



# THE BEACON BEAM

August 2015

## SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

### Why the Church Should Neither Cave Nor Panic About the Decision on Gay Marriage

By Russell Moore

As I write this, the Supreme Court has handed down what will be the “Roe v. Wade” of marriage, redefining marriage in all 50 states. This is a sober moment, and I am a conscientious dissenter from this ruling. The Court now has disregarded thousands of years of definition of the most foundational unit of society, and the cultural changes here will be broad and deep. So how should the church respond?

First of all, the church should not panic. The Supreme Court can do many things, but the Supreme Court cannot get Jesus back in that tomb. Jesus of Nazareth is still alive. He is still calling the universe toward his kingdom.

Moreover, while this decision will, I believe, ultimately hurt many people and families and civilization itself, the gospel doesn’t need “family values” to flourish. In fact, the church often thrives when it is in sharp contrast to the cultures around it. That was the case in Ephesus and Philippi and Corinth and Rome, which held to marriage views out of step with the Scriptures.

The church will need in the years ahead to articulate what we believe about marriage; we cannot assume that people agree with us, or even understand us. Let’s not simply talk about marriage in terms of values or culture or human flourishing. Let’s talk about marriage the way Jesus and the apostles

taught us to – as bound up with the gospel itself, a picture of the union of Christ and his church (Eph. 5:32).

As we do so, we must not just articulate our views of marriage, we must embody a gospel marriage culture. We have done a poor job of that in the past. Too many of our marriages have been ravaged by divorce.

Too often we’ve neglected church discipline in the cases of those who have unrepentantly destroyed their marriages. We must repent of our failings and picture to the world what marriage is meant to be, and keep the light lit to the old paths.

This gives the church an opportunity to do what Jesus called us to do with our marriages in the first place: to serve as a light in a dark place. Permanent, stable marriages with families with both a mother and a father may well make us seem freakish in 21<sup>st</sup>-century culture.

We should not fear that. We believe stranger things than that. We believe a previously dead man is alive, and will show up in the Eastern skies on a horse. We believe that the gospel can forgive sinners like us and make us sons and daughters. Let’s embrace the sort of freakishness that saves.

*“...the church often thrives when it is in sharp contrast to the cultures around it.”*

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**Beacon Baptist Church**  
1622 Kirkpatrick Road  
Burlington, NC 27215

**Phone:** (336) 226-5205

**Fax:** (336) 227-3665

**Website:**  
[www.beaconbaptist.com](http://www.beaconbaptist.com)

**E-mail:**  
[beaconbaptist@beaconbaptist.com](mailto:beaconbaptist@beaconbaptist.com)

#### Schedule of Services:

**Sunday**  
Morning Worship...9:30 AM  
Sunday School.....11:10 AM  
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

**Wednesday**  
Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM  
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM  
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

# Beacon Highlights for August

## Special Events for August

02	Jr./Sr. High YAC	11	Elders/Deacons Meeting
03	Tri-State Particular Baptist Fellowship	16	Members Meeting
		20	Silver Saints
05	Teen/Parent Focus		Kick-Off Cookout
08	Teen Homeplace Ministry		
09	Lord's Table		

## Back to School

### IMPACT Clubs 2015-2016

Our IMPACT children's clubs begin Wednesday, September 8, at 7:00 p.m. This is a unique opportunity for Bible instruction through Scripture memory and catechism questions. Age appropriate clubs are designed for children beginning at age 3 and continuing through sixth grade. IMPACT clubs meet each Wednesday night 7:00 to 8:15, through the school year. Your children, grandchildren, and the children of your friends and neighbors will benefit from this stimulating approach to learning.

### Sympathy ~ We express our heartfelt sympathy to the family of:

Dolly Rea Buckner	Brantly Ray
Don Evans	Roy Warren
Rev. Terry Jones	Scotty Watkins
Bobby McCracken, Jr.	

## The Beacon Broadcast

### Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.

