but rejecting its acceptance in our lives. We will reject their misuse of God’s promise of the rainbow which, while being a symbol of love, is also clearly a testimony of God’s mercy and judgment.

Be it finally resolved that we will not only speak in truth against the sinfulness of the LGBTQIA+ movement, but will, out of God’s great abundance of grace, mercy and love, seek to bring all people to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who feel marginalized and abandoned, and they are seeking acceptance in their sinfulness. We must be clear that the only true acceptance for all humanity is in the grace of God found in salvation through Christ’s death on the cross for their sin.

The Call to Do Right

Whereas there is an ever-increasing propensity among God’s people to “do what is right in their own eyes” like the Israelites in the Old Testament (Judges 17:6; 21:25), by failing to glorify God (Matthew 5:16; I Corinthians 10:31), by failing to accept, apply, and obey the Scripture in regards to marriage, ministry, medical issues, etc.; and

Whereas God’s people have allowed the world to influence and sway them, allowing their lives and practices to become like the sinful world, rather than demonstrating godliness in their lives, families, and churches; and

Whereas the world sees a failing church whose members (including pastors) “do what is right in their own eyes,” so that what is done hinders the work of God in our midst; Satan is “seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8), to the point that our sin is open to ridicule and rebuke, ruining our

testimony, as recently identified with the release of a number of reports disclosing sexual abuse among various churches and denominations that have not yet responded appropriately; and

Whereas God calls upon pastors to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22), “submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7), and many other personal commands for their life and ministry; and

Whereas many pastors have morally failed, within and without churches and have led others to participate in their sin as well;

Be it, therefore, resolved that each of us needs to examine his heart before the Lord and daily recommit himself to Him so that we can glorify Him, to determine whether our lives and actions have things hidden from others, and to deal with things even if it hurts to do so. The time has more than come that church members need to seek the face of God for personal revival to come and for the Spirit of God to begin again the work He has done in the past.

Be it further resolved that we, the members of the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America meeting in annual conference at Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA, June 21–23, 2022, covenant before God and each other to read, meditate upon, and apply the Scriptures so that we may strive with all our might to be like Christ and to be faithful to Him until we meet Him face to face.

Appreciation for Host Church

Paul’s exhortation to steadfastness, immovability, and an abounding work in the Lord encouraged those he called, “my beloved brethren” (1 Cor. 15:58). This apostolic love for fellow believers was not unique to Paul. The Apostle John commands, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). To obey this command is to be godly. John continues: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (vv. 8-9).



Clearly, the beloved of God must love one another. Having been richly blessed by the exemplary brotherly love of Hope Baptist Church of Hanover, PA this week, during our annual family conference, we sincerely thank you, our brothers and sisters, for your hospitality and generosity toward us. Under

the leadership of your faithful pastor and our beloved co-laborer, Brother Al Harris, your expressions of love have encouraged in us what Paul desired to encourage in the local church at Corinth.

These expressions of love have included the use of your beautiful facility, logistical help from your talented staff, making preparations for our Sight and Sound outing, delicious meals and refreshments expertly prepared, thoughtful gift bags, and the spirit of grace and joy that accompanied each kind gift and every generous good deed.

Therefore we, the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America meeting at its annual family conference, June 21-23, 2022, give our sincere thanks to you, the members of Hope Baptist Church, for these expressions of love for Christ and His church. We resolve to learn from your example of love and to follow that example with greater love for one another as sister churches. And we look forward to continued blessing from the Lord as we strive together with you to “be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as [we] know that [our] labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

The Surprise of Revival

By Pastor Kevin Hobi

Before the IBFNA was a Fellowship, it was a call for revival. Our founders called themselves “Regular Baptists for Revival.” In the last two editions of the *Review*, we highlighted both the definition of revival and the possibility of revival. Here we will focus on the surprise of revival, and I will begin with portions of a letter I received from a ministry friend a while ago. The letter was written as a ministry update, not intended for publication here, so I have anonymized the letter.

A Surprising Letter

“Dear Praying Friends,

“I and [church name] are so thankful for your laboring together with us in prayer for the cause of Christ. Since I last wrote you about the work here there have been several significant developments,

and through God’s grace we have by faith responded with, ‘Blessed be the name of the LORD.’

“On Saturday, January 30, [daughter’s name], the 19-year-old daughter of one of our deacons died in her sleep. [She] struggled with seizures the last few years of her life. The Lord has graciously sustained and strengthened the family, and their testimony from that moment to the present has been to the praise of His grace. Though there is grief, it has always been with faith and hope in the Lord’s sure promises (1 Thess. 4:13–18). ‘Blessed be the name of the LORD.’

“The week after [daughter’s name]’s funeral, her brother [brother’s name], a young farmer in North Dakota, finally repented of his stubborn rebellion and trusted in Christ. The same day, without either communicating with the other, his

girlfriend [girlfriend's name] also trusted Christ. "Blessed be the name of the LORD."

There was more good news in the letter that I do not have space here to convey. I received this email not long after having read Jonathan Edwards's *Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton, and the Neighboring Towns and Villages*. Edwards published this work in 1736 to explain what had happened during the revivals of 1734-1735, the first fruits of the Great Awakening that the Lord gave our nation, especially the region of New England.

Read Edwards's description of the beginning of the revival, and note some parallels with the letter I received from my friend:

"In the April following, anno 1734, there happened a very sudden and awful death of a young man in the bloom of his youth; who being violently seized with a pleurisy, and taken immediately very delirious, died in about two days; which (together with what was preached publicly on that occasion) much affected many young people. This was followed with another death of a young married woman, who had been considerably exercised in mind, about the salvation of her soul, before she was ill, and was in great distress in the beginning of her illness; but seemed to have satisfying evidences of God's mercy to her, before her death; so that she died very full of comfort, in a most earnest and moving manner warning and counselling others. This seemed to contribute to render solemn the spirits of many young persons; and there began evidently to appear more of a religious concern on people's minds."

