

## 20 YEARS A DRUNKARD BUT NEVER AN ALCOHOLIC

### *IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?*

By Gerwin McFarland

Back in my drinking days when someone in a bar asked what the difference was between a drunk and an alcoholic, I'd grin and reply, "us drunks don't have to go to meetings." That was when I was a practicing and experienced drinker, in my late thirties. However, there truly is a difference and I'll begin by stating my definition of drunkard: anyone who drinks four or more alcoholic beverages every day and gets drunk three or more times each month. I secretly knew that drinking was a problem for me but I kept right on making jokes and continuing in such foolishness, until I hit bottom. I'm certain that all drunkards have reached that lowest point of all lows and have chosen to deal with the problem in a variety of ways: some continue in the same destructive lifestyle; others try to quit on their own (and thousands have succeeded) and still others try the way of the "recovery movement."

The path that I eventually chose did not happen instantly but began with the moment that I finally decided to do something positive about my messed-up life. However, within a few short years it would enable me to say that I was a **former drunkard!** If you are a potential problem drinker, I hope that you'll read my story and be encouraged to strive for a new and better life. That life-changing day for me began early on a morning not unlike hundreds of others that I had experienced in recent years. It was similar in that I knew that I had been really blitzed the night before: foul taste in my mouth, pounding headache, that tired, achy feeling all over and the shame of not remembering any details of the last hour or so before I passed out. But this particular morning was far worse because of two other things: I was 38 years old and should have been at home with my wife and four kids but instead had been kicked out of that home the day before. That was my major problem as I awoke about 5:30 a.m. Adding to my shame, I was in my car and it was parked in the driveway of a home that I'd never seen before!



After starting the car, I backed out, drove to the nearest intersection and discovered that I was about eight blocks from my favorite tavern in Moses Lake, Washington. I drove to a restaurant and was thankful that there were only a few customers there as I quickly made my way to the men's room. As I washed my face and straightened out my hair I saw the lump on my right forehead and the bruises and scratches on my right cheek. Because I also had very sore spots on my right elbow and shoulder, I assumed that I had taken a bad fall the previous night, in the tavern or on the way to my car. I also guessed that I had then been driving around, deciding where to spend the night when I had probably spotted a police car and ducked off the main drag, parking temporarily in that driveway where I'd awakened. With engine and lights off, I had probably stared at the rear view mirror and decided to wait and watch for the patrol car for a few minutes but instead had passed out.

Leaving the men's room, I ordered a cup of coffee to go and returned to my car. I sat in the car, sipping the coffee and pondering these recent events in my life: my wife informing me that she had started divorce proceedings and that I had to leave the home, according to the legal notice she handed me, signed by the Grant County Sheriff. She had packed all my clothes and personal belongings in a suitcase and smaller bag, which were now in the trunk of the car along with the legal document. I drove to a fast-food place and had more coffee and a breakfast sandwich as I continued this review of the most recent events in my life. How did my life get so messed up? By my third cup of coffee, my mind was in fast reverse to 1949, the summer following my graduation from high school in Grants Pass, Oregon.

I had only drunk beer three or four times during high school but did not care for the taste of it. I joined the Army when I was 17. After basic training and clerk-typist school, I was assigned to Tokyo, Japan, serving in General Headquarters, Far East Command, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. One week after I arrived in Tokyo, the Korean War began.

During my stateside training periods I had drunk beer several nights a month and gradually developed a taste for it. After a few months in Tokyo I had several friends, mostly from the same office that I worked in. We all enjoyed drinking beer, some a bit more than others, but in a year or so I was up to speed with the "regular" drinkers. I got buzzed frequently and quite drunk several times a month. I was discharged a few months before my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and spent less than two years at the University of Oregon before quitting and going to work in the consumer finance business.