### Sunday

WPCM 920 AM (Burlington, NC)	9:00 a.m.
WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WSML 1200 AM (Graham, NC)	8:30 p.m.
WLES 560 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards 1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	9:30 p.m.

## August Member Birthdays



06	Carol Underwood
11	Brenda Jarrell
12	Larry Apple
17	Charlotte Evans
	David Hurley
21	Pat Duncan
22	Regina Abernathy
	BJ Massey
25	Alan Dyer
29	Ann Barker
31	Kelly La Tour

*Happy Birthday!*

## August Missionary Birthdays

03	David Edens
06	Nicky Vaughn
08	Tony Payne
14	Donna Edens
22	Renato Giuliani

*Happy Birthday!*

## Beacon Pastors

Gregory N. Barkman	Senior Pastor
Michael R. Karns	Minister of Christian Education
Robert F. La Tour	Minister of Families
Gerald J. Counts	Minister of Visitation
Gregory L. Phillips	Minister of Music

# Calvinism and Traditions

Greg Barkman

**T**raditions can become a significant barrier to understanding the Doctrines of Grace because they can have such an iron grip on our minds. Understanding the way traditions influence our thinking may help in working through some of the doctrinal questions raised by the recent series of BEAM articles on the doctrinal history of our church.

**WHAT ARE TRADITIONS?** Traditions are shared activities repeated often enough to become normative (my definition). Webster's Dictionary defines tradition as, "an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior." Traditions are why we do the same thing in the same way time after time. They can have a powerful, though usually unrecognized influence upon the way we analyze new ideas. We are prone to accept or reject concepts according to our traditional way of thinking. The way we have always thought or acted is a strong deterrent to change. Traditions are found in every area of life. Some are centuries old, others span two or three generations, and a few may be relatively new. We have family traditions, such as the way we celebrate Christmas or birthdays. Community traditions include fireworks every 4<sup>th</sup> of July, or an annual Christmas parade. We are all surrounded by traditions that relate to the country in which we live, place of employment, and religion. Religious traditions can have a profound impact upon the way we analyze religious doctrines or practices. It is not uncommon for Christians to reject something new, not because it is unscriptural, but because it goes against their traditions. "We've never done it that way before," or, "My church doesn't believe that way." It's good to be cautious about accepting new religious doctrines without first carefully

examining them in the light of Scripture, but when traditions prevent us from considering unfamiliar concepts that are truly Biblical, we become like the Pharisees, who rejected Christ's teaching because of man-made traditions.

*"Christians do not always recognize the connections, but theology shapes traditions."*

Religious traditions involve both the practices of public worship, as well as private practices of Christian devotion. They include the hymns we sing, which musical instruments we employ, the inclusion or exclusion of a choir, and the order of service we utilize. Another term for order of service is liturgy. Some Christians scorn traditions as that which others observe, but not themselves. Yet a little scrutiny discovers that every church has its own set of traditions. The rejection of certain practices, such as reciting the Apostles Creed, or repeating the Lord's Prayer, does not remove traditions from public worship. It only replaces them with something else. Those who decry formalism in favor of an informal style of worship do not thereby rid themselves of tradition. They simply establish their own by repeating their particular brand of non-formalism often enough to create new ones. Remember the opening definition? Traditions are shared activities repeated often enough to become normative. You won't attend a non-

traditional church for long without picking up on their traditions. They may develop practices which are entirely unique to their congregation, but before long, these practices become new traditions. Everyone has traditions. Even when we discard those previously practiced, we develop new ones to take their place. Traditions are an irreplaceable part of community relationships. We all practice them, and our perceptions are colored by them.