It was under the influence of that preparation of the hearts of people that Edwards, himself only around 30 years old at the time, began a series of messages on justification by faith. His goal was not revival, per se, but to guard his flock from what he discerned to be a dangerous influence of Arminian doctrine in the region. God used the combination of this preparation and those messages to accomplish what Edwards could only describe as "A Surprising Work of God."

And so when I received the email news about a deacon's daughter's death in my friend's church, I

wondered what other surprises the Lord may have in store for our churches at this time. As I have studied the history of revival, having only scratched the surface at this point, this important truth has become clear to me. When revival comes it does so to the surprise of those who are blessed by it, so much so that all they can do is exclaim, "Blessed be the name of the LORD." I want us to see three things about the surprise of revival.

The Surprise is Scriptural

Revival is often depicted in agricultural terms in the Scripture (Mark 4:26-29). Seeds are sown, soil conditions are necessary, and the sheaves of a harvest are reaped when revival happens.

In this Mark passage, Jesus seems to be emphasizing one special characteristic of a revival harvest - it is not produced by those casting seed into the ground. Clearly, casting seed is necessary, and Jesus would teach us to pray for laborers in the field, who are willing not only to cast seed but to harvest white and ripened fields. But getting from seed to white field happens when the farmer sleeps, and in a way that he does not even understand (v. 27). Earlier in the chapter, with the parable of the soils, Jesus teaches seed planters to expect different results. There too we learn that the best results are rare. The surprise of revival is scriptural.

The Surprise Has Been Controversial

As one studies the history of revival, he reads about the ministries of both Calvinists and Arminians. At times, God moved men to exalt the doctrines of grace to correct a man-centered approach to this work that only God can do. At other times revival men pleaded with their Calvinist brothers to overcome their coldness toward the condition of sinners. Calvinism had justified their coldness.

In his sermon titled, "Why Is God a Stranger in the Land?", the 19th century Scotsman, Robert Murray McCheyne, quotes from Edwards's *Faithful Narrative* to highlight the need of his own nation for revival, a nation whose Calvinist roots ran very deep, as did McCheyne's.

But in this sermon, he laments a noticeable difference between the newly saved and both seasoned and educated ministers when it comes to a

concern for lost souls: "When a sinner is newly converted, he would fain persuade everyone to come to Christ; the way is so plain, so easy, so precious. He thinks, Oh, if I were but a minister, how I would persuade men! This is a true feeling and a right feeling. But oh, how little is there of this among ministers!" When responding to a survey about the revival in his parish of Dundee, McCheyne spoke of how the Lord changed ministers in this regard and aided them "in declaring the terrors of the Lord, . . . and in setting forth the fullness and freeness of Christ as the Savior of sinners."

Both the First and Second Great Awakenings in our nation were dissolved in controversy. In the First Great Awakening, James Davenport emphasized what he claimed to be separation to protect the purity of the church without a proper love for the brothers.

In the Second Great Awakening, Charles Finney emphasized certain methods and measures by which any minister of the gospel could produce a revival if he just did things correctly. Both Davenport and Finney, after having seen the damage they had done, wrote mea culpas apologizing for their divisive approaches to gospel ministry. Finney would later distance himself from his apology, whereas Davenport seemed sincere.

Remembering the surprise of revival will guard us from the mistakes made by these men. When we see that revival is a God-sent surprise, we will give Him proper glory for His work (1 Cor. 3:21, Eph. 3:21). And when we see that revival is a God-sent surprise, we will see how needy we are for it and deprived without it.

The Apostle Paul was both the greatest theologian and the greatest evangelist the church has ever known. His theology caused him to live with what he calls both his "great heaviness and continual sorrow in [his] heart" (Rom. 9:2) and his "heart's desire and prayer to God" (Rom. 10:1), namely that lost ones would be saved. And so we need Paul's balance. We must see that revival is God's work without letting that truth make us indifferent about the needs of sinners.

The Surprise is Unusual

Surprises surprise because they are unusual.

In 1832 Ebenezer Porter was the President of Andover Seminary, which had been founded in 1808 as a reaction against apostasy at Harvard. He had lived through the Second Great Awakening, and he organized a series of lectures on revival that he delivered to his seminary in that year.

In the third of these lectures, Porter focused on hindrances to revival, and as he began that lecture he said something that encouraged my heart: "It cannot be doubted, that there is sometimes a sovereign withdrawal of divine influence from a church, when no special reason is apparent to us why it should be so, at that time rather than another."

Paul encourages young Timothy with some of his last words on earth: "Preach the Word. Be instant in season and out of season. . . . for the time [season] will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:1-5). The study of revival is the study of unusual times of blessing. We may or may not be called to seasons like that. It may be that we are called to out-of-season times and places. But whatever season we find ourselves called to, our duty is the same - preach the Word and do the work of the evangelist. Perhaps the Lord may have some surprising seasons ahead for us. Perhaps someday we will find ourselves writing about a surprising work of God in our ministry the way Jonathan Edwards did of his:

"And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more; souls did as it were come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day, for many months together, might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvelous light, and delivered out of an horrible pit, and from the miry clay, and set upon a rock, with a new song of praise to God in their mouths . . .

"It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought to them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. The doings of God were then seen in His sanctuary. God's day was a delight, and His tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful: the congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth."

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