I had been one of the "party animals" in college, heading for Robinson's Tavern or spontaneous parties as often as I could afford it. However, I was now a young married man working for modest wages. My wife and I attended parties about once a month and I did moderate social drinking with business associates a couple of times per month. In retrospect, my drinking habits then were drastically different than when I had been in the army. Now, as a young, married career man, my drinking "hobby" was curtailed primarily by insufficient income.

By age 33, there were major changes in my life. I had been divorced, remarried and found myself living in the small town of Ephrata, Washington. I was a finance man in the construction business. It was there that I eventually got into the sales of farm buildings and began earning more income. I also began drinking more.



It was during this period that I became a "working drunk," that is to say I got up every weekday, went to work and earned an adequate income. But my hours away from work were heavily involved with drinking and it was beginning to take its toll on my life in several ways. I had been involved in commission sales for about 5 years but now I was bringing less income home for two reasons: I was not working as effectively as I had

earlier in my sales career and I was spending more money on booze, sometimes during weekdays. In addition, my marriage was also deteriorating, primarily because of my drunkenness. My wife also enjoyed drinking, but not to the life-dominating extent that I did. At this point in our life, we were arguing fairly often. I frequently abused her verbally, especially on those nights that we had both been drinking. I was having problems in several areas of my life but ignoring them all. I was jolted into a reality check when I was required to move out of the home. And here I was the next morning, finishing a fast-food breakfast, reminiscing over my life history and wishing I could live it all over again.

Over the next week I arranged to move in temporarily with an acquaintance from the tavern. I also decided to greatly reduce the quantities of my daily drinking. Instead of drinking from about 4:00 p.m. until bedtime (euphemism for “passing out”) I would stop at the tavern after work for three beers and then fix something for dinner at my friend’s place. About 8:30, I would stroll back to the tavern for a couple of more beers, winding up in bed sober before 10:00 p.m.



I loved our four children but had lost daily contact with them, being relegated instead to weekly visits for a few hours. I also loved my wife and told her so in a phone conversation a couple of weeks after moving out. I also told her about the drastic cuts in my drinking habits. I begged her to give me another chance, but she wanted no part of me. I hated this domestic mess I was now in but recognized that I had brought it upon myself. Drunk, sober, or somewhere in between, I found myself weeping on many nights. I also finally acknowledged to myself that booze was my major problem and that I could not “cut down” on the amounts consumed but had to quit entirely. I meant it and made that very difficult decision to quit altogether, but knew that such a major transition would be quite difficult.

We had become “slightly religious” during the last few years of our marriage, attending a Lutheran church in Ephrata, Washington, once or twice a month. We’d each been exposed to Christianity as children but had lost any serious interest by junior high school. As married adults, we expressed belief in God but had never seriously investigated Him. There were a few men in that church we occasionally attended that I considered to be “fanatics.” They brought *their own* Bibles to church. They spoke about the Lord, in restaurants and other public places, as though they actually *knew Him!* They were never embarrassed about saying “praise the Lord” in public. I didn’t understand such activity and wanted nothing to do with them. However, when it finally began to sink in that I was not going to talk my wife into reconciliation, I recognized that I had “hit bottom” in life and knew that I needed help. I decided that I wanted to know more about God and found myself calling one of those “fanatics.” We talked a lot in his home the next night and almost daily thereafter, frequently with one or two of those other “fanatics.” They were helpful and kind, answering my questions and praying with me. One of them gave me a Bible and I began reading select chapters daily. By this time, I had moved back to Ephrata (about 20 miles from Moses Lake) and rented a small room. Some of what I read in the

Bible each day confused me, resulting in my always having questions for them when we met.