**TRADITIONS AND CALVINISM.** There are traditions historically associated with Calvinism, and others related to Arminianism. Christians do not always recognize the connections, but theology shapes traditions. For example, churches with a Calvinist heritage usually employ a style of worship which seems overly formal to those who come from an informal religious background. What is the connection between Calvinism and formalism? Calvinists more greatly emphasize the majesty and holiness of God, and develop liturgies that reflect their theology. Worship services are usually more orderly and predictable because they believe God is a God of order, and that familiar liturgies help worshippers focus upon God rather than being distracted by spontaneity and unpredictable elements. Calvinist hymns are generally more solemn and majestic because that is the way they understand God, and they want to help worshippers think properly about Him. Calvinist methods of evangelism put more emphasis upon the sovereignty of God in salvation, and less upon the activity of men, in keeping with their theology. Non-Calvinistic churches are often more energetic, less orderly, more flamboyant and entertaining. There is often a deliberately planned unpredictability in the order of worship, more appeal

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Let's also recognize that if we're right about marriage, and I believe we are, many people will be disappointed in getting what they want. Many of our neighbors believe that a redefined concept of marriage will simply expand the institution (and, let's be honest, many will want it to keep on expanding). This will not do so, because sexual complementarity is not ancillary to marriage. The church must prepare for the refugees from the sexual revolution.

We must prepare for those, like the sexually wayward Woman at the Well of Samaria, who will be thirsting for water of which they don't even know.

There are two sorts of churches that will not be able to reach the sexual revolution's refugees. A church that has given up on the truth of the Scriptures, including on marriage and

sexuality, and has nothing to say to a fallen world. And a church that screams with outrage at those who disagree will have nothing to say to those who are looking for a new birth.

We must stand with conviction and with kindness, with truth and with grace. We must hold to our views and love those who hate us for them. We must not only speak Christian truths; we must speak with a Christian accent. We must say what Jesus has revealed, and we must say those things the way Jesus does — with mercy and with an invitation to new life.

Some Christians will be tempted to anger, lashing out at the world around us with a narrative of decline. That temptation is wrong. God decided when we would be born, and when we would be born again. We have the Spirit and the gospel. To think that we deserve to live in different times is to tell God that we

deserve a better mission field than the one he has given us. Let's joyfully march to Zion.

The witness to marriage will be, like the pro-life movement, a long-term strategy that is multi-pronged. This is no time for fear or outrage or politicizing. We see that we are strangers and exiles in American culture. We are on the wrong side of history, just like we started. We should have been all along.

Let's seek the kingdom. Let's stand with the gospel. Let's fear our God. But let's not fear our mission field.

Russell Moore is president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He is author of *Adopted for Life*.

## COMMITMENT UNTO DEATH

I've been told that after a young African was martyred for his faith, this writing was found in his room; here is an excerpt:

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed, the die has been cast, I have stepped over the line, the decision has been made—I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ—I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure—I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving and dwarfed goals.

My pace is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions are few, my guide is reliable, my mission is clear. I won't give up, shut up, let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up for the cause of Jesus Christ.

I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till everyone knows, work till He stops me and when He comes for His own, He will have no trouble recognizing me because my banner will have been clear.

With this kind of resolve we will, with God's help, have the strength to withstand our crumbling culture, and perhaps even reverse what seems to be "irreversible." Of course, we are a minority, but armed with the promises of God we can have a spiritual impact that is greater than our numbers might suggest.

It may come down to a simple question: *Are we willing to pay the price?*

Erwin W. Lutzer, *WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Hope and Direction in our Present Crisis*

# Calvinism and Traditions

Greg Barkman

*(Continued from page 3)*

to emotions, and less reverence in worship. These churches often endeavor to create what they consider to be a revival atmosphere, believing this to be the best way to touch hearts and influence the will. Non-Calvinistic churches are much more likely to employ an altar call, and will often put pressure upon worshippers to respond. There is usually a strong emphasis upon “making a decision,” and great effort is expended to produce visible and physical responses from the congregation. Lack of visible response is often viewed as failure, and cause for discouragement. All of these elements produce practices which become deeply ingrained traditions over time. The average person in the pew may be unaware of the theological foundation of the traditions of his church. People who grow up in one tradition and visit a church of a different tradition, may consider that church distasteful without understanding the theological implications which undergird different styles. Because all of us are more comfortable with the traditions with which we are familiar, we may emotionally reject those of another church without much thought about the reason why. We just don’t like it; it’s as simple as that. End of discussion. And, unfortunately, end of willingness to learn and grow.