They also explained the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Very briefly, it is “bad news/good news.” BAD NEWS: You are a sinner. “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* [Romans 3:23] “*The wages of sin is death.*” (eternal separation from God) [Romans 6:23]. GOOD NEWS: Christ died for you. “*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” [Romans 5:8]. You can be saved through faith. *For by grace you have been saved (delivered from the penalty of sin) through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one should boast.* [Ephesians 2:8, 9]. In other words, there is absolutely nothing that we can do which will be righteous enough to cancel out our debt of sin and to reconcile our separation from God. How about being kind, honest and loving? Sorry, and neither will membership in a particular church. (More on that subject later) God is Love but He is also Just. For all those who are now in a correct relationship with Him, such status was attained only by the Grace of God, because of their repentant faith in God and their acknowledgment of the atoning work of the sacrificial death of Jesus for their sins.

*“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf...” [II Corinthians 5: 21]*

As an adult, I had never been agnostic. I held a vague belief in God but had simply been indifferent towards Him, to the extent that I had never learned about Him and what, if any, were my responsibilities towards Him; and I hadn't learned much more during the one or two sermons we heard each month at that church in Ephrata. I had been meeting with these godly men (the “fanatics”) for breakfast and/or a morning prayer several times a week for about a month when it all began to make sense to me. Late in April of 1971, I made a commitment to Jesus and asked Him to become the Lord of my life and to forgive me of my sins. On the night of my 39<sup>th</sup> birthday (May 9, 1971), I had been in my room reading the Bible, praying and reviewing the events of my life in recent years. Foremost on my mind were the divorce proceedings, my many talks with these men and my recent commitment to Jesus.

That night was the first time that the Holy Spirit revealed something to me. He showed me (in my heart) that my “commitment” had been half-hearted, with strings attached. Specifically, that I was only interested in getting my family back, although I was serious about giving up drinking. I kneeled at my bedside and acknowledged all this. I also confessed to the heavenly Father that I was a sinner and knew that my *major* problem in life was not booze but the fact that I was separated from Him by sin and therefore destined to spend eternity in hell. I repented of my sins and asked Him to forgive me in Jesus' name. I also asked Jesus to be the Lord of my life and to assist me in being obedient to Him and His written Word, both outwardly and in my heart. I was now born again, having been born from above.

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God [John 1:13].*

It took a couple of days for the results of this act to fully sink in. I then knew what it meant to be “set free” in Jesus.

*“and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.”* [John 8:32]

He had paid my debt of sin on the cross of Calvary. He was my Lord, raised from the dead, and His Spirit indwelt me. I was going to spend eternity with God! I had been forgiven by God for all my sins. I was now going to experience new life in Christ Jesus.



I couldn't wait to tell my wife, thinking that she would not only be delighted for me, but inclined to discuss reconciliation. Boy was I in for a surprise! She believed me but was skeptical, based on her unpleasant life with me in recent years. She was happy for me about my recent personal decisions but not enough to change her mind, and proceeded with the divorce. In retrospect, I cannot fault her decision.

I settled into my new life, starting each day with a time of reading the Bible and praying. The Lord built me into a fellowship of true believers from all walks of life. My closest friendships were with a few people in that Lutheran church; later, I developed other close friendships through a non-denominational men's group that met each week for breakfast. Several years later, in Orange County, California, I learned that in some very large congregations, there were special group meetings whose focus was dealing with the problems of alcohol abuse. All who attended were either true believers who Jesus had delivered from drunkenness or were serious inquirers into Christianity, who currently were dealing with the sin of drunkenness. These groups were sort of a Christian version of an AA meeting. I attended a few of them but eventually decided that all new converts were far better off by simply getting fully involved in a fellowship that taught and practiced sound doctrine. Before we were redeemed, we all had sins which had “easily entrapped us” [Hebrews 12:1]. Why should new or old believers spend a lot of time dwelling on that past sin in a group setting? I believe that the key to Christian growth is to be built into a fellowship that teaches and practices sound doctrine, based solely on the Bible. We can grow in knowledge there and eventually be able to help others who are struggling with sin.

I was enjoying learning more about the Kingdom of God and looked forward to a regular prayer meeting that I had begun attending each week as well as spontaneous meetings after dinner at some of my new friends' homes, plus church on Sunday. Sunday was my best day, beginning with picking up my children in the morning. We were always glad to see each other and then off to Sunday school and church. During the summer, we would have picnics in a park after church and other times lunch in my little apartment, followed by other fun activities.