## TRADITIONS AND DOCTRINE.

Traditions which were developed out of a particular theological position serve to reinforce our way of understanding Scripture. Since we tend to respond emotionally to traditions, liking those with which we are familiar, and disliking those that are unfamiliar, we also tend to accept without thinking, the particular theological position that shaped the traditions we enjoy. Some things just seem right,

*“Even some Calvinists,  
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better, cannot seem to  
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success.”*

and others wrong, based, not upon a thoughtful analysis of Scripture, but upon an emotional reaction to tradition. In this way, traditions may become a barrier to our ability to examine Scripture. We tend to view Scripture through the lens of tradition rather than analyze traditions through the lens of Scripture. Traditions can color our ability to understand doctrine. Although we can probably never escape this phenomenon entirely, we need to recognize this all-too-human tendency, and try to set it aside when we weigh differing interpretations of Scripture. God’s truth is not a matter of what we like or dislike, but rather what He has revealed and declared. What a pity if we should reject divine revelation because of an emotional attachment to tradition.

**CONFUSING SIGNALS.** Some who do not understand the vital connection between tradition and theology, endeavor to mix things up a bit. Realizing that most people prefer informality and entertaining styles of worship, but also wanting to proclaim Calvinistic doctrine, they may be tempted to attract people by giving them Arminian styles of worship while preaching a Calvinistic message, sometimes best described as “Calvinism light.” After all, if you

can’t get people to attend to hear the message, what good is solid theology? Unfortunately, what usually happens is that Arminian worship styles are so emotionally powerful that people don’t hear the message clearly. The theology from the pulpit is weakened by the more man-centered worship styles which dominate everything else. Pragmatic methodology flows from Arminian theology. Calvinists believe that God accomplishes His work through His Word, and anything that hinders the message of God’s Word is a barrier to true worship and sound evangelism. That’s why I’m not overly impressed with many examples of the “New Calvinism.” What I usually see is an Arminian style of “doing church,” coupled with a more Calvinist pulpit ministry than is usually found in contemporary churches. However, I do not believe that you can beneficially mix a Calvinistic message with Arminian styles of worship any more that you can mix oil and water. This approach is successful only in the way that Arminianism measures success—numbers, dollars, programs, and building. Even some Calvinists, who should know better, cannot seem to rid themselves of worldly concepts of gauging success. Hearts that are changed by the Spirit-empowered Word are often difficult to detect because of the attraction created by entertainment styles of music and preaching. It is nearly impossible to discern who is responding to the Word, and who just likes the “cool” worship. It may be hip to attend a church with a modicum of Calvinist theology in this day when “young, restless, and reformed” is the latest fad, but those who understand Calvinism best, know that theology is inextricably tied to methodology, and Arminian methodology will seldom produce solid Christians who worship

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“...and so I gave him something to chew on instead of my stewing over the same thing.” Found in an email from a friend last week, this phrase snagged on a corner of my mind, began to nag me and has left me with a question or two: Am I a ‘stewer’ or a ‘chewer’? Which are you? What is a stewer and over what do they stew? What does a chewer chew?