Like most problem drinkers, I had been drinking more each year than in previous years. For example, at age 29 I was drinking 8-10 beers each evening, stopping at dinnertime. Then I started having liquor before dinner and wine with dinner. By the time I was 38, I was drinking beer and/or liquor after work and before dinner, then wine during and after dinner. I once measured my daily consumption by “proof ounces,” and determined that my total daily consumption of all alcohol [age 38] was about the equivalent of one quart of liquor per day. Because of this continual, daily intake, I had been extremely nervous on my first day of abstaining from booze. The temptation to drink was strong but I had been praying a lot and the Lord helped me to resist temptation. Things were a little better the second day; also the third. After two weeks I felt like a new man, physically, emotionally and spiritually. I was drawing much closer to God and the Bible was becoming a little easier to understand. I learned from my mentors that this was due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In spite of my enjoyment of this new life, I did have a problem with “backsliding” during my first few years as a True Believer. There had been countless temptations to drink and I resisted most of them with the Lord’s help, but fell off the wagon about one month after my conversion. I got drunk on a Friday night and continued drinking Saturday afternoon and night. I stopped by Sunday but did the same thing a couple of months later. I “fell off” about 5 times during the first year and 4 during the second year. During the third year of my new life in Jesus I noticed that the time elapsing between these incidents got further and further apart. After abstaining for 16 months during a period that began in 1976, there were a couple of incidents in 1977 and I got drunk for the last time on January 2, 1978.

*Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, **nor drunkards**, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the Kingdom of God. [I Corinthians 6:9,10]*

Now read the incredible freedom expressed in verse eleven:

*Such **were** some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*

Thanks be unto you, Most High God. I am not a drunkard, but a **former drunkard!**

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. [II Corinthians 5:17]*

I now believe sincerely that if I had persevered in prayer during those major times of temptation during my first few years as a believer, that the incidents of backsliding would have been far fewer. However, for over thirty years I have been rejoicing, not because I am a former drunkard, but that my name has been written in the Lamb’s book of Life [Luke 10:20].



How about you? After reading all the above scriptures and my testimony, are you ready to acknowledge that you are separated from God by sin? He loves you and His mercies never come to an end! Repent, turn to Him and ask for His forgiveness, in Jesus' name. However, if you are still not convinced but *know* that something is wrong between you and the Creator of the universe, then consider this "brave agnostic's prayer."

"God, if you are real, I want to know you! Please reveal Yourself to me as I read a portion of the Bible".

Then, read the Gospel of John and the Book of Romans.

If you are sincere in that prayer and your search for Him, you will know [in your heart] within a short time that He and His Word are the truth! Then, you must make a decision -- - either to accept His loving offer in repentant faith, receive his forgiveness and to spend eternity with Him, or to remain in your present state, destined to experience the wrath of God for eternity.

Some reading this will think that it does not apply to them because they are not sinners but *good persons*. Well, you probably are, if you compare yourself to other human beings. But God will not judge you by Man's standards. He holds all of us accountable to His standards of righteousness, declared in writing in the Bible: His Word. According to that, we have ALL sinned and NONE is righteous. While it is impossible for any of us to attain righteousness in our own strength, in His love and mercy He has made a way -- the atonement for all of our sins by the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, on Calvary. That sacrifice was made for all in the world who would believe on Him.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. [John 3:16]*