**Stew:** When used as a noun, we think of a pot of assorted meats and vegetables placed over low heat on the back burner. As a verb, the word could be replaced with the synonyms simmer, bubble, or heat. The container for the stew is our mind and the ingredients are the circumstances of our lives lived in this terribly imperfect world. Everyone’s stew is concocted from their own original recipe and no two are alike. What might we find in this stew? When those around us fail to live up to our expectations, when changes don’t fit our best scenario, when we realize our lives have turned out nothing like we had assumed they would...these are basic elements. We throw them in the pot, along with all the other ingredients we’ve gathered over a life time, from small things like an unkind word spoken to us in haste, bigger things that others do and which we can’t fix, all the way to the life-altering actions of another, sometimes with consequences that ruin their world and encircle ours. Then there are those difficult to swallow ingredients...the problems we create ourselves, the sins that cause irreparable harm to others and to ourselves and have an aftertaste that lingers for years. As do all stews, this one begs for some flavoring, and so frustration, anger, resentment, and fear become the *bouquet garni*, a mix of emotions tossed into the pot that brings out the already unpleasant tastes. Most of the time our stew just sits and simmers on low heat, but when heated up by yet another

indication that life is not perfect, we turn it up to a full rolling boil. And while it bubbles and splatters on the stove we scurry around looking for an injustice or two to add. There’s always a disappointing family member on hand, or a difficult friendship. There are problems too big for our shoulders, or too small for anyone else to take seriously. Financial difficulties are a popular ingredient as are people who won’t take our advice. I wonder if our pot is going to hold all this...and we haven’t even mentioned politics and religion!

*“When things are out of our control and are controlling us instead, we should remember two things: There is something that GOD IS doing and there is something I CAN do.”*

Though our stews are unique to each of us, there is one common thread that runs through most of these ingredients. They are mostly out of our control. And if that’s true...if there is nothing we can do except stew...then what’s the point? Now we are ready to talk about chewing! When my emailing friend said she gave ‘something to chew on’ what was that? It was truth to consider. When things are out of our control and are controlling us instead, we should remember two things: There is something that GOD IS doing and there is something I CAN do.

What is God doing? He is doing us a kindness in planning for

our lives the things that will help us grow up. He’s giving us things to ‘get over’. He is providing opportunities to learn forgiveness and to practice objective thinking. He is telling us to think about someone besides ourselves. And best and most important, He’s teaching us to trust Him, by the method He knows will work! Just this morning as Greg read our *Tabletalk* for the day I heard these words from Ecclesiastes: “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (7:2-4). To paraphrase one of the comments, a life lived with all fun and no trouble is a distraction from what really matters ~ the state of our souls. God’s purpose in bringing sorrow into our lives is ‘deep and honest reflection’ (mourning), for in good times we are not likely to reflect on our hearts.

So what is the truth about all those things in our stew? They are all there by design and for a purpose. They are customized by our Maker for the person we are. And the purpose is to make us good, wise, loving, mature, fruitful, joyful, and godly people. This is what God is doing and this is true.

And what are WE to DO? We are to chew on truth. Chewing is the grinding up of food. Truth, like food, must first be chewed or broken down into small manageable pieces before it can be swallowed, at which time it becomes a part of us. Only then can it take root and bear fruit in our lives. We said that much of our troubles come in the form of things over which we have no control. But also true is that in most cases, there are elements we can control, but it’s *self-control* that is wanting...and that’s the hard work most are not willing to do. Do some slow and thoughtful chewing on this: If we want change,

*(Continued on page 8)*

# An Open Letter By Dr. John MacArthur

John MacArthur

**T**he following thoughts are from Dr. John MacArthur as he frames the issue from a biblical perspective:

The highest court in the land has passed its judgment. The headlines proclaim that a slim majority of Supreme Court justices considers freedom of sexual orientation a right for all Americans. This exchange of one set of values in favor of another does not come as a surprise to us who already know that the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. June 26th, 2015 stands as a significant milestone in the American demonstration of this ancient reality.

**1. No human court has the authority to redefine marriage**, and the verdict yesterday does not change the God ordained reality of marriage. God was not defeated in this ruling, and every marriage will be judged according to biblical grounds on the last day. Nothing will prevail against Him (*There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the LORD - Proverbs 21:30*), and nothing will thwart the advance of His Kingdom (*All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" - Daniel 4:35*).

**2. The Word of God has pronounced judgment on any nation that would reclassify evil as good, darkness as light, and bitter as sweet** (*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! - Isaiah 5:20*). As a nation, America continues to put herself in the crosshairs of judgment. As a proclaimer of truth, you are responsible for never compromis-

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ing on these issues. In every way you must stand firm.

**3. This ruling proves that we are clearly in the minority, and a people set apart** (*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. - I Peter 2:9-11*). The standards that shaped Western culture and American society have given way to practical atheism and moral relativism. This decision has simply accelerated the rate of decline. A country will not rise above the morality of its citizens, and the majority of Americans don't have a biblical worldview.

**4. Religious liberty is not promised in the Bible.** In America, the church of Jesus Christ has enjoyed unprecedented freedom. This is changing, and the new normal may include persecution that is new to us. There has never been a more important time for gifted men to help lead the church by capably handling the sword of the Spirit (*And take the*

*helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. - Ephesians 6:17*).

**5. Marriage is not the ultimate battleground**, and our enemies are not the men and women who seek to destroy it (*For the weapon of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. - II Corinthians 10:4*). The battleground is the Gospel. Be careful not to replace patience, love, and prayer with bitterness, hatred, and politics. As you carefully guide your flock around the dangerous pitfalls ahead, remind them of the indomitable power of forgiveness through the cross of Christ.

**6. Romans 1 clearly identifies the evidence for the wrath of God on a nation:** sexual immorality followed by homosexual immorality culminating in a reprobate mind. This most recent step reminds us that God's wrath has come in full. We now see reprobate minds at every level of leadership - in the Supreme Court, the presidency, cabinet, legislature, press and culture. If our diagnosis is in line with Romans 1, then we must also follow the prescription found in Romans 1 - we are not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation! In this day it is our divine duty and calling to strengthen the church, families, and gospel testimony by shedding the pragmatic nonsense that distracts the church from its mission given by God. Homosexuals—like all other sinners—need to be warned of impending eternal judgment and lovingly offered the forgiveness, grace and new life through repentance and faith in the lord Jesus Christ.

Taken from an *Open Letter to The Master's Seminary Alumni*.

# Calvinism and Traditions

Greg Barkman

*(Continued from page 5)*

a sovereign, holy, and majestic God.

Must faithful Calvinistic churches be resigned to unending smallness? No, but they must be willing to be. When impatience with smallness yields pragmatic methodologies, some measure of sound theology is lost in the process. If Armin-

ian style worship is the only way to overcome smallness, then yes, faithful Calvinistic churches must remain small. But both history and present-day observation informs us that it is possible to be both large and true to Calvinistic doctrine and reverent worship. But only if the Spirit of God, not the cleverness of men, is at work.

But isn't that what we really long for? If so, we must be willing to wait on God, for His Spirit, like the wind, blows where He chooses. Impatience in serving God is no virtue, but steadfast labor and total reliance upon a sovereign God is.

## *On the Feminine Side*

Marti Barkman

*(Continued from page 6)*

who can we change but ourselves?

"But the problem lies with someone else!" you say. May be, but since God gave you the sorrow, the solution *and its benefit* is yours as well. Think of just one small ingredient from that stew ~ that unkind word, so unkind that you simply can't forget it. You've played it over and over in your mind and now interpret all other comments in the light of what you

think was the intention of the speaker. Before long you begin to avoid this person who may not even know they've offended you. But Ecclesiastes 7:21 says, *Do not take to heart all the things that people say....* Don't let the words of another person control what you do. Unkind words are spoken for many reasons and until you've had a conversation with the speaker, you don't really know the

intent behind the words. Lives can be altered by a word.

Difficulties are a fact of life. Some people seem to have more than their share but everyone has some. What will you and I do with ours? The choice is clear: We can spend our lives stewing and fretting or searching and meditating. And the result is clear: fearful anxiety or joyful trusting!



*The Beacon Beam*  
Beacon Baptist Church  
PO Box 159  
Alamance, NC 27201

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