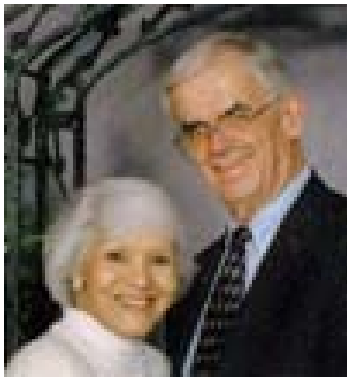
Still others reading this may think that they're okay with God because they're members of a major Protestant denomination, or the Roman Catholic Church, or the Mormon Church. If you are thinking that way, think again. In effect, you have examined God's plan for the eternal redemption of your soul and are saying, "well, that's nice God, but I'm just as comfortable with the 'membership route.'" What blasphemous audacity! There are NO acceptable substitutions for His way, regardless of the religious rituals and sacraments that you may be practicing. "Church membership," or church attendance, will not atone for the sins that separate you from God. You must be born again!

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Then Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born can he? Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." [John 3: 3-6]*

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Still others may think that they're okay with God because they answered an altar call 20 years ago[for example] and said the "sinner's prayer." That's good, if you're following Him in a walk of faith and obedience *now*, but if you're still living the same old life you did before you said that sinners prayer in the past, that is evidence that you really don't believe. [See the explanation of the parable of the sower, Matthew 13:20-22].

I described my definition of "drunkard" early in this article. I will finish with my definition of **alcoholic**: drunkards who have given themselves a new name with a nice, clinical ring to it and who are indeed victims --- not of alcohol, but a belief system that is contrary to God's Word. Here's another way to look at it: whereas Jesus offers hope, freedom and eternal life, the "Recovery" system offers not only victimhood but absolutely no hope, in this life or eternity!



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR: (May 9, 1932 – April 7, 2008)**

Gerwin McFarland was a retired insurance agent. After the 1972 divorce he began praying for a new wife who shared his faith. He met and married Hilda in 1981. They lived near Tacoma, Washington.

If you have just committed your life and heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, contact the [Webmaster@EXDrunkard.Com](mailto:Webmaster@EXDrunkard.Com) and include your mailing address, as he wants to send you a helpful booklet and suggestions for finding a local fellowship that teaches and practices sound doctrine, based solely on the

Bible. Until the Lord directs you to that place (a local church or home church/assembly) you need communication with the Lord: reading in His Word every day and praying as often as you want to, but at least once daily. Until you have a local mentor to guide you, here is a simple daily reading plan: spend about 15 minutes in the Old Testament and another 15 in the New Testament. Work your way through Genesis, Exodus and the entire New Testament. After you finish Exodus, read all of the Psalms and Proverbs. Personally, Gerwin prayed for a few minutes before reading the Scriptures every day and then additional prayers, as led by the Holy Spirit.

Gerwin also highly recommended the book [\*12 Steps To Destruction\*](#), by Martin and Deidre Bobgan, Eastgate Publishers, Santa Barbara, CA 93110. Their book goes into greater detail about the ungodly origins of the "12 Step" programs as well as the so-called "disease" of co-dependency. For more details, see their website:

[www.psychoheresy-aware.org](http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org)

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## WHY I REJECTED THE “RECOVERY” SYSTEM.

After I had been a follower of Jesus Christ for a couple of months, it occurred to me that I knew very little about Alcoholics Anonymous. Since I happened to be in a library at the time, I spent about an hour reading one of the official AA publications. I learned enough to realize that Christians becoming involved with AA would be compromising their faith and would be unequally yoked with unbelievers. That was 35 years ago, and my reasons for rejecting the three primary aspects of the Recovery movement are still the same:

(1) The Bible declares that drunkenness is a sin but those in Recovery believe it to be a disease. Even if you do not believe God or His Word, consider this from the view of simple logic: how can a *behavioral choice* be a disease? If you *chose* to eat ten candy bars every day and to never brush your teeth, they would start rotting out. Could you seriously blame that on a *disease*? What shall we call it? How about D.H.I. (Dental Hygiene Inadequacy?) Or perhaps, E.C.C.D. (Excessive Chocolate Consumption Disorder?)” Drunkenness, like all sin, is learned behavior.

Of course we are *all born* sinners, and even those who have been born again, still have the capacity to sin, but will not be *continuing* in (or *practicing*) a sin. For example, if I lose my temper and yell angrily at my wife, I have sinned against her and God. Because of His indwelling Holy Spirit, and His grace, He will cause me to be sorrowful to the point of repentance and I will confess my sin to both my wife and God, and will ask each of them to forgive me. That is an example of *a sin*. However, if I do that several times every week and every month without repentance, that would be *practicing sin* and would be a good sign that I was probably not a “true believer” but a “counterfeit believer.” Just as *obedience* is a common manifestation of a true believer, *continuing disobedience* is the most common manifestation of a counterfeit believer. Jesus said, “*If you love Me, you will keep my commandments*”. [John 14:15]

(2) By coming to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentant faith, I became a “new creature in Christ” according to II Cor. 5:17 and other verses. Therefore, I am no longer a drunkard but a **former** drunkard. But those in Recovery would say that I was *born* that way and will still have the “disease” until I die, even though I stopped drinking 35 years ago!

(3) Is there more than one God? The Bible says NO.

*Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it....*

*I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another.... Before Me there was no God formed; nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior....*

*Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts ; I am the First and I am the Last: besides Me, there is no God. [Isaiah 42:5,8; 43:10,11; 44:6]*

AA does not take a stand on Who God is but rather encourages followers to select the belief THEY FEEL LIKE selecting, including “God as I understand Him.” In other words,

“any old God will do?” Not according to the Bible, which millions (including myself) believe to be the ONLY source for Absolute Truth regarding God and how we are to live.

### **What about Rick Warren’s “ Celebrate Recovery?”**

It’s just another version of AA’s Twelve Steps. In the October 2005 issue of *Berean Call*, T. A. McMahon gives his assessment of CR having attended the 2005 Celebrate Recovery Summit at Saddleback Church in Southern California. [The rest of this section includes quotes from that article]. While acknowledging that he has been a long-time critic of psychological counseling and 12-Steps therapies in the church, one thing (McMahon) observed right away was that all in attendance had a tremendous zeal for the Lord and an unquestionable sincerity in desiring to help those who were struggling with habitual sin. But other thoughts began running through his mind during the 3 day session: is Celebrate Recovery’s 12-Steps program really different---that is “biblical and balanced....rather than psychological” ----as Rick Warren believes? Is God’s Word the basis for CR or is Celebrate Recovery another alarming example of *a way that seems right to a man* but one that is turning believers to ways and means other than the Bible to solve their sin-related problems? This is not just a Saddleback Church issue. Increasing numbers of evangelical churches are sponsoring AA meetings and /or creating their own self-help groups based upon AA’s 12-Steps principles.

Celebrate Recovery is a very complex methodology that attempts to bring biblical adjustments to the 12-Steps program and utilized in dozens of other addiction recovery programs....Why not simply rely on what the bible teaches?....Sin is not something from which a believer is “in recovery.” Sin is confessed by the believer and forgiven by God. The believer is cleansed of the sin right then.”I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5)....

How dependent is Celebrate Recovery on (with minor modifications) AA’s 12-Steps? Completely! ....Without Bill Wilson’s principles, the CR program would be reduced to a handful of misapplied Bible verses.

The many problems inherent within a Christianized 12-Steps program----and particularly Celebrate Recovery----are too numerous for this brief article Yet, consider these observations: CR is promoted as completely biblical and not psychological, yet the key speakers for CR Summit 2005 were clinical psychologists Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud. David Stoop, editor of *Life Recovery Bible* [CR participants’ mandatory paraphrase Bible, polluted with psychotherapy commentary] is a favorite speaker at Saddleback’s CR Large Group meetings. The CR leadership manual advises, “Have Christian psychotherapists volunteer their time to help instruct and support your leaders.”

We desperately need to take heed to God’s admonition through the Prophet Jeremiah: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

**<http://www.thebereancall.org/files/oct05.pdf>**